

Teaching
foreign
languages
through
songs

Karen M. Ludke



INSTITUTE FOR MUSIC IN
HUMAN AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
[IMHSD]



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Contents

Preface	8
Introduction: Songs in foreign language learning	10
Activities	14
1 Introduce a song in the target language	14
2 Teach vocabulary through a song	17
3 Teach grammar through a song	18
4 Teach listening comprehension through a song	22
5 Teach speaking skills through a song	23
6 Teach pronunciation through song lyrics	24
7 Teach reading skills through a song	26
8 Teach writing skills through a song	27
9 Teach the target culture through a song	29
10 Teach learners to sing a song in the target language	30
References	32
Musical Experience and Preferences Questionnaire	34
Additional Resources	35
Song Index	38



Preface

The content of this workbook has been developed as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh in the Institute for Music in Human and Social Development, supervised by Dr. Katie Overy and Prof. Fernanda Ferreira, and with previous support from Prof. Nigel Osborne during my MSc by Research degree.

The workbook has been designed for modern language teachers who are interested in using songs in their classroom. The materials have been designed to accompany an afternoon workshop at the University of Edinburgh. One aim of the workshop is to share research findings from psychology and neuroscience regarding the potential use of music and songs to support foreign language learning, in order to inform and enhance modern language teaching practice. The workshop also demonstrates the use of some of the activities found in this workbook and provides an opportunity for teachers to share their own ideas and techniques for teaching with songs in the modern language classroom.

The ten lessons developed for the workbook will enable teachers to focus on a variety of foreign language skills using songs. The activities are simple and easy to use, designed to be accessible for teachers without any formal musical training. Most of the lesson ideas have been used previously with beginning and intermediate language learners, so they are 'classroom-ready'. The workbook is designed to enable teachers to pick and choose the activities that they wish to use with their students. The activities can be adapted to teach many different languages with learners at different ages and proficiency levels.

Gaining a sense of students' musical experience and preferences is important to ensure the success of teaching with songs and to determine whether students might be interested in creating melodies and songs of their own. Before starting to use songs in the classroom, I recommend distributing a musical experience and preferences questionnaire (in the target language, where possible) for students to fill out (see page 34). Establishing which music genres and artists the students prefer in their native language(s) can be a great help to guide the teacher's choice of music styles that will be received most enthusiastically in the classroom. The activities outlined in this workbook can be combined in different ways to create mini-lessons that focus on a range of linguistic skills in the target language. I like to teach one song over the course of 2-3 weeks, using the target language whenever possible. When introducing a new song, I recommend using a full 60-minute lesson starting with Activity 1 (see page 14) followed by another activity.

During the first 15-20 minutes of each subsequent lesson, I suggest incorporating different activities using the same song before moving on to the textbook or other activities for the day's lesson. Toward the end of the first week, I like to begin singing the the song's chorus with the class (see Activity 10 on pages 30-31). Singing with a class full of students can be a challenge, but singing along as a whole group while listening to a recorded song can increase confidence and reduce performance anxiety for everyone. In general, it is better to teach songs that you feel comfortable singing.

On pages 35-40, there is a list of books, websites, and other music-related resources that can be used to teach modern languages, including an index of song suggestions to provide a starting point.

Songs in foreign language learning

Is there reason to believe that music and songs could be particularly effective for supporting foreign or second language learning? To ensure positive learning outcomes, pedagogical methods must efficiently introduce and reinforce new material, while at the same time capturing students' attention and increasing their motivation to learn. From a practical perspective, it is also important that new instructional methods can be employed without a great deal of extra training or preparation on the part of teachers. Often, it is difficult to determine whether a new technique or activity will work without actually trying it in the classroom. In the case of music, there is evidence from a variety of sources to suggest that using songs as pedagogical material can be very effective.

For example, educators, researchers, and theorists have claimed that music and songs in the modern language classroom may provide positive emotional and learning enhancements for students at different ages and stages of learning (*Spicher & Sweeney, 2007; Ting, 2002; Medina, 1993; Lozanov & Gateva, 1989; Rees, 1977*). As a result, several pedagogical techniques and recommendations have already been advanced which encourage the incorporation of music and song into the foreign language curriculum (*Murphey, 1992; Anton, 1990; Felix, 1989; Bancroft, 1995*). Teachers have also reported that songs can quickly set a positive classroom tone (*Jensen, 2000*), improve foreign or second language (L2) intake in the learning process, and attract learners' attention to the linguistic material contained in the song. As a pedagogical tool, songs might actually be ideal for achieving modern language teachers' aims. Songs can present challenging, authentic L2 material (*Spicher & Sweeney, 2007*) and the enjoyable repetition of language sounds and structures through the use of songs can encourage students to practise the L2 material outside of class (*Murphey, 1990*).

