

研究ノート | Research Note

童謡など既存の曲を用いた児童英語のための替え歌の作成と活用

Song Creation with Familiar Tunes for Young Japanese EFL Students

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[要旨]

本研究は、公立小学校の英語教育に向けた英語の歌の活用についての考察である。授業で英語の歌を学習すると、子どもたちはそれを喜んで親の前で披露する。Paul (2003) は、歌は子どもの集中力と記憶力に効果的に作用すると述べている。Slattery and Willis (2003) は、歌は子どもたちに「英語学習は簡単」と感じさせる効果があると主張する。更に、根岸 (2010) は、歌は英語学習を楽しくする「魔法のツール」であると言及する。筆者は以前複数の語学学校に所属し、その間子どもの英語学習に効果がある様々な英語の歌に触れた。その後、英語や日本語で歌われている童謡の音楽をベースにした英語学習のための替え歌を作成した。本稿ではこれらの歌と先行研究で発表された歌を紹介すると共に、数年前に行った英語の歌に関する教員アンケートの結果と、学生たちが好んで使用する音楽のリストも披露する。その他、物語を歌に乗せて読むことができる絵本を紹介する。最後に、児童英語教育における英語の歌の更なる可能性について追究する。

[Abstract]

This study discusses song use in young learners' English education specifically in Japanese public elementary school settings. Children find pleasure in learning songs which they can take home with them and sing to their parents. According to Paul (2003), songs enable children to focus better and remember things with less difficulty. In addition, Slattery and Willis (2003) suggest songs are greatly helpful for children to feel 'English is easy'. Moreover, Negishi (2010) defines English songs as a 'magic' tool to create fun English lessons. While belonging to various language schools in the past, the author learned many songs to inspire children's interests into English words and phrases, and later created some songs based on the familiar music of English and Japanese traditional songs. Those songs and other interesting songs the author discovered from some EFL professionals are introduced in this paper. The paper also shares the data of song use with English teachers of children who participated in the survey some years ago as well as the recent students' feedback on songs. Additionally, the songs based on the storybooks are also displayed. The paper explores further potential of song use in children's English classes.

キーワード

児童英語、教員養成、英語教育

Keywords:

English for young learners, teacher education, English education

1. Introduction

This paper introduces some simple and easy songs for children's EFL classrooms based on the familiar music of English and Japanese traditional songs. While belonging to some language schools, the author encountered many songs to inspire children's interests into English words and phrases. Some of these songs had original music; However, many used the melodies of the traditional children's songs. The author, therefore, tried to create some English songs based on the familiar tunes and shared them with a group of Japanese and Filipino English teachers for Japanese children. Their feedback on song creation is presented in this article. The study also introduces some simple songs using the texts of the picture books that can be sung along with the students instead of doing ordinary storytelling.

2. Literature review

2.1. MEXT foreign language education

In 2020 MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) launched their new English education curriculum for public elementary schools. Based on their new guidelines, English has become a compulsory subject for fifth- and sixth- grades, and English activities have been regularly incorporated into "The Period for Integrated Study" class for third- and fourth- grades. Additionally, reading and writing have officially been introduced to the upper elementary grades.

Although the Japanese government aims to increase the number of "specialist teachers" of English, its number is still low. Moreover, the budget to hire such English professionals has been insufficient in most public elementary schools. As a result, it is anticipated that English classes will be conducted mainly by homeroom teachers who have less experience in teaching a foreign language.

2.2. Applications of songs in English education

Children enjoy singing and find pleasure in learning new songs. They are delighted to show what they learned in class in front of their parents later in the day. According to Shin and Crandall (2014), one Uzbekistan teacher explains, "Teachers can contextualize instruction by taking the content and turning it into songs that relate to young learners' lives" (p. 101). Curtain and Dahlberg (2016) also insist, "Songs learned in the target language have the double benefit of giving students experience with an important dimension of the target culture and helping them to internalize the sounds, vocabulary, rhythms, and structures of the new languages" (p. 370). Other advantages and benefits of song use for language classrooms are: enjoy lessons (Slattery & Willis, 2003; Millington, 2011), add variety to class (Slattery & Willis, 2003), add flexibility (Millington, 2011), vocabulary and grammar (Kanel, 1997; Slattery & Willis, 2003; Millington, 2011), pronunciation and speaking (Millington, 2011),

cultural input (Millington, 2011; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2016), and automaticity and memorization (Paul, 2003; York, 2011).

