Working with songs in class (Part 1)


The present article aims to give a brief overview on how make the most of the employ of songs in our English classes at Secondary school and to promote their use amongst English teachers, so they can form part of their usual resources.

Based upon my personal experience, I find songs highly useful in class. Students on the whole, love working with songs. It is a very convenient way to deal with the grammar, translation, and the four skills (let’s not forget the necessary and favourable integration of the four skills).

Bearing in mind that my students’ and my favourite songs may not always be the same, I prepare some songs on my own. But on the other hand, I always encourage them to bring to class some other songs they like.

My students’ songs only need to meet the following requirements. Firstly, the level of difficulty of the song must be appropriate for the whole class. And secondly, if the chosen song consists of basically music, we will not work with it.

The technique I often utilize when working with songs is dividing clearly the activities between before, while and after you listen. Let’s have a look at them more in detail.

In “Before you listen” activities, we practice the speaking as they orally may have to try to guess the content of the song by the title (skill of prediction). Or we might just comment a bit on the singer or group (that is, the skill of dealing with the previous ideas). This is often achievable as whenever it is possible, I attempt to select current musical groups or authors that my students might find of their interest. In other words, with the opening of the academic year, I take advantage of the first days of class, to plan and to design the activities we will be coping with during the course. Therefore, I
generally ask them which type of music they like or which singers or band are popular nowadays. This way I have definitely more opportunities to match their expectations.

Secondly, let’s examine “While you listen” activities. To illustrate this point we can consider the following ones:

- Preparing the song as a cloze test. The students must fill in the gaps of the song, while listening to it. This is a simple activity to prepare as we do not need to devote much time to do it. Needless to say we should not forget that diversity exist in our classes. That it is to say, the existence of mixed ability groups or different levels within the same class. How can we cope with it? Very simply. For instance, this exercise may be made easier by writing all the missing words somewhere else on the page or all mixed up on the board.

- Disordering the lines of each verse. The students have to listen carefully to some parts I select from the song, and afterwards put the numbers next to the lines.

La relación entre clase social y aprendizaje:
Una pequeña guía para propiciar el aprendizaje del alumno

Título: La relación entre clase social y aprendizaje: Una pequeña guía para propiciar el aprendizaje del alumno.

Existe una relación entre el origen o condición social de un alumno y su repercusión directa en el proceso de aprendizaje? Esta pregunta, da lugar a numerosos debates y posturas, y me parece de vital relevancia detenerme y estudiar un tópico que genera tanta expectación. Es obvio, que existe una clara relación entre aprendizaje y clase social, y que por supuesto, la clase social de una persona va a influir en su rendimiento escolar. Sin embargo, también es cierto, que no podemos generalizar y que el hecho de pertenecer a una clase social desfavorecida no siempre es equivalente a un rendimiento negativo o fracaso escolar. Hay otros muchos factores que determinan el aprendizaje de un individuo, como son la genética, el entorno escolar, la motivación, etc.

Para empezar, me gustaría primero introducir el concepto de clase social:

“El origen social de una persona o grupo representa la procedencia de los diferentes estratos en que la sociedad se divide por la desigual apropiación de los recursos económicos, culturales y de poder existentes [...] Los indicadores más comunes del origen social del alumnado son el nivel de estudios y la profesión y ocupación del padre y de la madre” (Guerrero Serón, 1996: 248)