

# CHAPTER 27

## A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF MUSIC TO THE PEDAGOGY OF FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Olivia Ezeafulukwe (PhD) & Scholastica Ezeodili (PhD)

### **Abstract**

French language as a foreign language is plagued with a lot of problems that affect both the educator and the learner, especially as foreign languages are always learnt in a milieu that is not natural. Consequently, the functionality of the foreign language is not usually appreciated thus dimming the motivation needed for effective and rapid learning to take place. Are there ways to motivate second-language learners of the French language? How can French as a second language be acquired without applying traditional learning methods? What role does music play in language acquisition? These are questions to which this paper seeks to find answers. Through the use of a French song, this paper sought to prove that music could be a wonderful pedagogical tool. It was discovered that music aids language pedagogy by sharpening the brain, making learning a stress-free and enjoyable experience, and removing some obstacles that make foreign language acquisition a herculean task.

**Keywords:** French language, music, pedagogy

---

### **Introduction**

Despite variations among language acquisition theorists, there is this consensus that man can learn a language. Whether this ability is inborn or acquired remains a debate that is yet to be settled by linguists. Learning a first language does not require as much effort as learning a second language as age, milieu, motivation, and lack of interference play positive roles in this direction.

The second language, on the other hand, has to contend with challenges such as:

**(i) The advanced age of the learner:** people only acquire a second language when the need arises and this could be at any age ranging from one year to death.

**(ii) Problem of interference:** the learner already knows his first language and now uses that as a parameter for learning the second language.

**(iii) Learning milieu:** Apart from people who migrated to places that warranted their picking up a second language, many others acquire the language in a classroom setting, thus the functionality of the language or the use to which it would be put is still not clear to the learner and so the learner is not motivated to learn the language to use it but simply to pass an examination. Even those who migrated to the second language culture may have done so under uncertain conditions and so are faced with a lot of social problems that may hamper the motivation to learn the second language. Deficiency in second language acquisition is manifested in ways such as poor vocabulary, lack of fluency, ungrammatical sentences, language interference and frequent code-mixing to cover up vocabulary deficiencies.

But music, in common parlance, is a universal language hence drawing an analogy between music and language. Music is a by-product of language as music is made by individuals in their languages. Using music in second language pedagogy builds confidence in the learner, as all the aforementioned manifestations of language deficiency can be masked when the linguistic items to be acquired are articulated into a musical rendition. Even stammerers do not stammer while singing. The use of songs in the language class makes it possible to learn the target language and to develop above all the competence of oral and written expression through activities combining pleasure and learning.

French language in Nigeria, being acquired as the third, fourth or even fifth language, is facing a lot of challenges which this paper seeks to overcome by introducing music to this language, and pedagogy. Consequently, a French song was used, while aiming at vocabulary and syntactical enhancement in the learners.

### **Music as a tool in language Pedagogy**

Music according to the Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary, denotes the sounds that are arranged in a way that is pleasant or exciting to listen to. (966) People sing music or play it with instruments. In this article, we will use music and songs interchangeably as the vocal sounds that are played with or without instruments. Songs generally are motivating, entertaining and communicative.

Music has been playing a very vital role in foreign language pedagogy as evidenced by so many contemporary researchers. Leith (1979) observed that “there is probably not a better or quicker way to teach phonetics than with songs.”(540) Similarly, Murphey (1992) cited by Boukhatem Nadera notes that songs can also be useful tools in the learning of vocabulary, sentence structures and sentence pattern, not to mention their reflectivity of mother tongue culture. (370)

Research has also revealed that music is very effective in the teaching of Grammar. In a study conducted by Zehra Ezgi Kara and Aynur Semera Aksel, to ascertain the effectiveness of music in grammar teaching and on the motivation and success of the students at the preparatory school at Uludağ University, it was revealed that music made the lesson more enjoyable and students found it easy to learn and practice grammar with music. Also supports the claim by positing thus: from a linguistic viewpoint, songs are useful for listening comprehension, pronunciation practice (especially prosody) vocabulary learning (especially idioms) and grammar review.” (12)

**Learning a foreign language through songs is fun.** Listening to a song in class is a way of very lightly approaching the cultural and linguistic aspects of the target language, relaxing students after exercises that have required a lot of effort, or acquiring or reviewing some vocabulary. The present study is based on the theory of desuggestopedia as proposed by George Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychotherapist. He was the one that propounded suggestopedia as a teaching approach used in foreign language acquisition. It was propounded in 1970 but as time went on it became more concentrated on desuggestive teaching and is now commonly known as desuggestopedia. This theory claims that students learn better when they are in a calm, relaxed and stress-free environment, the result being more successful and easier learning. The goal of this theory is to create a joyful and enjoyable environment. Learners feel freer. On this, music is good for inducing a feeling of mental relaxation.