Research evidence from psychology and neuroscience has also shown that musical presentation methods can support language learning. For example, music has been shown to support verbal learning in the native language (*Thaut et al., 2008; Rainey & Larsen, 2002*). Another experiment tested implicit learning by asking adult participants to listen to a continuous stream of synthesised nonsense syllables, presented either as spoken or as sung syllables, for 7 minutes. Results showed that participants who heard the sounds presented in the two musical conditions performed significantly better at segmenting the stream of syllables into nonsense words than participants who heard the spoken version, who only performed at chance levels (*Schön et al., 2008*).

Active listening skills and fine discrimination of subtle differences between sounds are also important skills that can be developed through music. Learning to sing folk songs and pop songs can provide practice with listening comprehension and pronunciation, which can then transfer to improvements in speaking skills (*Spicher & Sweeney, 2007; Fomina, 2000*). Songs are also more likely to repeat in the student's mind after a lesson than the same words presented as speech or poetry (*Ludke, in preparation; Smith Salcedo, 2002*).

It has been proposed that certain properties of songs are especially likely to support verbal learning, including:

- A simple and predictable song structure, such as verse and chorus (*Kellaris, 2003, 2001; Wallace, 1994*)
- A symmetrical melodic line, such as a rise in pitch followed by a fall (*Wallace, 1994*)
- Songs or phrases in which the end leads naturally back to the beginning (*Kellaris, 2003*)
- A rhyme scheme within the lyrics, since this can facilitate recall (*Wallace, 1994; Rubin & Wallace, 1989*)
- Songs without too much new vocabulary or grammar at once, since this can cause confusion and frustration for learners (*Smith Salcedo, 2002*).

One study found that after a one-week interval, people remembered and re-learned a list of proper names (in the native language) more quickly if they had originally learned the list through a song (*Rainey & Larsen, 2002*). Evidence from neuroscience shows that learning a list of words (in the native language) presented through song changes the way the brain processes verbal input (*Thaut et al., 2008*), which the authors propose is due to the ability of the song's rhythm to increase the efficiency of neural firing patterns.

Smith Salcedo (2002:108) writes: 'Nuessel and Cicogna (1991) sum up the pedagogical techniques that utilize song and music implementation as a medium for "pronunciation, morphological or syntactic patterns, vocabulary-building, and

cultural aspects, to name but a few possibilities. A song constitutes an ideal text that is admirably suited to a multiplicity of learning/acquisition activities carried out in the language classroom” (pp. 476-477).’

When teaching adolescents, R&B and rap can be particularly good options (although it is important to ensure the suitability of the lyrics) because this type of music tends to be popular with teenagers. In addition, the lyrics emphasise the natural rhythms of the language, often with a smaller-than-normal pitch range, which can be less intimidating when boys’ voices are in the process of changing. Rap music provides material that is similar in some ways to jazz chants (see page 26), which can also be used effectively with adults and older children.

Thus, there is considerable research evidence to suggest that songs can support language learning. This workbook presents some practical ideas for activities to use in the modern language classroom.

1 Introduce a song in the target language

Preparation: Find a song in the target language with challenging (but not too difficult) lyrics, taking into account the proficiency level of learners and their musical preferences (see questionnaire on page 34). Decide which aspects of the song will be the lesson's primary focus and prepare a short description of the singer, the style of music, or the song (50-100 words for beginners and intermediate students, up to 200 words for advanced students). With intermediate or advanced classes, you can assign one or a pair of students to choose a song (subject to review of the lyrics) and prepare an oral presentation to introduce it to the rest of the group. Wikipedia.org has biographical and cultural information in many languages that can be adapted for use with students at different levels.

1	5 min	In the target language (if possible), orally introduce background information about the style of music, the singer and/or composer of the song, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar for learners at that level. Ask 3-5 oral comprehension questions during the description to ensure that learners understand.
	5-10 min	<i>Variation:</i> Provide a written text with this background information, along with 3-5 reading comprehension questions about the material (see below for an example in French). Explain that students do not need to understand every single word of the text. Discuss the correct answers as a class.
2	5 min	Present a brief description of the song, using visual aides if possible. Explain any important vocabulary or grammar that will help learners understand the song's plot, theme, or message.
3	5 min	Allow learners to listen to the song once for enjoyment. Discuss in pairs what the song makes them think or feel.
	3-5 min	<i>Variation:</i> While the song is being played, ask students to draw a picture of how the song makes them feel or to draw pictures of any of the words they understand in the song.

