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Student Motivation to Learn Foreign Languages Through Song in Malaysia

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Abstract

The study was conducted to identify the effects of using song as a teaching aid for students studying foreign language at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Global language or foreign language is a compulsory course for students in Universiti Putra Malaysia. Students are required to learn this foreign language for two semesters, which is up to level two. Should they progress to level three, they will be awarded a certificate. As such, students will definitely need to have high motivation for learning the foreign language. Hence this study is undertaken to learn whether the approach is suitable to guide and enhance student's learning capabilities. This research was conducted on 105 students who were selected at random as respondents and were given online questionnaires to complete. The questionnaire was developed based on Dörnyei's (1994) theory, which is course specific motivational components involving four constructs (interest; relevance; expectancy; satisfaction). The findings showed that students strongly agree that learning foreign language using song has the following effect: (i) it does not make them bored, (ii) the lyrics trigger their interest to learn the foreign language, (iii) the use of songs in learning helps to reinforce vocabulary, and (iv) the students feel proud when they pronounce the words correctly.

Keyword: Motivation, Learning Foreign Languages, Song, Teaching Aid, Vocabulary

Introduction

The use of interesting teaching aids enables the creation of an enjoyable learning environment among students. One such teaching aid is the use of song in learning a foreign language which is aimed at creating fun learning in a relaxed manner and subsequently to improve the motivation for learning among students. The use of song is a teaching method that can simplify the learning process, especially in mastering the vocabulary as it can improve student motivation and interest so as to have fun and not be bored when learning the Japanese language. (Muhammad & Sanimah, 2018). Whereas the element of singing which uses musical training is able to improve student memory as the individual who is trained to sing will have to memorise the lyrics before starting singing practice (Hamzah et al., 2018).

The application of edutainment elements such as singing in the learning process can also be turned into a teaching method that fosters motivation. Motivation can stimulate students to remain confident. This is because motivation is formed as an entity resulting from various factors and its level can change from time to time (Ismail & Zakaria, 2019). According to Noels (2002), there are two categories that form motivation. The first is intrinsic orientations, which refers to satisfaction and enjoyment whether due to the increase in knowledge, self-achievement or obtaining an experience that is enjoyable. The second is extrinsic orientations that occur due to external returns such as obtaining a degree, employment, prizes and others. Gardner and Lember (1972) stated that in language learning attitude and motivation are closely related to one another. For example, if a student has a highly positive attitude, then his level of motivation will also succeed in mastering the second language learned and vice versa. In fact, one's attitude towards a certain language strongly influences his motivation to learn that language.

Students who learn English as a second language are inspired by the use of song in learning literature (Israel, 2013). Apart from songs, there are also various other types of edutainment activities which can stimulate student interest to learn a foreign language. The edutainment activities that can be practiced include comedic elements, aesthetics, games, music and acting (Zailah, 2012). Entertainment elements which are inserted into poetry reading are intended to attract interest and to alleviate boredom. This method can reduce the pressure on students when learning the Spanish language, and subsequently create a positive learning environment (Husain, 2019). Therefore, learning in this relaxed manner enables students to have fun and stimulates their motivation to remain focused and enthusiastic.

Methodology

This study uses the theory by Dörnyei (1994), which is course specific motivational components which involves four constructs: interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction. A total of 105 respondents were involved in answering the questionnaire provided regarding the use of song in learning a foreign language. The respondents were students who had previously or are currently taking foreign language courses during their period of study. Of the respondents, 84 respondents (80%) were female students and the remaining 21 students (20%) were male students. The foreign languages learned by the respondents included Arabic, Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Turkish, Persian, and others. The diversity of this language data shows that the respondents involved comprised students locally and overseas who are currently or had previously studied at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Findings

Based on the findings of the research, the majority of students who were the samples for this research had used the song teaching aid to learn foreign language. This can explain why the song method is one of the teaching materials in foreign language classes. This situation may be caused by the singing factor which can encourage the student to learn in a relaxed environment and with no pressure.