3. Song suggestions

3.1. Adaptation of songs

Paul (2003) agrees that there are many great children's songs teachers want to use for their classes. Thus, he encourages language teachers to modify original verses to make their learners acquire more words, phrases and expressions through songs. Abe-Ford (2001) also believes that English songs are effective for acquiring 'natural' English. According to her, teachers should modify verses relevant to the students' levels, interests and environment. On the other hand, some scholars such as Kanel (1997) are against these ideas. He points out that there are some mistakes, non-standard structures and vocabulary, and irregular stress and intonational patterns in authentic songs (p. 219); therefore, teachers should develop new 'language learning' songs by themselves. Takahashi, Kawai, Sawada and Yanagi (2021) admit that it is important to choose some familiar music or simple melodies for the adaptation of songs for elementary school English. Yet, teachers should also remember that these songs are not always easy to sing for the learners. Takahashi et al. (2021) also warn that strong attention should be paid to the selection of songs when teaching pronunciation or rhythm of the English language. In terms of modification of songs, teachers should carefully consider the places of stress in order not to hinder students' learning attitudes.

3.2. Steps for song-creation

Songs are introduced to English classes with different purposes. For example, as a background music, chanting for vocabulary exercise, using actions/gestures for review, or for code-switching. Following are the steps for song-creation based on the ideas from Kanel (1997) and Paul (2003):

1. Consider your students levels and interests, the environment, and the lesson schedule
2. Decide your target words, phrases and grammar points
3. Brainstorm a list of simple, popular melodies
4. Create verses (with your target words or phrases) and sing along with a familiar melody
5. Revise those verses if they do not match the melody (rewording, rephrasing or using contractions effectively)

4. Types of songs to introduce in English classrooms (Some songs are modified version of the songs presented in Shimada, 2014)

4.1. Total Physical Response (TPR)

Asher's TPR is a popular method for young language learners. TPR works effectively in beginners' classrooms when checking students' comprehension. In this theory, teachers give instructions to students, and they show their understanding with actions without saying a word (Asher, 1969). It is also possible to make the following TPR song more student-centered if the students sing in turn (instead of a teacher), swapping 'color' words.

'Color' song

Tune: *London Bridge* (*ENG)

Who is wearing something **blue? Something blue? Something blue?

Who is wearing something blue? Please stand up!/Please sit down!

(*ENG means English traditional songs, and JPN means Japanese traditional songs for children.)

(**The words can be replaced with other words in the same vocabulary group.)

4.2. Simple questions and answers

Simple Q & A songs can be created based on the tunes of popular children's songs in both Japanese and English. Below are the songs that can be sung along with the picture books as the song verses are the story texts in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* and *Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?* Two popular melodies would fit: One is *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, and the other is *Teddy Bear* song. Learning songs in the target language through picture books will give students triple benefits---song, language and the story.

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (by Eric Carle)

Tune: *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star / Teddy Bear* song (*ENG)

**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Red Bird, Red Bird, What Do You See?

I see **a red bird looking at me.

I see a yellow duck looking at me.

(The story continues)

Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See? (by Eric Carle)

Tune: *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star / Teddy Bear* song (*ENG)

**Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See? Bald Eagle, Bald Eagle, What Do You See?

I see **a bald eagle soaring by me.

I see a water buffalo charging by me.

(The story continues)

4.3. Topic-based songs

When creating songs, it is important to think how to relate songs to students' everyday lives (Shin and Crandall, 2014) as well as to find connections with new or familiar topics (Slattery & Willis, 2003). Here is the song the author created when influenza was spreading and more people got infected.

