Using Songs in ELT Speaker Notes

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BEREKET ELT Archive

A suggested spoken script aligned with the newly prepared 22 slide main seminar. This document replaces the earlier version. Use the separate classroom demonstration presentation for body, colour and greeting song activities.

Slide 1 Using Songs in ELT

Welcome to Using Songs in ELT. I have prepared many song activities in PowerPoint and FrontPage and used them in my classes. My archive also includes three song presentations that I created with Flash. Today we will look at how a song can support a clear lesson aim. As you listen to the examples, consider what learners do with the language. Begin by thinking of a song you have used, or one you would like to use.

Slide 2 Workshop Aims

By the end of this workshop, you should have a practical plan for using a short song excerpt with your learners. We will consider song selection, preparation before listening and tasks that focus attention during listening. We will then use the same language in a new context. Choose a learner group as we begin. It may be young learners, teenagers or adults. Keep that group in mind when deciding which examples you would adapt.

Slide 3 Why Use Songs

A song can provide repeated expressions and a topic that learners can respond to. Some groups enjoy the change of pace and the chance to join a refrain. However, we should look at the response of our own learners. Enjoyment does not show us whether they understand the language. Give them a task that makes understanding visible, such as selecting a picture or answering a question. Later, ask them to use an expression without the recording.

Slide 4 Song Selection

Choose a recording that suits the age, language level and interests of your group. Listen to it before the lesson and check the clarity of the words. Decide whether the whole song is necessary or whether a short excerpt serves the aim. A familiar tune may help learners join in, but the content still needs to fit the class. Prepare the task from the actual recording and check the answer key. Avoid requiring learners to understand too many new words at once.

Slide 5 A Song Within a Lesson

A song can provide an opening routine, practise language introduced earlier or revisit expressions in a later lesson. Match its place in the lesson to the purpose. A greeting song may fit the opening naturally. A vocabulary song may work better after picture preparation. Plan a short response afterwards so that learners use what they heard. If music is playing in the background, switch it off for instructions or for a task that requires careful listening.

Slide 6 The Activity Sequence

Prepare learners before playing the recording. Give them a topic, a picture or a short question to consider. The first listening may focus on general meaning. A later listening can focus on a few target words or relationships. Let learners compare answers before a replay. Once they have checked, ask them to use the language in a new description or exchange. The number of listenings depends on the excerpt and the group. Each listening should have a clear purpose.

Slide 7 Participation Choices

Learners can take part without singing aloud. They might point to a picture, mark an answer or use a small movement. Give a hesitant learner time to rehearse with a partner before speaking publicly. Optional singing lets those who enjoy it join in while others work towards the same language aim in another way. Adapt movement to the room and to the learners. A seated gesture or a picture card can often provide the response we need.

Slide 8 Body Vocabulary

Our first demonstration uses body vocabulary. Show a few pictures and introduce the words learners need. Say a word and let them select or point to the picture. Then change the response: one learner gives an instruction and a partner follows it. These short tasks prepare learners for the body song. Use the My Body examples in the archived classroom demonstration deck. Picture pointing provides an alternative to pointing to a learner's own body.

Slide 9 Body Song Listening

Open the My Eyes Can See example in the classroom demonstration deck. Give learners time to read the short gap task before the audio starts. Let them try independently, compare with a partner and listen again to the relevant section. The intended gap sequence in that example is ears, nose, head, legs and walk. Check the recording during preparation. After checking, close the written support and ask learners to use one expression in response to a picture.

Slide 10 Meaning After Listening

The next body activity asks learners to decide whether statements are true or false. Let them respond before showing the answers. A correction of a false statement gives us a useful check of meaning. Learners can use a picture, a short answer or a full sentence according to their level. Finish with a new instruction in pairs. We are checking the language after the song rather than judging the singing. Avoid making an individual learner's physical ability the subject of the task.

Slide 11 Colour Vocabulary

Prepare the colour words using objects or pictures that learners can see clearly. Ask about a familiar object and give them time to answer. Partners can then ask about a different object. This prepares the language for the colour song. After the listening task, we will return to descriptions with a new object. Provide another way to respond if a learner finds a colour distinction difficult. Keep unfamiliar object names to a minimum so the colour language remains the focus.