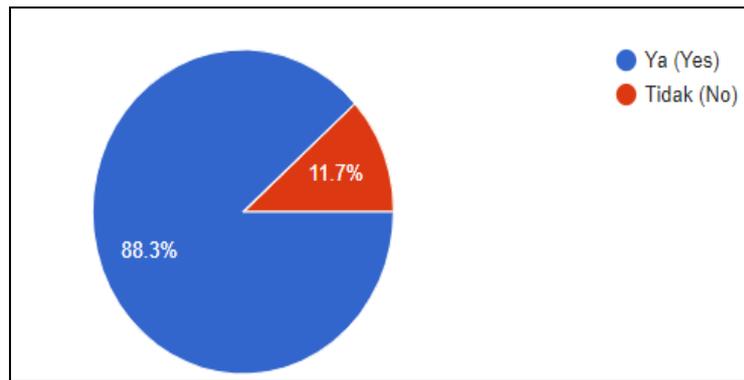


Figure 1: Percentage of Students who have Used Song in Learning Foreign Language

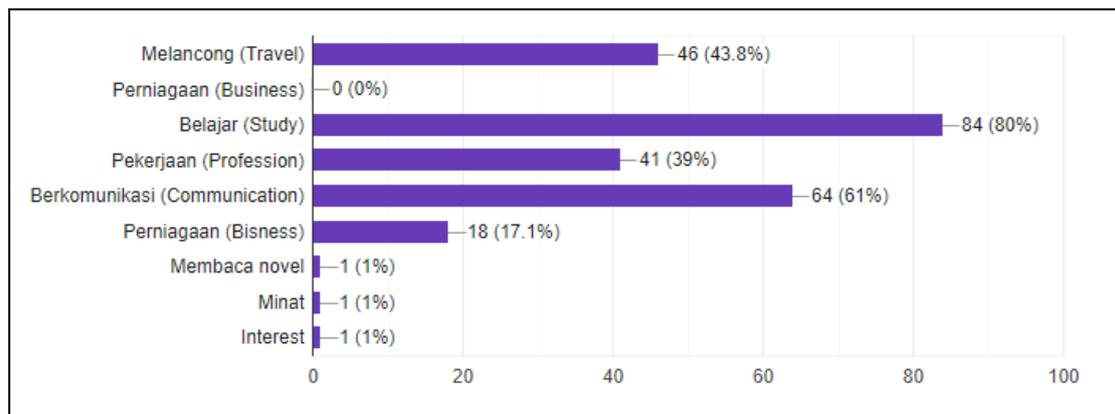


Figure 2: Purpose of Learning Foreign Language

The students stated that the purpose for learning foreign language is due to the study requirement, which recorded the highest value with 84 students (80%). This is because the global language or foreign language course is a core course as a condition to graduate. The students must learn one foreign language throughout the duration of study and achieve level two. Students also learn foreign language for communication requirements (64 respondents or 61.0%), travelling purposes (46 respondents or 43.8%), professional purposes (41 respondents or 39.0%) and the least is for business purposes (18 respondents or 17.1%). Based on the results of these findings, it is clear that students learn foreign language due to the learning requirement or condition to graduate for their programme. Therefore, the student is greatly in need of high motivation to master the writing and speaking skills in the foreign language learned. Thus, song is an excellent tool in helping the language learning process and they would have learned something indirectly (Nurhayati, 2009).

Discussion

There are eleven items which have been built to measure the interest construct for learning foreign language using the song teaching aid among students. Based on Schedule 1, there are five items that the students strongly disagree, which are items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Whereas the item with the highest student strongly agree response is item 7 with 59 respondents (56.2%) and followed by items 4 and 9 which recorded strongly agree by 54 respondents (51.4%) respectively. Singing is part of human nature for children who like entertainment. Through the singing activity, children are able to identify situations and understand the issues that are happening around them. The use of the singing method is said to be able to resolve the

problem of students whose skills in identifying alphabets are weak. This proves that the singing method by using several charts of lyrics of chosen songs, can help preschool children learn the alphabets (Kamilan, 2012).