Sample singer biographies

For French beginners:

Jeanne Moreau est née le 23 janvier 1928 à Paris. Son père était un restaurateur français et sa mère était une danseuse anglaise. Jeanne Moreau a étudié à la Conservatoire de Paris. Puis, elle a interprété beaucoup de rôles – elle était actrice dans 50 films! Elle a travaillé avec des réalisateurs de films célèbres, par exemple, Jean-Luc Godard, Orson Welles et Marguerite Duras. Comme chanteuse, elle a fait quelques disques et un concert avec Frank Sinatra à Carnegie Hall.

Jeanne Moreau: « Vous ne devez pas séparer votre vie de votre travail. »

For intermediate French learners:

Jacques Romain Georges Brel est né le 8 avril 1929 à Bruxelles en Belgique. Quand il était jeune, sa famille a parlé français (au lieu de néerlandais). Jacques Brel a commencé à composer et à chanter des chansons accompagné par le piano et la guitare. Brel a déménagé à Paris pour grandir sa carrière comme chanteur et musicien, sans sa femme et leurs enfants qui restaient tous en Belgique. Plus tard, il est devenu acteur et réalisateur de films. Il a fait 16 disques et 12 films, et quelques chansons sont traduites en langues étrangères. Il est mort le 9 octobre 1978 près de Paris, France. En décembre 2005, Jacques Brel est élu au rang de plus grand belge de tous les temps.

Jacques Brel: « Le talent, c'est d'avoir l'envie de faire quelque chose. »

Sample reading or listening comprehension questions

- 1 *Comment s'appelle le chanteur / la chanteuse?* (What is the singer's name?)
- 2 *De quel pays ou de quelle ville vient l'artiste?* (Which country or city is the artist from?)
- 3 *L'artiste a fait combien de disques dans sa carrière?* (The artist made how many recordings in his/her career?)
- 4 *À ton avis, quel est un accomplissement remarquable que l'artiste a fait?* (In your opinion, what is an impressive accomplishment that the artist has done?)

2 Teach vocabulary through a song

Preparation: Identify a song that contains several examples of the vocabulary items you are currently teaching or that you intend to teach soon. Searching online is useful, and there is a list of resources for different languages at the back of this workbook plus a song index (see pages 35 and 38).

1	5 min	After introducing the song (see page 14), which may have been in a previous lesson, distribute a worksheet with the vocabulary to be covered or present the new words on the board. Say each word in the list aloud and ask learners if they know or can guess the meaning of any of the new vocabulary words. It is better not to present more than 10-15 new words at once, so a good strategy is to start with the chorus, and then present vocabulary from the verses one at a time over a period of a few days. (For variety, other activities in this workbook can teach new vocabulary while also providing practice with other language skills.)
2	5 min	Play the song and encourage learners to try to guess, from the context, what the new vocabulary words mean.
	5 min	<i>Variation:</i> Provide a list of vocabulary words the learners can match with meanings. Perhaps use colour photographs or pictures using a SmartBoard, if available and if appropriate for the content.
3	5 min	Ask students to compare their answers with a partner, and then correct the answers together as a class.

Small-group extension activity or homework

Fill-in-the-blank Cloze activities (see page 20) can also provide useful vocabulary and listening practice.

3 Teach grammar through a song

Preparation: Select a song containing several examples of the grammatical items you are currently teaching or grammar that you intend to teach soon. Searching online is useful, and there is a list of resources for different languages at the back of this workbook plus a song index (see pages 35 and 38).

1	1 min	After introducing the song (see page 14), distribute a Cloze exercise of the written lyrics, with the particular grammatical forms, verbs, or word endings that you wish to highlight replaced with blanks (see the examples on page 20).
	5-10 min	<i>Variation:</i> Alternatively, this worksheet can contain a translation of the verb or noun in the learners' native language, in parentheses after the blank, which would incorporate vocabulary practice at the same time as grammar (see page 20 for an example). In this variation, students can be asked to fill in as many of the blanks as possible before they actually hear the song, in the next step.
2	5-10 min	Play the song and ask learners to listen and fill in the missing verb, noun, or adjective endings. Play the song a second time for them to check their answers, especially if the song or the missing words are new and/or challenging.
3	5-10 min	Ask learners to report the correct answers as you fill in the endings on the board for them to note down. Different colours can be used for masculine or feminine endings, for different verb conjugations, singular or plural endings, and so forth, depending on the grammar focus.
4	5 min	Explain the grammar point explicitly, using the examples found in the song lyrics to illustrate how the structure works. Move on to another exercise or textbook activity when appropriate.