Slide 12 Listening for Word Choices

Open the word-choice activity in the Colours examples. Learners listen for the word that completes each line. Let them compare before revealing the key and ask what they heard. The supplied key gives blue, grass, rain, night and snow. Replay a short part to resolve differences. Some answers can be guessed from the meaning, so consider letting learners hear an excerpt before showing every option. The teacher's aim here is attention to the recording in context.

Slide 13 Listening for Sequence

Ordering lines requires a different listening response. Learners read the selected strips and listen for their sequence. They may number them individually or move strips with a partner. Use fewer strips for a beginner group. Check the strips against the recording in preparation and distinguish a heading from a sung line. After a replay, ask learners what helped them decide. The archive ordering example gives us a model that can be adapted to another short recording.

Slide 14 Listening for Relationships

The listening grid connects objects with the colours associated with them in the song. Explain the labels before playing the recording. The supplied associations include snow with white, sky with blue and a rose with red. These belong to the song and are not universal descriptions of the world. Once learners have checked the grid, ask them to describe a different object. They can also suggest a different colour for an object already mentioned and explain their choice in a simple sentence.

Slide 15 Language Beyond the Song

The follow-up gives the familiar language another context. A learner might describe an object and ask a partner to identify it. Another group could write a short clue. Keep the vocabulary within reach of the learners, so the challenge comes from making and understanding the description. A word search can provide optional spelling practice, but it should not replace language use. Check any learner grid against its key before printing. Choose a verified selection of words for an archived puzzle.

Slide 16 Greetings in Use

A greeting song can support a classroom routine. Begin with a spoken exchange, then listen and complete the short task in the archived example. The intended gaps in that example are morning, you, well and thank. After checking, learners close the written task and greet a new partner. Allow familiar alternative replies so that they can answer naturally. This changes a repeated refrain into an exchange between classmates. Both partners should have a turn to ask and respond.

Slide 17 Songs and Pronunciation

Choose one useful expression from the recording and ask learners to listen closely. They may repeat it with the song before saying it at a conversational pace. A melody can lengthen sounds or alter the rhythm of an expression, so provide a spoken model when necessary. Pair practice gives learners a reason to use the expression with an addressee. Keep the pronunciation aim narrow. You might focus on one word or on how a short expression sounds in the exchange.

Slide 18 Reading and Writing Follow Ups

A short written task can support listening when learners understand what they need to read. Avoid putting a long lyric sheet on screen for every stage. Select the section that serves the task. After listening, learners can write a new description, a clue or a brief exchange using familiar language. Ask another learner to respond to it. The writing then prepares communication. Adjust the amount of reading and writing to the age and level of the group.

Slide 19 A Longer Song and Its Story

The archive includes Coat of Many Colors as a longer example. With a suitable group, introduce a question about its story before listening and select one short section for closer work. Afterwards, discuss care and respect through an imagined situation. Ask what makes a gift valuable or how classmates could respond kindly. Learners do not need to disclose personal financial experiences. The example file contains embedded audio and an older AVI video, so test the playback on the teaching computer before the session.

Slide 20 Digital Song Materials

My teaching archive includes PowerPoint song activities, earlier FrontPage work and three songs I prepared in Flash. The task determines what learners do with the material. The classroom example presentations and Flash files are kept separately in the teacher archive; they are not included in this five-file web package. Select a working example before the session and prepare an alternative when an older format cannot run on the teaching device.

Slide 21 Teacher Planning Task

Now plan an activity for the learner group you chose at the beginning. Work with a partner to select a short excerpt and state the language aim. Describe how you will prepare learners, what they will do during listening and how they will use the language afterwards. Give yourselves ten minutes to plan and rehearse the instructions. Exchange the plan with another pair. Ask whether they can identify the aim and follow the task. Revise one part after their feedback.

Slide 22 Final Reflection

Invite a few pairs to share their plans. Ask them to name the response that will show what learners have understood or can use. It might be a new description, a short greeting or an instruction followed by a partner. In a later lesson, return to a similar question and observe the response. This tells us whether learners need another model or are ready to extend the language. Leave the workshop with one activity you can adapt and one simple way to check its result.