Notes: STS (Strongly Disagree), TS (Disagree), TP (Not sure), S (Agree), SS (Strongly Agree)

Schedule 1: Interest Construct

No.	Item	STS	TS	TP	S	SS
1.	I feel more interested to learn foreign languages using song.			14 (13.3%)	44 (41.9%)	47 (44.8%)
2.	I am more committed to following the whole foreign language class when using songs.		3 (2.9%)	18 (17.1%)	42 (40.0%)	42 (40.0%)
3.	I feel more motivated to learn foreign language using songs that are related to the topics being learned.		1 (1.0%)	10 (9.5%)	45 (42.9%)	49 (46.7%)
4.	I am more excited to learn foreign languages when I sing.			11 (10.5%)	40 (38.1%)	54 (51.4%)
5.	I am more active in class when learning through song.		1 (1.0%)	13 (12.4%)	42 (40.0%)	49 (46.7%)
6.	I feel it is easier to pay attention when learning through song.	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	13 (12.4%)	44 (41.9%)	46 (43.8%)
7.	I do not feel bored when learning foreign language using a song.	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	6 (5.7%)	38 (36.2%)	59 (56.2%)
8.	I am not easily stressed when learning foreign language using a song.	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	12 (11.4%)	42 (40.0%)	50 (47.6%)
9.	I can learn in a relaxed environment by using a song in the foreign language classes.	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	5 (4.8%)	44 (41.9%)	54 (51.4%)
10.	I learn more effectively when song is used in the foreign language learning class.	1 (1.0%)	2 (1.9%)	13 (12.4%)	44 (41.9%)	45 (42.9%)
11.	I feel it is easier to learn foreign language using song.		1 (1.0%)	14 (13.3%)	42 (40.0%)	48 (45.7%)

Relevance Construct

The relevance construct refers to the content of the topic which relates to the course requirement that simplifies the understanding process, memorizing and getting to know the culture as well as the foreign language learned. In this study, relevance is linked to the suitability of the song used in the language learning process as a form of motivation for the student. Seven questions were formed to measure this construct and only two items, which are items 1 and 4 showed that the students strongly disagreed. Alternatively, item 3 recorded the highest percentage of strongly agree with 50 respondents (47.6%) followed by item 6 which recorded strongly agree for 49 respondents (46.7%). This is supported by the research done by Sabin et. al (2019) who developed the *Modul Riang Ria Membaca* [Cheerful Reading

Module] (MRRM), which is an early reading teaching module using singing for preschool students in interior Sabah. The development of MRRM is based on three theories, which are Cognitive Psycholinguistic Theory, Lev Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory and Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. The development of MRRM using the ADDIE Model comprised 20 activities, which were developed based on four submodules. The selection of songs for the 20 activities were done using the Kodaly approach, which uses the folk song melody. The study on the development of MRRM provided an alternative contribution to the method and source of teaching reading which is fun, in line with the government policy which emphasises the edutainment concept. The prototype of the MRRM teaching module is complemented by video and power point presentations which can become interactive learning materials that can improve the children's oral memory compared to conventional reading materials. In other words, the use of *Modul Riang Ria Membaca* which integrates the singing method as well as applies the learning through play in preschool is a method that is suitable to be used as an intervention for improving early reading skills in preschool.