Small-group extension activity or homework

As an exercise, the lyrics can be adapted so that students can practise changing all of the verbs from the song into a particular form. Before you set this exercise, explain to students that each phrase will not necessarily be the same as in the original lyrics. For example, the exercise might provide practice of the imperfect form by listing all of the verbs in the original context of the song, but with different subjects (e.g. I, she, they, and so on). Instructions would ask students to fill in the missing verbs (or alternatively, to add the verb endings) by transforming the verbs into the imperfect form. To practice grammar and vocabulary at the same time, put the word in English (or learners' native language) in parentheses and ask students to fill in the entire word in the imperfect form (see pages 20-21 for examples of these exercises).

Mad Libs® is a game created by Roger Price and Leonard Stern in 1958 and is another fun activity that can be adapted to provide grammar practice. The game can be used either for an entire song or for only part of it, such as the chorus. In Mad Libs®, occasional lyrics are removed from the original text and each one must be replaced by a word that serves the same grammatical function (e.g., 'jumping' could be replaced by 'sleeping'). Students can volunteer words to fill in the blanks by providing the correct forms. Once the list of new words to replace the blanks is complete, the resulting version of the song can be read through in its entirety. The new words often result in hilarious changes in meaning. This activity can be completed with the entire class or with smaller groups, in which case volunteers can present the new chorus or verse of the song they created for the rest of the class (either by singing or speaking the lyrics).

Sample Cloze exercise using the first verse of 'Le Tourbillon' as performed by Jeanne Moreau to practise de, du, de la, de l', des

Elle avait ⁽¹⁾ _____ bagues à chaque doigt,
⁽²⁾ _____ tas ⁽³⁾ _____ bracelets autour ⁽⁴⁾ _____ poignets,
Et puis elle chantait avec une voix
Qui, sitôt, m'enjôla.

Answer key:

- 1 des (some)
- 2 Des (some)
- 3 de (of)
- 4 des (the)

Sample Cloze exercise using the first verse of 'Le Tourbillon' as performed by Jeanne Moreau to practise l'imparfait

Elle ⁽¹⁾ _____ des bagues à chaque doigt,
Des tas de bracelets autour des poignets,
Et puis elle ⁽²⁾ _____ avec une voix
Qui, sitôt, m'enjôla.

Answer key:

- 1 avait
- 2 chantait

Sample homework exercise to practice verb endings for l'imparfait using the first verse of 'Le Tourbillon' as performed by Jeanne Moreau

- 1 Elle av _____ des bagues à chaque doigt.
- 2 Et puis nous chant _____
- 3 Vous m'enjôl _____.

Answer key:

- 1 *-ait*
- 2 *-ions*
- 3 *-iez*

Sample homework exercise to practise vocabulary and verb endings for l'imparfait using the first verse of 'Le Tourbillon' as performed by Jeanne Moreau

Elle ⁽¹⁾ _____ (would have) *des bagues à chaque doigt,*
Des tas de bracelets autour des poignets,
Et puis elle ⁽²⁾ _____ (would sing) *avec une voix*
Qui, sitôt, ⁽³⁾ _____ (would entrance me).

Answer key:

- 1 *avait*
- 2 *chantait*
- 3 *m'enjôlait*

Sample Mad Libs® exercise using the first verse of 'Le Tourbillon' as performed by Jeanne Moreau

Elle ⁽¹⁾ _____ (verb: 3rd person singular, imperfect) *des bagues à*
chaque ⁽²⁾ _____ (noun: masculine singular),
Des tas de bracelets autour des ⁽³⁾ _____ (noun: masculine plural),
Et puis elle ⁽⁴⁾ _____ (verb: 3rd person singular, imperfect) *avec une voix*
Qui, ⁽⁵⁾ _____ (adverb), *m'enjôla.*

4 Teach listening comprehension through a song

Preparation: Choose a song recording with good, clear pronunciation of the lyrics and not too many new vocabulary items or grammatical structures.

1	5 min	If the song was introduced on a previous day, play the song once at the start of the lesson, for familiarity and fun.
2	5 min	Distribute a Cloze exercise of the written lyrics to learners, with a blank replacing every 5 th , 7 th , or 9 th word. The more blanks there are, the more challenging this listening exercise will be. Removing every 7 th or 8 th word is appropriate for intermediate learners, if the song itself is not too advanced. Ask students to listen and fill in as many blanks as possible while the song is played again.
	5 min	<i>Variation:</i> To practise specific grammar or vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs, grammar forms or word endings can be removed rather than counting to remove the words (see Activity 3).
	10-15 min	<i>Variation:</i> A dictation exercise in which students write out the lyrics of the entire song is a good way to practise listening skills, especially for advanced learners. For dictation using an entire song, play it at least 3 times. These exercises can also be combined together (e.g., fill in the blanks for the verses and then write out the full chorus).
3	5 min	Ask 5 listening comprehension questions orally (and in writing on the board, if possible) based on the song lyrics. Ask volunteers to respond to the questions using the target language.