'Influenza' song (in Japan around 2009)

Tune: *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* (ENG)

1. Gargle, gargle, gargle When you have sore throat (Repeat two lines)
2. Blow, blow, blow your nose Gently blow your nose #(Repeat two lines)
 #(Optional) Gently, gently, gently, gently Gently blow your nose
3. Wear, wear, wear your mask When you cough so hard (Repeat two lines)
4. Stay, stay, stay in bed Quietly stay in bed/When your fever's high #(Repeat two lines)
 #(Optional line) Quietly, quietly, quietly, quietly Quietly stay in bed

4.4. Grammar rules

Kanel's study with his university students revealed positive results when conducting song-based activities. The study concluded that songs would work effectively in language education the same as other conventional activities (Kanel, 1997). Many students the author taught had difficulties in acquiring grammar rules; young students were often confused with the usage of verbs for sports. The song verses, therefore, were arranged in accordance with the words such as 'play', 'do', and 'skate, ski, surf', etc. As Millington (2011) states, "By adapting the song in this way, the teacher has the advantage of being able to select a particular language feature and incorporate it into the song. This feature could be an item of vocabulary, syntax, phonology, or a simple conversational expression. This allows the teacher to incorporate more songs into a curriculum and save time searching for and learning new songs" (p. 140).

'Sports' song

Tune: *Are you sleeping?* (*ENG)

<Verse 1>

Let's play together
 Let's play **baseball
 Let's play basketball
 Let's play soccer

<Verse 3>

Let's do together
 Let's do yoga
 Let's do Kendo
 Let's do Karate

<Verse 2>

Let's play together
 Let's play tennis
 Let's play ping-pong
 Let's play golf

<Verse 4>

Let's ski and skate
 Let's snowboard
 Let's surf and swim
 Let's roller skate

4.5. Seasonal events/Cultural input

One advantage of learning a foreign language is to be exposed to different cultures and views. In that respect, it is estimated that combining language and culture into a song can nurture more cultural awareness and interests of children. Chen (2009) defines one of the merits of song use as "A kaleidoscope of culture" and states, "Language and music are interwoven in songs to communicate cultural reality in a very unique way" (p. 88). While singing the first 'food' song around the world, the students naturally encounter different world food that they never knew before. The song might raise their curiosity about the food and its country and the people. While singing the second song, children can experience and enjoy traditional games, and master seasonal greetings and vocabulary.

'World food' song

Tune: *London bridge* (*ENG)

- | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Have you ever eaten <u>**Sinigang</u> (Filipino food)? | | <u>Sinigang?</u> | <u>Sinigang?</u> |
| Have you ever eaten <u>Sinigang</u> ? | | | Yes, I have./No, I haven't. |
| 2. Have you ever eaten <u>Zoni</u> (Japanese food)? | | <u>Zoni?</u> | <u>Zoni?</u> |
| Have you ever eaten <u>Zoni</u> ? | | | Yes, I have./No, I haven't. |
| 3. Have you ever eaten <u>Black pudding</u> (British food)? | | <u>Black pudding?</u> | <u>Black pudding?</u> |
| Have you ever eaten <u>Black pudding</u> ? | | | Yes, I have./No, I haven't. |

4. Have you ever eaten Vegemite (Australian food)? Vegemite? Vegemite?
 Have you ever eaten Vegemite? Yes, I have./No, I haven't.

Halloween & Christmas

Tune: *Ring-a-Ring-o' Roses* (*ENG)

[Version I]

Ring-a-Ring-a Lantern
 A pocket full of candy corn
 Trick or treat! Trick or treat!
 We all get the treats

[Version II]

Black cats on the roof
 Vampires in the coffins
 We all scream! We all scream!
 With a loud, loud voice

[Version I]

Ring-a-Ring-a Christmas tree
 A pocket full of candy cane
 Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!
 We all decorate the tree

[Version II]

Santa with many presents (Christmas gifts)
 Reindeers pull the sleigh
 We're all in bed. We're all in bed.
 With sweet, sweet dreams