Schedule 2: Relevance Construct

No.	Item	STS	TS	TP	S	SS
1.	The use of song while learning a foreign language is VERY appropriate for me.	1 (1.0%)	2 (1.9%)	21 (20.0%)	41 (39.0%)	40 (38.1%)
2.	The lyrics can make me easily understand foreign language lessons.		1 (1.0%)	11 (10.5%)	48 (45.7%)	45 (42.9%)
3.	The lyrics can make me interested to learn foreign languages.		1 (1.0%)	5 (4.8%)	49 (46.7%)	50 (47.6%)
4.	The lyrics make it easier for me to understand the structure of grammar in the foreign language.	1 (1.0%)	6 (5.7%)	27 (25.7%)	38 (36.2%)	33 (31.4%)
5.	The animation in the song makes it easy for me to understand the subject content being learned.		1 (1.0%)	12 (11.4%)	51 (48.6%)	41 (39.0%)
6.	Using song during the foreign language learning process can help me memorize a lot of words.		1 (1.0%)	5 (4.8%)	50 (47.6%)	49 (46.7%)
7.	Using song while learning can help me get to know the culture of that language.		2 (1.9%)	18 (17.1%)	47 (44.8%)	38 (36.2%)

Expectancy or Confidence Construct

The expectancy or confidence construct explains student confidence in learning a foreign language. The student's level of confidence is seen as having a higher percentage when the using song method is used in class. Seven items were formed to measure this construct and the findings showed that only one item recorded a strongly disagree among the students, which is item 3. Whereas item 2 recorded the highest percentage of strongly agree, which is 46 respondents (44.2%) and followed by item 1 with 44 respondents (42.3%). The selection of the song Didi & Friends in the study conducted by Osman (2016) is for the purpose of

observing the emotional development of children in the musical activity. This study was carried out at a nursery in Petaling Jaya, Selangor which involved four children, three boys and a girl, aged three years old. The research method used for collecting data was observation using a checklist, interviews and document analysis. The checklist used is regarding the child's emotional development before and after the musical activity using the song Didi & Friends. Whereas the interview with the teacher was conducted to obtain the teacher's view on the child's emotional development. The results of the research showed that the musical activity using the song Didi & Friends had a positive impact on the child's emotional development and is most appropriate to be used as an alternative to the teaching and learning methods.

Schedule 3: Expectancy/Confidence Construct

No.	Item	STS	TS	TP	S	SS
1.	Using song during the learning process makes me feel more confident to pronounce words in the foreign language.			14 (13.5%)	46 (44.2%)	44 (42.3%)
2.	Using song during the learning process can help me to improve pronunciation of the foreign language vocabulary.		1 (1.0%)	5 (4.8%)	52 (50.0%)	46 (44.2%)
3.	Using song during the learning process can help me to understand the grammar of the foreign language.	1 (1.0%)	3 (2.9%)	23 (22.1%)	49 (47.1%)	28 (26.9%)
4.	Using song during the learning process can help me feel more confident to speak in the foreign language.		1 (1.0%)	14 (13.5%)	56 (53.8%)	33 (31.7%)
5.	Using song during the learning process can make me feel more confident of passing this foreign language course.		1 (1.0%)	13 (12.5%)	51 (49.0%)	39 (37.5%)
6.	Using song during the learning process can build my confidence to complete the foreign language syllabus.		1 (1.0%)	16 (15.5%)	52 (50.5%)	34 (33.0%)
7.	Using song during the learning process can overcome the difficulty of understanding the meaning of the word in a foreign language.		1 (1.0%)	12 (11.5%)	53 (51.0%)	38 (36.5%)

Satisfaction Construct

The satisfaction construct was built to look at the student's level of mastery regarding the effectiveness of the use of song in learning foreign language which enables the student to have fun. The results of the research found that the student is able to understand the foreign language when the element of song is used during the language learning process. A total of

seven items were formed to measure this construct. The findings showed that the students strongly disagree with four items, which are items 1, 4, 6 and 7. Whereas item 5 recorded the highest percentage of strongly agree with 52 respondents (50.0%). This was followed by item 7 with 43 respondents (41.7%). Motivation is strongly linked to one's attitude and that attitude will definitely influence the language learning process. In the study by Ghazali et al., (2010), the researcher made surveyed student attitude towards learning Arabic language oral skills at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). This qualitative study involved 21 interviews, which is a series of 13 interviews with students and eight series of interviews with the lecturer. The results of this research showed that from a cognitive perspective, all the students stated the importance of the Arabic language although some of them placed more importance on other subjects, the level of difficulty faced depends on the student's prior level of experience. Whereas, from the perspective of affective, all students showed a positive attitude towards the Arabic language and from a conative perspective, the students showed their consistency in learning the Arabic language and wanted to continue learning it in the future. It is clear that the attitude factor plays a large role in shaping student motivation.

