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INDEX

Sr. No.	Title	Author	Subject	Page No.
1	Vat And Accounting and Emerging Financial Services	Dr.Kishor V. Bhesaniya	Accountancy	1-2
2	Regulations for Alternative Investment Funds – A Primer	Dr. Bheemanagouda	Commerce	3-4
3	Financial Inclusion in India: A Real Effort for Growth	Dr. Jyotindra M. Jani, Manish B. Raval	Commerce	5-6
4	Tourism Industry and Medical Tourism in India – An Analysis	Dr. M. K. Maru	Commerce	7-8
5	Enhancing Supply Chain Performance through Effective Transportation	Dr. Vipul Chalotra	Commerce	9-10
6	Growth of Consumer Co-Operatives in J&K- A Study	Tarsem Lal	Commerce	11-12
7	Uses of College Funds in Assam-With Reference to Lakhimpur District	Dr. Niranjan Kakati	Commerce	13-14
8	LIC –A Modle Employer	Dr.J.K.Sehgal	Commerce	15-16
9	A study of the use of Information technology enabled banking services by Indian Customers	Dr Sunny Thomas, MsWaheeda Sheikh	Economics	17-18
10	The Role of Women Entrepreneurs in The Emerging Economic Force	Dr.Sangappa.V. Mamanshetty	Economics	19-21
11	Trade-off Between Inflation and Unemployment for BRICS Countries – Dead or Alive?	Krunal K Bhuva, Ashok R. Bantwa	Economics	22-23
12	Urbanisation and its Impact on Poverty	Dr. K.J. Thankachan, Mrs. Nazia Ansari	Economics	24-25
13	Food Security- Issues and Concerns	Munisha Gaur	Economics	26-27
14	Teaching Strategies : A Model Approach	Dr. Mujibul Hasan Siddiqui	Education	28-29
15	School Curriculum in Terms of Life Skills and its Implications for Teacher Education	Ramesh B. Sakhiya	Education	30-31
16	Edge Detection using live video acquisition	Patel Janakkumar Baldevbhai, R.S. Anand, Patel Nilam J.	Engineering	32-34
17	Topological Characteristics of Dynamics of Heart in Various Pathological Cases using Lyapunov Exponent and RBF Network	Abinash Dahal, Deepashree Devaraj, Dr. N. Pradhan	Engineering	35-37
18	Implementation of Digital Logic Method for Selection of Material of Automotive Brake Disc	Mr. Keval J. patel, Tushar M. Patel, Ankit A. Darji	Engineering	38-40
19	Initial and after Market Performance of Indian IPOs	Dr. Ashvin H. Solanki	Finance	41-43
20	Facilitation of Collateral Free Loan to Improve Financial Linkages For Start Up & Growth – A Case Study	D M Parikh	Finance	44-46
21	Impact of Maternal Nutrition Education Module on Nutritional Knowledge And Status in Rural Pregnant Women	Dr. Anjali A. Rajwade	Home Science	47-49
22	Trends and Challenges in Indian Insurance Industry	Dr Mahalaxmi Krishnan	Insurance	50-51
23	(Raksha Patrakarita : Dayra Badhae Media Sansthan)	Dr. Subodh Kumar	Journalism	52-53
24	NATIONAL WAGE POLICY VIZ-A-VIZ CORRELATION BETWEEN WAGES, PRICE AND TAX	Manish Parshuram Pawar, Dr. Ashok Shankarrao Pawar	Law	54-55

