

## **SONGS AND MUSIC AS TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FRENCH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The world of our time is going music wise. Most of the people in the world nowadays are adherents of music. It is no doubt that youths today can be qualified as being considerable addicted to music as they can barely do nothing without it. Many young ones and even some adults inclusive are inclined to listening to music than for them to read novels or books. Their areas of interest on daily life's activities could be much more concentrated on recreations and music. Some are addicted to music to the extent that they could hardly perform any task a day without music. In view of this, in order to attract or support learners' learning sensation, songs and music can be effective and beneficial tools to teach French language to our students with great pleasure. Considering the advantages of these tools will help in looking into how the learners could be motivated by them to develop some skills in foreign (French) language's linguistic structures through melodious songs. In this paper, we have anticipated to delve into how the use of songs and music can help learners improve in developing the four linguistic skills (oral and written expressions as well as oral and written comprehension), reflect culture and increase their feeling of pleasure in learning French language.

*Key words:* songs and music, tools, linguistic competence

### **Introduction**

There is a lot of methods being in use by language teachers nowadays by which students can be helped to learn foreign language(s). Singing and listening to music are the most enjoyable activities for learning both for children and adults as well. However, it should be noted that as climate changes in the ever dynamic world, students' attitude to learning also changes. Hence, the teacher

needs to get along sometimes with the trend or pace with which his learners' interest to acquisition of knowledge changes especially in the area of modern language acquisition. French language is known to be a musical, a romantic and a language of melody. Music is an organized sound produced by human in his society to soften mind or to elevate spirit. Music has a powerful impact on human as it can serve as stress reliever, morale builder and pain/emotional reliever. Consequently, insomuch as learners are these days well-disposed to music, one of the best ways French as a foreign language can be learnt is through songs and music. At times, students can be noticed as being bored with theoretical aspect of learning. They could therefore find it pleasurable sometimes to learn some aspects of language structures through songs. For a certainty, it is not a gainsaying or an exaggeration recognizing music as part of man's everyday life. Actually, life without music could be tagged as incomplete in its entirety as "music and songs are part of everyone's life" (Vishnevskaja and Zhou, 2019:1809). The world of today is going euphonious, indeed musically conscious. Today's youths and even some adults too are inclined to listening to music than reading novels or books. Their areas of interest on life's activities could be much more concentrated in recreations and music. Some are even addicted to music that they could hardly do anything a day without it. In view of this, it would be helpful to look into how these young ones could be helped to develop some language acquisition by means of songs and music.

### **The influence of music on human psyche**

Music is a wonderful artery to human mind. It is part of every day's life of every human because life itself without music could be incomplete. Music plays a very important role in healing, relieving the pain, stress, mental or emotional worries, and increasing memory and mental alertness. This was evidently proved in a king's case in the Holy Scriptures. When God's spirit left king Saul and bad spirit terrorized him, his servants, knowing the power of music in soothing troubled mind, recommended him the following in 1 Samuel 16:16,23: Let our lord, please command your servants before you to look for a man skilled at playing the harp. Whenever a bad spirit from God comes upon you, he will play it and you will feel better ... David took the harp and played it, and Saul found relief and felt better, and the bad spirit would depart from him.

Undeniably, it can be seen here that music has the ability to produce or impact positive influence on a distressful mental state. As we perceive here, music helped in boosting king Saul's mood for better and reduced and/ or ease his depressive thoughts drastically. Music could be seen as a force

connected to emotions that evokes feelings of happiness, sadness, excitement or anxiety (Zhang, 2020; Kopczynski, 2021). In fact, “music alone with sudden charms can bind the wandering sense, and calm the troubled mind” (Awake, 1999:15). Furthermore, Awake (1999:15) agrees that music has a power as it can play on “the gamut of human emotion – from sadness and phantos to love and joy”. Of course, music appeals to virtually the full range of human emotions. Awake (2011: 8) bears out that music soothes and excites us, uplifts and inspires us. It moves us to ecstasy and reduces our anxieties. Moreover, because music speaks straight to our heart, it has power and can influence us on the deepest level. Music is a language of both the mind and the heart (Awake, 2008: 7); for this very reason, wholesome and qualitative music that can influence positive development of human mind should be available to all—young and old as this can contribute positively to learning a foreign language.