5 Teach speaking skills through a song

People of all ages enjoy talking about music. A good way to start a conversation in the target language is to provide some structure, for example by writing a few questions in advance about the song. While learners listen to the song, they can think about their responses to the questions.

Preparation: Choose a song that has a number of commonly used phrases or structures – these will be useful to students in other contexts. Many popular music songs have lyrics that are appropriate for this pedagogical goal.

1	5-10 min	On the board, write a number of questions for the students to discuss in the target language. Questions can include what they understood about the song's message, how the song made them feel, what emotions are expressed by the song, comparisons to other songs they have heard in class or other styles of music, whether they enjoy listening to that singer or musical genre (and why), etc. Also, provide a revision of any vocabulary or grammatical structures that might be useful for formulating a response to the questions. Then play the song once for familiarity and fun.
2	5 min	Using the target language, ask learners to answer and discuss some of the questions on the board.
	10-15 min	<i>Variation:</i> Individually, learners can write 3-5 questions of their own about the song and then interview a partner. (If you want to incorporate writing practice into the activity, they can also take notes, although this takes more time.) After the interviewee has responded to the questions, the partners can exchange roles, so that the interviewer becomes the interviewee.
3	5-10 min	Share responses to the questions as a group and talk about the song or the genre of music in general using the target language.

6 Teach pronunciation through song lyrics

Songs provide an excellent opportunity to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluent, connected speech. Song lyrics generally present words at half the pace of spoken material (*Murphey, 1990*). Combining this slower pace with the fact that many song melodies follow the natural intonation pattern of the language, songs can be particularly effective for teaching pronunciation.

For the purposes of pronunciation practice, it is important to choose songs which are not too fast and which do not have a very difficult melody or rhythm. While it can be a nice challenge to sing a more complex or advanced song with some groups of students, it is important not to choose songs that are so difficult they cause frustration. Start with easy songs and build up to more challenging materials if the group is enthusiastic.

Preparation: Practice the song using a few listening, grammar, or vocabulary activities before starting to practice pronunciation, so that the song's lyrics are familiar to learners.

1

5 min

Explain that different languages have different stress patterns and that this is perceived as rhythm in the spoken language. Explain that some languages are perceived as more 'stress-timed' (such as English) and some are 'syllable-timed' (such as Spanish and French). Using the first verse, show learners how to categorise each syllable as 'long' or 'short' by writing a mark above each syllable they hear in the song (the ones used in English poetry can work, ~ = weak and / = strong). For example:

/ ~ / ~ / ~ /
Mary had a little lamb,

~ / ~ / ~ /
Its fleece was white as snow.

2	5 min	Distribute the Cloze exercise or lyrics sheets to students. Ask students to listen to the song's chorus and to assign each syllable a 'long' (or 'strong') beat or a 'short' (or 'weak') beat above each one. (Make sure that the lyrics sheet has enough blank space between the lines for them to write/read these marks.)
3	5 min	Show learners how to tap or clap along as they say each syllable of the chorus. Then gradually build up, one verse at a time, to reciting the entire song. This is helpful for both stress-timed and syllable-timed languages because it externalises and emphasises the rhythm of the phrases.
		<i>Variation:</i> Clapping/tapping and speaking at the same time is quite challenging at first, so you can ask learners on one side of the class to clap while the other half of the class says the words aloud, and then switch for the next chorus or verse. You can also experiment with splitting the class in other ways.
4	5 min	Without tapping or clapping, ask learners to repeat the words of the song aloud as a group, paying attention to the rhythm of their speech.

Small-group extension activity or homework

Some students (especially younger learners) may enjoy dancing to the song. If they are particularly keen, small groups of children can be asked to create a simple song-and-dance routine for homework, which they can then present or even teach to the class.

Some teachers have found it even more helpful to coordinate movements and gestures with the words of the song (*Wendy Maxwell: www.aimlanguagelearning.com*). For example, learners can hold their hands up next to their ears for vocabulary words such as 'listen' or 'hear'. Coordinating gestures with the song seems to dramatically increase memory for the words, while also providing an outlet for extra energy when working with younger children!

7 Teach reading skills through a song

Preparation: Create a brief written version of the song lyrics and 5-10 reading comprehension questions. Some items can be general (e.g., how many people are mentioned in the song) while others should require understanding of specific passages of the text.