Learning should be simple and fun, Song as a didactic technique ensures that students remain in a positive emotional state at all times and that, through the enjoyment of singing, play and repetition, they come to assimilate the language. Associating words with a melody makes it easier to learn a language. Various pieces of research on this subject seem to have proven that learners of a foreign language find it easier to assimilate new words when they are sung than when they are pronounced normally. The music associated with a text would also help to understand the segmentation of words, a very important question when approaching a new language.

There are two major parts in language studies: oral and written and according to Dolz and Schneuwly (92) “Works in oral genres is always done at two levels: communication and structuring” (Our translation) Songs fall into the oral domain of language but it remains a very useful technique for the teaching of writing.

Songs have a lot of emotional 'ingredients' because each song is subconsciously associated with the emotion of when it was learned or shared and with whom it was learned or shared. Therefore, with the songs, where the emotional dimension is so present, learning becomes much easier. There can be no real learning if there is no pleasure and emotion.

Foreign language learning in our educational institutions is mostly done by teenagers and music is part of their everyday life: outside the classroom, in the restaurant, in the car, in church, with peers, and at home. On this Batista, Juliana comments that

In addition to authentic language exposure, songs are also important as an authentic activity. That is, by using songs in the classroom, we are getting students to do something that they would do in real life because a lot of people, especially teenagers, enjoy and spend a fair amount of their spare time listening to songs. (158)

By using the song for learning, one can also discover the historical and socio-cultural context existing at the time of its composition; it may therefore be interesting, about these artistic works, to emphasize the cultural data they contain and convey by asking the pupils to express themselves in this respect.

Concerning how to use a song in a French foreign language class, Pozuelo (2007) proposes the steps below for the teaching of songs in a language class.

- Play the song
- Identify the situation of the song through questions posed to the whole class. Four simple questions help to do this: - Where? Can we locate the place(s) of the action? Can we spot the names of streets, cities, and countries...? - Who? Can we say who the characters are and characterize them? - When? Can we say at what moment(s) the action takes place? - What? Can we describe the actions? Can we say what is going on?
- Distribute a handout filled with blanks corresponding to the words students are expected to find.
- Discover the tone of the song by asking what emotion the song evokes (
- Proceed to thematic analysis through the study of vocabulary and the lexical field and semantic fields of the theme raised

This procedure has been adopted for the present study as these steps would be practicalities in this research.

### **Accessing the Songs for Language Pedagogy**

Musicians are always in the business of creating songs. These songs can easily be accessed through the internet or by buying music albums. Some of the works of artists have become so popular that the lyrics have become common knowledge many already visible online. French songs by modern and emerging artists certainly allow French Language students to approach a more familiar, more up-to-date vocabulary, adding words of common use to their vocabulary. Original songs and albums could become authentic documents when applied to language teaching.

One very easy way of helping French language learning through songs is by translating songs which a learner has already mastered in his first language into French. Being that the learner already knows the lyrics of the song in a familiar language he quickly adapts this knowledge to the song in the new language. Many hymns and Christmas carols have already been translated and the congregation whenever they see themselves in another linguistic community can always join in singing these hymns. Once they have the translations in front of them, they easily master the song. This translation strategy could be adapted to pedagogy.

A language teacher should be innovative. A teacher is sometimes seen as a repository of knowledge, knowing a bit of everything. The musical composition should be a technique that a language teacher needs to cultivate. Composing songs using the language items to be taught would surely make a class more lively and learning easier. Songs could be composed using existing rhythms or new ones.