Schedule 4: Satisfaction Construct

No.	Item	STS	TS	TP	S	SS
1.	I can understand the foreign language through a song while learning in class.		2 (1.9%)	12 (11.5%)	59 (56.7%)	31 (29.8%)
2.	I can complete the foreign language activities which use song while learning in class.	1 (1.0%)	4 (3.8%)	18 (17.3%)	51 (49.0%)	30 (28.8%)
3.	I feel more eager to complete foreign language activities that are more difficult using song while learning in class.			14 (13.6%)	56 (54.4%)	33 (32.0%)
4.	I enjoy being able to pronounce words in the foreign language by using a song while learning in class.	1 (1.0%)		8 (7.8%)	53 (51.5%)	41 (39.8%)
5.	I feel proud because I can pronounce words in the foreign language by using a song while learning in class.			8 (7.7%)	44 (42.3%)	52 (50.0%)
6.	I will attend the foreign language classes because I love to sing in class.	2 (1.9%)	5 (4.8%)	27 (26.0%)	41 (39.4%)	29 (27.9%)
7.	I still enjoy learning songs in the foreign language even though I fail to get good marks.	1 (1.0%)	2 (1.9%)	17 (16.5%)	40 (38.8%)	43 (41.7%)

It is clear that the use of song in learning foreign language is able to provide satisfaction to the student when they are able to pronounce and sing in class. This situation is seen as able to give encouragement and enjoyment to the student in learning foreign language more effectively.

Conclusion

From the discussion above it is clear that the method of learning through song greatly influences student attitude and emotions. This situation can be seen when the scale for selecting strongly agree and agree exceeds the scale of unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. Therefore, it is clear that students can build their confidence by saying the lyrics of the song learned as listening and pronunciation skills can be practiced simultaneously while developing their psychomotor and cognitive skills.

Based on the four constructs tested, it can be stated in conclusion that all constructs recorded the highest percentage, that is exceeding 80% for the strongly agree and agree scale that the use of song in learning a foreign language gives them motivation to learn. But interest construct was recorded highly percentage more than 100% based on responded agree and strongly agree. It shows that students feel happy when they can learn and sing at the same time. Second construct recorded 94.3% for agree and strongly agree was a relevance construct. Then followed by satisfaction construct 91.7% and expectancy or confidence construct 86.5%. This situation explained that students feel enjoyment, confidence and happiness when they pronounce foreign language words through song. In addition, together with the findings from this study, suggests that, there are need to conduct more empirical research related to this matter. This study would find it interesting to conduct intensive experimental research to be able to determine the long-term effects of learning foreign languages through songs. Therefore, it is clear that the method of using song in the process of learning foreign language plays an important role in fostering student comprehension to understand the course content as a whole as well as to retain interest, give hope and satisfaction to the student to remain relevant in learning foreign language.

It is obvious that student attitude and emotions are intertwined in building student motivation. The elements of song used are able to inspire students to learn in a relaxed situation. Students will indirectly be able to master grammar through the lyrics of the song sung. This situation is seen as able to stimulate writing and pronunciation skills among students because their emotions are at a positive level and they are not under pressure. Therefore, it can be said that lecturers are seen as having played a role as the learning model to guide students. This situation is able to improve the student motivation level (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) as students not only know the tasks that should be done but also the ways and strategies that must be used to perform the activities related to the subject being learned.

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