5. Language teachers' preference of music based on the mini-survey and feedback

5.1. Teachers' preference

The results of the mini-survey in Appendix conducted by Shimada (2014) with twenty-eight English teachers (6 native-speaker teachers, 10 teachers from Japan, and 12 teachers from the Philippines and other countries) show that many teachers prefer to use familiar tunes of English songs in their English classes such as: *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, *London Bridge*, and *Bingo*. According to the respondents, tunes of English songs are already familiar to Japanese children and easier for them to learn; therefore, it does not matter whether tunes come from Japanese songs or not. Their comments also reveal that the students are able to relax and enjoy songs more with English melodies perhaps with faster tempo compared to Japanese songs, according to a few teachers. Another reason is that the Japanese songs are unfamiliar to some non-Japanese teachers. Thus, they feel comfortable using English songs instead. There are few teachers who do not care about the types of melody as long as the tunes fit their students' levels and include appropriate tempo and rhythm.

5.2. Japanese students' preference

In the 90 minute-class of Nov. 5th in 2021, the author assigned her university students to form pairs and create songs using any familiar melodies of traditional songs. The tunes they (10 pairs) used for their song creation in the author's recent teacher education class include: *It's a Small World*, *Happy Birthday*, *London Bridge*, *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*, *Mickey Mouse Club March*, *Jingle Bells*, *Edelweiss*, *The Other Day*, *I Met a Bear*, *Tulip*, and *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. Although there were more varieties in their music selection compared to the list of veteran teachers, some students were struggling to fit their original lyrics with the melodies they chose. As a result, some of their English songs sounded like "Japanese-English" songs.

6. Discussion

The results of the survey reveal that the majority of teachers of English for Japanese young EFL learners prefer to use the tunes of English songs. Compared to the song selection of the veteran English teachers, Japanese university students (who wish to become English teachers for young children) tend to choose more variety. Although only 9 teachers answered they want to use songs as background music in this survey, there are still some educators who use songs only for warm-up/ wrap-up activities, or minor activities to change the atmosphere in class. As Millington (2014) points out, many teachers do not realize the effectiveness or potential of song use. Therefore, more teachers should use “songs as pedagogical tools” (p. 134) as he defines.

Children are fond of songs and it is easier for homeroom teachers to teach English using CDs and other audio materials. Songs make the classroom fun and relaxing. They also bring variety to the everyday routine; therefore, both teachers and students should be able to enjoy it. However, there are some issues and limitations when adapting songs to class. For example, the suitable music selection by the teacher and appropriate lyrics to the melodies. Therefore, more teachers are encouraged to study English songs and attend workshops to acquire skills for the adaptation of songs.

7. Conclusion

The research on activities using songs has not been examined sufficiently. More research and detailed surveys about song creation for young learners' English classrooms should be conducted. There is a desperate need for lectures and workshops on an adaptation of songs specifically for public elementary school teachers. Adaptation of songs as well as song creation should also be incorporated into the curriculum for university teacher candidates. Finally, teachers for young learners of English should make more efforts to incorporate songs into their English lessons.

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Appendix (Presented in Shimada, 2014)

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Which tunes do you think would be most appropriate for song creation for Japanese young learners of English? Please circle one and give some reasons.

English songs	Japanese songs	Original melodies
Reasons: _____		

2. Please choose five song titles you would like to use for song creation for Japanese young learners of English.

[English songs]	[Japanese songs]
10 little Indians/monkeys ()	‘Tulip’ song ()
London bridge ()	‘Butterfly’ song [Lightly Row] ()
Are you sleeping? ()	‘Elephant’ song ()
Twinkle, twinkle, little star ()	‘Moon’ song ()
If you’re happy ()	‘Lunch box’ song ()
Old McDonald had a farm ()	Morino kuma-san [The other day I met a bear] ()
‘ABC’ song ()	Ai, Ai/ ‘Monkey’ song ()
Row, row, row your boat ()	Medaka no gakko [A tiddlers school] ()

Bingo ()

Omoide no arubamu/Remember the days ()

Seven steps ()

Chatsumi/Tea harvesting ()

Skip to my Lou ()

Akatombo/Dragonflies ()

***Please add any other titles you think would be suitable for English-song creation

3. What is your focus when introducing songs to young learners of English? Please choose three.

() words

() phrases

() grammar

() pronunciation

() memorization

() relaxation---as background music