A song can provide a good opportunity for learners to approach reading strategies for authentic foreign language material. Lyrics from songs in a foreign language (not songs which were translated from another language) often contain challenging vocabulary and grammatical structures that have not been simplified for pedagogical uses, unlike the songs often found in textbooks.

1	5 min	If you introduced the song on a previous day, play the song once at the start of class for familiarity and fun.
2	2-5 min	Present learners with the lyrics as a written text, along with the specific reading comprehension questions. This is a good opportunity to ask questions and require responses in the target language, particularly for intermediate and advanced learners.
	5 min	<i>Variation:</i> Ask learners to create 5 reading comprehension questions and to exchange their questions with a partner.
3	5 min	Discuss the correct answers as a class. Highlight the passages in which the correct answer can be found.

Small-group extension activity

When learners have become very familiar with the song, they can play the Scramble Game. Give pairs or small groups of students the song lyrics, which have been cut up into one or two lines and then scrambled up so they are out of order. Ask students to put the lines into the correct order as quickly as they can. Then play the song so that everyone can check their answers. You can then increase the level of difficulty by dividing the lyrics into shorter phrases, but to keep the game fun and manageable, it is a good idea to decrease the number of lines at the same time (e.g., use only the chorus or give each group a different verse of the song). With this version, the groups can work out aspects of vocabulary and grammar, for instance whether the preceding article should be *le/du, la/de la, de l'/ l'* or *des/les homme* ('man' in French) in the context of a particular verse of the song.

8 Teach writing skills through a song

Preparation: Choose a song that is at an appropriate level of difficulty, without too many new words or grammatical structures.

1	2-5 min	If you introduced the song on a previous day, allow learners to listen to the song once first for enjoyment. Explain to the students that you are going to write a story related to the song.
2	5 min	As a pre-writing activity, revise some grammar and vocabulary items that might be of use for the writing activity (e.g., past or future tense, transition words such as 'Then' or 'Suddenly,' other phrases relevant to the song). Brainstorm a few ideas as a class.
3	10-15 min	Ask learners to write a short story in the target language (for beginners, this can be as simple as one or two sentences using the present tense) describing what happened to the singer or characters in the song, or what might happen next. Then have learners exchange stories with a partner and make corrections or suggestions. Volunteers can share their stories with the class.
	10 min	<i>Variation:</i> If the song contains slang, unusual word order, or if it is missing function words such as personal pronouns, ask learners to rewrite (some of) the song lyrics using the 'correct' forms and structures (e.g., 'I ain't got no money' could be rewritten as 'I haven't got any money' or 'I have no money.')

Small-group extension activity or homework

After learners have heard the tune and words for a particular song several times and memorised them through speaking and singing practice, ask learners to write new lyrics using their own words, using vocabulary and grammatical structures currently being covered in class (*Anton, 1990*).

When marking a writing assignment, one tip (from Johanna van Gendt) to keep learners engaged in the learning process is not to correct the errors. Instead, put the total number of errors found for each line in the left-hand margin of the page. The number for misspelled words or missing accent marks can be put in a different column or a different colour from grammar mistakes. Learners then have the opportunity to find the errors themselves and learn from their mistakes, rather than simply copying the improved version that the teacher has corrected for them.

9 Teach the target culture through a song

Preparation: Choose a song or a style of music which was created in, or which is popular in the target culture. Alternatively, find a song with lyrics that discuss or explore an important theme or cultural differences in a location where that language is spoken.

1	5 min	Introduce information about the history of the style of music, the singer and/or the composer of the song, using the target language.
2	5 min	Present a brief description of the role/function of the musical style in the target culture (e.g., for festivals, for dancing, for children). Provide context by drawing comparisons with the learners' own culture or another culture familiar to the students.
		<i>Variation:</i> In pairs, ask learners to brainstorm a list of 5-10 nouns and adjectives that the musical style brings to mind. Write some of the responses on the board and discuss them as a group.
3	2-3 min	Explain any important idioms, vocabulary, or grammar that will help learners understand the song's message.
4	2-3 min	Play the song along with the music video, if available, to provide more context. (www.YouTube.com has different songs daily, with and without subtitles.)

Small-group extension activity or homework

Ask learners to choose a singer or a style of music that is famous or popular in the target culture and to write a short written or oral report about it.

10 Teach learners to sing a song in the target language

Preparation: Select a song that has recently been used with the class for other pedagogical reasons (perhaps for new vocabulary items or grammatical structures). The best choices for singing are songs with simple, catchy melodies, without too many difficult rhythms or wide leaps in pitch. A good rule of thumb is to teach a song that you feel comfortable (and enjoy) singing yourself!