### **Guide to Preparing for a Music Class**

The aim of every teacher is first of all to impart knowledge. The knowledge to be imparted is: centrally developed by the government through the policy-making bodies, and handed over to the Ministry of Education for further interpretation and breaking down as the curriculum. A parastatal of the Ministry of Education sees to the day-to-day running of the schools and the implementation of the education policies. From the syllabus, the teacher breaks down the curriculum or syllabus into weekly or daily lesson notes.

- If an educator wishes to use a song as a technique to attain any of the classroom objectives, there is a need to prepare the song beforehand. There is a need to:
  - Choose a song that targets the objective of the lesson, the language level of the learners, as well as the duration of the lesson.
  - Number the lines of the song by 5 to allow clear and convenient references.
  - Make copies before lesson delivery.
  - Ensure good audio quality by playing the recording for the first time before lesson delivery, through a tape recorder or whatever gadget you have at your disposal. In the absence of any gadgets practice singing the song before class to ensure mastery.
  - Distribute copies to learners in class or project the song on a screen.
  - Give them enough time to read and observe the song.
  - Ask them questions that encourage them to read the text.

Just as the teacher's task requires him to plan his lesson before entering to deliver it in class, a song as an object of study must be planned. A lesson plan is a document prepared by teachers and trainers that outlines course objectives, activities and tasks, resources, materials, schedules, and more.

Before you start writing a lesson plan for your class, you should have a clear understanding of the specific objective of your lesson, its requirements, and the needs of your learners.

### **Practical Application**

**Topic:** Un drôle de restaurant (A song)

**Level of the learner:** Beginners (Level A1)

**Duration of class:** 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours

**Specific Objectives:** By the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- (i) Say the foods that could be served in a restaurant.
- (ii) Mention them to order them.
- (iii) Make simple negative sentences.
- (v) Use the correct partitive articles.
- (vi) Express displeasure when not satisfied

### **Teaching Procedure**

**Entry behaviour:** The students already know how to greet in French. They can obey and give

simple instructions like the one in the song. They already know the names of foods in their language. (The teacher can ascertain this necessary background knowledge by asking them questions such as the following: How did you greet me when I came in? If my friend Mrs Eze were with me how would you greet us? What if it was Mr Obi standing in front of you, how would you greet him?)

Announce to them what the specific objectives for the lesson are and that the song below would guide the learning.

**Play the song below or sing it at least two times.**

**The original song in French**

**English Translation of the song**

**UN DROLE DE RESTAURANT**

**UN DROLE DE RESTAURANT**

Bonjour Madame, asseyez-vous

Hello Madam, have a seat

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Bonjour Madame, asseyez-vous

Hello Madam, have a seat

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il y a du pâté?

Is there pie?

Il n'y a pas de pâté.

There is no pie.

Il n'y a pas de pâté ?

There is no pie?

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il n'y a pas de pâté

There is no pie.

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il y a du poulet?

Is there chicken?

Il n'y a pas de poulet

There is no chicken.

Il n'y a pas de poulet ?

There is no chicken?

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il n'y a pas de poulet

There is no chicken.

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il y a du riz?

Is there rice?

Il n'y a pas de riz

There is no rice.

Il n'y a pas de riz ?

There is no rice?

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il n'y a pas de riz

There is no rice.

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Il y des fruit?

Are there fruits?

Il n'y a pas de fruits

There are no fruits.

Il n'y a pas de fruits! Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous? Il n'y a pas de fruits Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous? {Il n'y a pas de pâté! Il n'y a pas de poulet! Il n'y a pas de riz! Il n'y a pas de fruits!}2x {Alors je m'en vais Au revoir Monsieur Ce restaurant n'est pas sérieux}2x	There are no fruits? Here's the menu, what do you want? There are no fruits. Here's the menu, what do you want? There is no pie. There is no chicken. There is no rice. There are no fruits. }2x  {So I'm leaving Goodbye, sir. This restaurant is not serious}2x
---	--

**Encourage the students to listen and understand the song by asking them these questions?**

Qui parlent dans la chanson? Who are speaking in the song?

Où sont-ils? Where are they?

Que veut celui qui pose les questions? What does the questioner want?

**Distribute the typed song filled with blanks corresponding to the words students are expected to find as shown below.**

Bonjour Madame, asseyez-vous

Voilà la -----que voulez-vous?

Il y a -----?

Il n'y a pas de pâté

Il y a -----?

Il n'y a pas de poulet

Il y a -----?