Sr. No.	Title	Author	Subject	Page No.
25	Shobha De's treatment of sex in Starry Nights	Chetan J. Marakana	Literature	56
26	A Catalyst to Promote Teaching and Learning English Grammar	Elsamma Sebastian	Literature	57-58
27	A Study on Effectiveness of Employee Training in Health Care Industry in a Private Multi-Speciality Organization	Dr C Swarnalatha, TS Prasanna	Management	59-61
28	Insights in to the Tomorrow Retailing in India: A Point of View and Method	Anuradha Averineni	Management	62-63
29	A Study on the Excellence of Worklife Among the Employees of it Sector in Coimbatore	G. Murali Manokari, R.Kanaka Rathinam	Management	64-65
30	Socio Cultural Issues in Marketing	Kavita A. Trivedi	Management	66-67
31	Organised Multi Brand Retailing: Opportunity For Sustainable Development	Rachita Sambyal	Management	68-69
32	Investors Perception for Mutual Fund Investment in 21st Century	Dr. Deepak H. Tekwani	Management	70-71
33	FDI in India	Dr. M Venkata Subba Reddy, Mr.udaya Banu	Management	72-73
34	Global Crisis and Indian Economy, A Comparative Analysis with World Economy	Dr. Pankaj K. Trivedi	Management	74-76
35	Practical Utility of Intellectual Capital Approach-A Critical Analysis	Dr. Shilpa Trivedi	Management	77-78
36	An In-depth study of Consumer Preference towards Personal Care Products	Dr.Sharif Memon	Management	79-81
37	Consumer Awareness and Preferences towards Ayurvedic Cosmetic Products in Coimbatore City	Mrs. B. Menaka, Dr. T. Ramasamy, Dr. R. Ganapathi	Management	82-90
38	Miracle combination of five herbs Methi, Kalongi, saunf, jeera and Rai	Dr. Sneh Harshendra Sharma	Management	91-93
39	Social Marketing: Towards a new horizon	Dr Partha Sarkar	Marketing	94-95
40	Epidemiological Transition and Emerging Conflicts in Health Care	Dr. Pawan Kumar, Dr. Abdul Majeed Khan	Public Health	96-97
41	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Reproductive Health Care Services among the Members and Non-members of Self Help Groups (SHGs)	Dr.K.Jothy	Social Sciences	98-100

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Research Paper Literature

A Catalyst to Promote Teaching and Learning English Grammar

Elsamma Sebastian PhD Scholar, Bharathiar University

ABSTRACT

The natural rhythm is the basic foundation of normal existence of any human being. Distortion to the unique original rhythm of each individual, results in issues and imbalances. A healthy and harmonious living, therefore, necessitate promotion of one's own original rhythm. In a stress driven civil society, music plays a significant role to restore normalcy. As such, the use of music can be extended to the field of education as well, especially to difficult skills like grammar learning and acquisition of English language. Music is, therefore, adopted in this research work as a definite tool of instruction, guaranteeing laser point results.

The repetitive nature of tune and rhythm in music creates a relaxed state of mind for the students to be more receptive in learning. This in turn helps to assimilate the components of grammar learning easily, instantly and effectively.

KEYWORDS: Music, A tool of instruction, Concentration, Grammar learning, Language

INTRODUCTION

Had today's life been in tandem with nature, the entire world of organisms would have been reverberating with natural rhythm. No organism would then need to live in disharmony. Human beings, in such hypothetical condition, experiences more pleasure than pain. However, a reality check on this matter, confirms non-existence of such idealistic situation. Still the existing order of nature is interwoven with various neutralizing factors, by default, as shock-absorbers. An analysis of the recorded history of different cultures, during the past-millenniums, would confirm the adoption of music in normalizing various critical aspects of human life. In today's stress-ridden world, for example, music has extreme therapeutic value. The case studies on various research works have reported higher crop-yields, when music is played.

Music entertains, relaxes, and refreshes the mind of the listener. The rhythm in the songs, beneficially affects the mind, making them more disciplined and focused. This is especially so when the song is of repetitive nature, in tune and rhythm. Singing, thus, has a refreshing, elevating and pacifying effect on the mind. This important principle of nature lies dormant in our genetic code.

EVOLUTION OF THE STUDY

During the two decades of exposure in Spoken English and Grammar, posed with multi-folded difficulties in teaching, the author has occasionally observed the beneficial use of music as a tool of teaching in developing students' knowledge in grammar through grammar songs. This has intrigued her curiosity to explore the possibility of systematic application of music in grammar teaching.

The researcher was aware that in the old Gurukula System, the lessons were taught in the form of verses, so that it was easier for the students to learn them effectively through repeated recitation. She knew that the versification of the lessons will surely go a long way in helping students to retain the knowledge. The researcher also understood that if music is added to the verses, then the verses get firmly rooted in the memory for ever. This has prompted her to experiment extension of the same principle to develop students knowledge in grammar through grammar songs.

The students being drawn, mostly from different socio-economic background, with associated problems (namely: quarrelsome parents, their mental ill-health, deeper financial crisis, parental separation, addiction to alcohol/drugs, the generation-gap issues, and socio-cultural impacts), they have lacked interest in listening. They were also found to be lacking concentration, self-confidence and interest in studies. These by-products of stress, have created a non-congenial learning environments.

Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988), states that "place students in an environment in which it is appropriate to use target utterances in a genuinely communicative fashion"(p.476).But when they were exposed to grammar lessons containing lyrics and music, as an innovative module for teaching grammar, they were found to respond positively. This is because, grammar songs have the same wavelength as that of the unique rhythm of each individual learner. Grammar songs have thereby activated the learning skills of the student to place them on a threshold level of learning instantly.

The problems of students should not be seen in isolation, since teachers, curriculum, and English teaching methodologies exhibit their own unique and specific problems. The innovative module so introduced takes care of these problems to a greater extend.

SONGS AND GRAMMAR LEARNING

In the contemporary world, students learn movie songs effortlessly and instantly after listening to them a couple of times. They memorize and integrate them faster in their normal life. This knowledge combined with the insight got from Gurukula System have led the researcher to compose lyrics on grammar as the students assimilate it quite easily.

Music is one of the most useful instruments that makes the learning joyful . Receptive nature of tune and rhythm in music calms the mind of the students, making them more receptive to learn.

The researcher has also experienced good response on combining music with dance, as it enthusiastically attracts the learner. When the modulated tone and rhythm of music is synchronized with movement of actions, it forms a foundation of memory- that is receptivity, retention and recall.

Wallace (1994), explained that, "music, can make a text more easily learned and better recalled than when the same text is learned without any melody"(p.1473-1474). The study suggests that simple musical songs transforms ordinary text into information that is effectively retained and recalled when needed.

The cognitive process of learner gets positively stimulated when tone and rhythm of music are simultaneously applied in the actions of dance. Emotional balance, mental calmness, and coherent learning are the intangible benefits of this model. The whole process thus cause to create an altered state of awareness, without the conscious knowledge of the learner, to place the listener to a deeper level of learning.

Kalmar (1982), noted that the method of instruction by singing which involved the accompaniment of music with rhythmic movements as well as the verbal and physical representation of songs register greater improvements in motor development, abstract conceptual thinking, play improvisation, originality and verbal abilities.

Songs thus develop listening skill, fluency of speaking and as memory pegs. It motivates pupils besides building self confidence. Falioni (1993), is of the view that "The addition of music to the foreign language classroom as a teaching method may be a way to focus students' attention and produce a more committed learner"(p.104).

Teaching with songs helps to learn vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Although, learning is a slow process, music when combine with dance, enables mastering of learning skill instantly as it aids to focus, organize

and practice.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the existing system of grammar instructions, a total lack of interest on the part of the learners are evident since they are drawn mostly from different socio-economic background with associated problems. This major factor places the learner with lack of concentration, absence of self confidence, and lesser interest in studies.

The pedagogical scope of songs in teaching and learning grammar through songs, is recognized distinctly in foreign countries. It is yet to be applied in the Indian context, particularly in the state of Kerala. This possibility in English Language teaching was not known to the educational practitioners, curriculum designers, administrators, native Malayalam speakers, researchers and students, as revealed by the two focus group discussions as part fulfillment of this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to find out the suitability of song in delivering desired effect on the acquisition of grammar knowledge and skills. It, therefore, aimed at developing a viable substitute to the traditional method of teaching English.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the effect of tone and rhythm in the songs in enhancing grammar learning.

To evaluate the influence of innovative teaching module in developing students' knowledge in grammar.

To analyze the benefits accrued by learners from different levels.

To examine the impact of music in bringing about cognitive synergy.

HYPOTHESIS

There will be a significant difference between the traditional teaching and the innovative module in so far as the learning proficiency of the students are concerned.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Theoretical Benefit

a) The study result serves as a major input in both English teaching and learning.

b) The study provides a basis of reference for those who desire to do further research in the allied fields.

Practical Benefit

a) The innovative module forms as an easily adoptable technique or methodology for teaching grammar for various levels of students.

b) The encouraging result of the study stimulates further motivation among students to learn using this module and the teachers to bring about grammar proficiency.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The existing problems in curriculum and methodology, has slowed down the researcher's endeavor to come out with this topic.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study is likely to generate interest among policy makers of education, to introduce this module as an eye-opener for all concerned. It would, thereby, unfold natural acceptance of the module as a result oriented language teaching and learning catalyst.

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