The transfer of memorised song lyrics to speech is simple if the song's melody matches or follows the intonation pattern of the language (*Fomina, 2000*). It can also be more enjoyable to sing a song several times as a group activity than to repeat a dialogue aloud many times. Learning to sing a song in a new language can be an effective way of increasing beginners' confidence to speak (*Ludke, in preparation*).

Some students (and some groups) are less willing to sing than others. Explaining to students that singing in the target language is beneficial for their L2 speaking and pronunciation abilities will encourage them to participate. It is important to be encouraging and enthusiastic, but it is not reasonable to force someone to sing. Make it clear that you are not judging learners' voice quality – this will reduce any pressure on individuals. Start with one section at a time, such as the chorus.

1	1 min	When the students are familiar with the lyrics of a song, having heard it and practiced saying it together, explain that today you are going to sing it.
2	2 min	To warm up, ask everyone to stand up and move their body around for 30 seconds to loosen up – wiggle arms, legs, and head (and demonstrate this). Then ask learners to say a word or phrase in the new language, expressing it in multiple ways. Say the word in a happy voice, then a sad voice, a quiet voice, and finally a loud voice. 'Hello' is a good word to use, but you can try other phrases, lyrics from the song, or even tongue twisters if you don't mind a lot of laughter during the warm-up! Another possibility is to choose a comfortable starting pitch and sing up and down the scale on 'la' together as a group or to sing Do-Re-Mi ('Do - a deer, a female deer...'), especially with younger students. Short singing warm-up videos are also available on www.YouTube.com . The warm-up will prepare the students to sing out with their voices.

3

5 min

While reading the lyrics on a sheet of paper or on the board, everyone can sing along with the recording together, as it plays in the background (at a loud enough volume so that everyone can hear, but not so loud that it hurts students' ears if they are sitting near the speakers). This works well if everyone stands together in a group, although standing is not necessary.

5 min

Variation: Divide learners into groups (e.g., the left and right side of the classroom) and ask them to sing alternating verses, with everyone singing the chorus together. If they are keen, you can also ask a few students to act out the song lyrics at the front of the class while the rest of the class sings, or you can even try singing without the recording!

Small-group extension activity or homework

At the end of the year, conduct a playful target-language game based on the yearly EuroVision competition. First, divide students into groups of 3-5 based on their favourite song that was learned in class (for karaoke-style performances in which the students will sing and act out their song). For more ambitious groups who want to create a new song or rap, it is a good idea to first decide on a target number of beats or syllables for each line of the song and for the chorus. I recommend 6-10 syllables per line for the verses and 4-8 for the chorus; two or three verses are plenty.

Next, ask students to brainstorm 5-10 pairs of rhyming words in the new language related to a particular topic, perhaps based around recent vocabulary and grammar presented in the textbook. If students prefer to write their own song, allow them to create the new melody as homework. Provide at least two weeks for students to refine the new song lyrics and to prepare and practice their performances, and then devote one class period for the competition. This game will help students revise the material they have learned during the year using a process of creative synthesis, while having a lot of fun!

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Musical experience and preferences questionnaire

1 Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument or taken singing lessons?

Yes No

Which instrument(s) did you play? _____

For how long? _____

Do you still play/practice? Yes No Sometimes

2 Do you participate in a choir, band, or musical ensemble?

Yes No Sometimes

3 About how many hours do you listen to music each week? _____

4 About how many concerts or live music events do you attend each month? _____

5 What are some of your favourite band(s) or singer(s)? _____

6 Do you like or dislike listening to these styles of music? Please circle the ones that you do enjoy and put an X through any of the genres that you do not like at all.

Country/Folk

Pop/Top 40

Electronic/Dance

R&B

Jazz/Blues

Rap

Oldies

Rock/Alternative

Additional resources

Books with practical tips for teaching with songs

Jensen, E.P. (2005). *Top tunes for teaching: 977 song titles & practical tools for choosing the right music every time*. San Diego, California: Corwin Press.

This is a good resource for finding English songs.

Murphey, T. (1992). *Music and Song*. (A. Maley, Ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lots of excellent ideas and lessons, including a wide variety of activities.

Teach Me (Chinese, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish): Learning Language Through Songs and Stories

Mainly created for younger children. I have not used these personally, but both teacher and student versions are available and reviews are excellent.