*Il n'y a pas de fruits.*

*Il n'y a pas de fruits* U

*Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous* U

*Il n'y a pas --- pâté!*

*Il n'y a pas --- poulet!*

*Il n'y a pas de riz!*

*Il n'y a pas de fruits!}2x*

*{Alors je m'en vais*

*Au revoir Monsieur*

*Ce restaurant n'--- pas sérieux}2x*

**Play the music again and ask them to fill the gaps as they hear them in the song.**

**Discover the tone of the song by asking the following questions:**

*Qui parlent ici? Que lui offre le serveur ? (Answer: Une chaise)*

*Pourquoi?*

*Le client trouve ce qu'il veut ?*

*Il s'assied?*

*Pourquoi pas?*

*Comment est-ce qu'il décrit le restaurant ?*

*Que fait le client ensuite ?*

*Comment est le client? (Possible answers: il est déçu. Il a faim.)*

**Proceed to thematic analysis through the study of vocabulary and the lexical field and semantic fields of the theme raised.**

The following questions would be useful in doing that:

Name some of the foods mentioned in the song.

Where do you find the foods prepared in a restaurant?

Say the French sentences that can translate the sentences below.

### Questions

### Possible answers

Here's the menu, what do you want?

Voilà la carte, que voulez-vous?

Is there pie?

Il y a du pâté.

Is there rice?

Il y a du riz.

Is there chicken?

Il y a du poulet.

There is no rice,

Il n'y a pas de riz.

There is no chicken

Il n'y a pas de poulet.

There is no pie.

Il n'y a pas de pâté.

There are no fruits.

Il n'y a pas de fruits.

Note that nothing prevents the teacher from replaying the music if at any point it is discovered that the learners are not following.

### Class Evaluation

The following evaluation techniques can be used to evaluate the learners: Singing the song, repeating, role-playing (between waiter and customer), adding to the song by finding names of other French foods, fill-in-the-blank cards, and questions/answers.

### Conclusion

French language like any other foreign language needs extra time and attention to be learnt and taught. But with enough motivation, a lot of progress can be made. Among the many motivation techniques that the foreign language teacher can use, music seems to be of very high consequence as it creates a learning environment that better disposes the learner to a better and deeper understanding of the lesson while having fun. Music/song has a phenomenal way of calming tension. It, therefore, puts the language learner in a state that makes him best disposed of for learning thus making the pedagogue's job easier as language teaching and learning becomes fun when done in a tension-free setting.

Teaching French through songs sharpens the brain, makes learning a stress-free and enjoyable experience and removes some obstacles that make foreign language acquisition difficult. Music could be used to teach any language item ranging from vocabulary, sentence structures and sentence patterns, and grammar. The four language competencies which are oral comprehension, oral expression, written comprehension and written expression can all be acquired through music-based pedagogy, as associating words with a melody makes their learning easier.

Foreign language teachers of French are encouraged to explore this technique of language teaching as they would be amazed at the positive results that accrue from it, on the part of the

learners and their part. For best results though, adequate planning of the lesson before delivery is a sine qua non.

### References

- Arieo, A. (2000). Song and foreign language teaching” *Cahiers de l'APLIUT*. Année 200 19-4 5-19.
- Batista, J. S. (2008). Music and song: A learning tool. *Dialogos Pertinentes- Revista Gentifica de letras. Franca(SP)*, 4(4), 155-178.
- Boukhatem, N. (2015). Promoting students' motivation in EFL classroom through extended music education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 19(9), 368-371.
- Dolz-Mestre, J. & Schneuwly, B. (2009). *Pour un enseignement de l'oral: Initiation aux genres formels à l'école*. (4th ed.). Issy-les-Moulineaux : ESF éditeur. (Didactique du Français) <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:31461>
- Kara, Z. E. & Aksel A. S. (2013). The effectiveness of music in grammar teaching on the motivation and success of the students at the preparatory school at Uludag University. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 106, 2739-2745.
- Leith, W.D. (1979). *Advanced French conversation through popular music*. *The French review*, 52, 537-551.
- Murphey, T. (1992). *Music and song*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) (2006). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pozuelo, L. W. (2007). Comment exploiter une chanson en classe de FLEQ La revista de educación May 2007, 12 Aldadis.net.