Official website is: www.teachmetapes.com

Books, software and educational CDs to support L2 learning

www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_ss_w_h?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=learn+music+%22foreign+language%22&x=0&y=0

www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_ss_w_h?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=teach+music+%22foreign+language%22&x=0&y=0

Websites and resources with more song suggestions and teaching tips

Multiple languages

www.songsforteaching.com

Song lyrics and resources are currently available for English, French, German, Spanish, Latin, and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese).

www.putumayo.com

Mainly created for children but performed by popular singers and groups from different countries, these are great materials for teaching culture.

www.vistawide.com

www.caslt.org/resources/modern-lang/index_en.php

Search for 'music' to find lessons for teaching songs in languages including English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Ukrainian, and more.

English

www.eslcafe.com/search/Music/index.html

www.englishclub.com/teaching-tips/music-classroom.htm

www.eslpartyland.com/teachers/nov/music.htm

www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?sectionType=listsummary&catid=59396

Ideas for using jazz chants to support English skills (and sample MP3s).

www.theteacherscorner.net

Search for 'music' to find lessons with English songs for different topics.

www.beatlestube.net/index.php#movies

Links to Beatles songs and music videos (available through YouTube).

French

<http://people.southwestern.edu/~prevots/songs/>

<http://platea.pntic.mec.es/cvera/hotpot/chanson>

www.aimlanguagelearning.com

www.momes.net/comptines/comptines-chansons.html

Songs that are most appropriate for beginners or young children.

Génération Française (CD et livrets pédagogiques)

Contemporary songs and suggested activities for teaching French.

Spanish

www.musicalspanish.com

This website provides Spanish music lessons for \$9.99, but free lessons and song ideas are found at: www.musicalspanish.com/Canciones.htm

www.musicapaedia.com

www.spainrocks.com/cantante.php

German

www.learn-german-online.net/learning-german-resouces/music_en.htm

Italian

www.viperella.it/musica.htm#

Portuguese

www.learn-portuguese-now.com/brazilian-singers.html

This website contains Brazilian Portuguese songs.

<http://cotonete.clix.pt/>

European Portuguese radio and music website.

Chinese

www.chinese-tools.com/songs

www.chineselearner.com/songlyrics/

Index of song suggestions

This song grid can be filled in over time to provide a great resource for use with future classes. Students can also contribute suggestions to these grids for the language(s) they are learning.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	Hello, Goodbye	The Beatles	Opposites	Present tense
	ABC	Jackson 5	Education-related words	Present tense
Intermediate	I Love You	Stevie Wonder	Months of the year, holidays	Present tense
	Dancing in the Street	Martha Reeves & The Vandellas		Present tense
Advanced	6th Avenue Heartache	The Wallflowers		Present, past tense

French (with thanks to Florence Bonacina)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	Les Bonbons	Jacques Brel		Present tense
	Les Champs-Élysées	Joe Dassin		Imperfect
Intermediate	Je ne regrette rien	Edith Piaf / Cheb Mami		
	La Memoire qui flanche	Jeanne Moreau		Imperfect
Advanced	Le Parapluie	Georges Brassens		Imperfect
	Caroline	MC Solaar (rap)		

Spanish (top line European Spanish, bottom line Latin American Spanish)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	Una palabra	Carlos Varela		
	Como la flor	Selena		
Intermediate	Corazón partío	Alejandro Sanz		
	Moscas en la casa	Shakira		
Advanced	Que te quería	La Quinta Estación		
	Sueño de una noche de verano	Silvio Rodríguez		

German (with thanks to Dorothea Gschwandtner)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	Grün ja grün sind alle meine Kleider	Traditional	Colours	Present
	Der Kuckuck und der Esel	Traditional (words by Hoffmann von Fallersleben)		
Intermediate	Bist du das	Juli		
	Laut gedacht	Silbermond		
Advanced	Die perfekte Welle	Juli		
	Alles wird besser	Rosenstolz		

Portuguese (with thanks to Ana Oliveira)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	Cinderela	Carlos Paião		
	Um Dia Frio	Djavan		
Intermediate	O Problema De Expressão	Clã		
	Garota de Ipanema	João Gilberto		
Advanced	Traz outro amigo também	José Afonso		
	Eu Te Amo Tanto	Roberto Carlos		

Italian (with thanks to Mara Mari Kirkwood)

Level	Song title	Singer/group	Vocabulary	Grammar
Beginner	E penso a te	Lucio Battisti		
	La gatta	Gino Paoli		
	I bambini fanno oh	Giuseppe Povia		
Intermediate	Buonanotte fiorellino	Francesco de Gregori		
	Qualcosa di grande, 50 special	Luna pop		
Advanced	Che coss'è l'amor	Vinicio Capossela		
	La donna d'inverno	Paolo Conte		

About the Author

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