We all, both young and old, have an innate ability to learn something new in life including an innate ability to learn a language. However, this may at times seem non assertive, cumbersome and/ or uninteresting for students to properly enjoy learning a modern language. As a way of motivating students to learn, the teacher can do his best to help bring about an effective outcome in language learning. A practical model to achieve this is by making use of songs and music to bring about a laudable performance. The use of songs and music can have an impact on anxiety, timidity and even on motivation of the learners which could in turn affect their language acquisition positively (Degrave, 2019). Džanić and Pejić (2016:44) expressed that by using songs, children can get the feeling of success and of being “encouraged and motivated to participate in the activity, as well as a sense of enjoyment of singing with the rest of the group”. Indeed, learners love to sing songs as it is a fun way to have them practice pronunciation, memorizing words, phrases and complete sentences (Kopczynski, 2021). Indeed, songs and music can be appealing to students’ learning style as a desired and effective tool for teaching them a foreign language. Songs can be used in a foreign language piece of work to bring about some vocabulary and linguistic acquisition. Millington (2011:136) asserts that “most children enjoy singing and usually respond well to using song in the classroom” because apart from enjoying fun, this stimulates students’ interest and attention which motivate them to engage in foreign language learning with a sense of reaching high level of linguistic achievements.

**Benefits of songs/music in learning situation**

Music is considered by Israel (2013) as a form of emotional communication that inspires, motivates, soothes, and relaxes learners depending on their taste. For many learners, French language proves to be a very difficult subject for them to learn. Hence, teachers can initiate activities that can help them learn better with great interest. One way of doing this is by incorporating songs and music in the classroom teaching for a desired result. A host of researchers (Israel, 2013; Dolean, 2015, Benett, 2019 and Adjepong, 2020) have carried out works on the use of songs and music in encouraging and motivating learning. Songs and music are not just created for nothing. They have their advantages in bestowing and building up memory of learners in enjoyable ways. They are very useful tool in language acquisition as they can be used to grab or to capture learners' attention, helping them repeat words for retention and happily they will use their initiative to practice the language (Brendan, 2019; Koch, 2017). So, singing in a foreign language can make it easier to learn such a language. Barker (1999) reiterates by saying that Singing is a particularly beneficial way of learning to construct phrases and sentences for the words they [learners] are using will be much more memorable as part of a song.

Singing a foreign language song, French for instance, can help the learners of French language recognize and memorize more words (vocabularies) that they can make use of in their day-to-day activities with their colleagues and/ or with the autochthones. Berman (2014) agrees that music “attaches the student to vocabulary in ways that rote memorization does not”. Beside recognizing words and memorizing them, listening and singing songs in French by learners together in the classroom can equally improve their social awareness and communication skills. Burke (2013) expressed that there are tremendous ways we can use music/songs to develop listening skills, explore moods, and absorb things about cultures. Songs and music have that power that can appeal to both mind and heart as they can touch and affect positively the cerebral, and emotion even improves performance whenever one is under pressure. Adjepong (2018) reiterates that singing enhances learners' “mental well-being, and give them more positive attitude” to learn especially when they find themselves in a difficult learning situation. Kopczynksi (2021) concurred that “music activates the auditory cortex part of our brain” which in turn helps us “remember the words without knowing their meaning”. Awake (1999) asserts that Music can affect minds and hearts and can be used to manipulate them either for good or bad. For example, exposure of young children

to certain types of music is believed to enhance their intellectual and emotional development. Even stammerers can sometimes sing sentences that they cannot speak

Human beings, young or old have different ways they can be influenced and inspired emotionally and intellectually to achieve a desired goal and this may at times be through music. Franzoni and Assar (2009) recognize that some people “assimilate in a better way the knowledge received visually, auditory or through a certain sense”. Listening to and singing songs/music for the academic purpose can stimulate and even inspire action in learners to assimilate a vocabulary, sound production and other linguistic aspects better. Kouri & Winn (2006), Legg (2009) and Smith (2015) accentuate the use of music to teach vocabulary to young students as well as encouraging them to listen and participate in singing songs in the classroom. This can be effective in inculcating the knowledge of vocabulary of a foreign language like French in their mind. Of course, music and songs can be such a teaching approach that motivates young and adult learners alike to learn French language skillfully. When songs/ music are effectively exploited by the teacher, this would assuredly enhance and make his teaching more enjoyable by bringing both students and teacher closer to themselves (Bokiev, Bokiev, Aralas, Ismail and Othman, 2018). Everyone in the class, irrespective of his biological and psychological bearings, can participate joyfully in learning French language through delightful songs in the class. The shy/timid ones can find it motivating to eagerly participate in learning through this medium. Even a chronic stammerer can participate joyfully in this situation of learning as he could sing fluently long verses successfully in the language without any interruption. It would be very beneficial to learners when the teachers use French songs to help their learners pick up their French lesson through these enjoyable activities. Brendan (2019) agrees that “when applied effectively, ... music and songs can be highly engaging teaching strategies”. Songs have favourable impacts on language learning process. One thing is that songs and music are motivating factor to learning a foreign language. The exploitation of songs in the class helps in improving learners’ listening skills. It may equally influence them to change their behaviour from negative to a positive attitude to learning.

In fact, nothing can be compared as being as effective and motivating as music in learners language class. When songs are introduced as instructional outfit in language, learners find it fantastic and a fun activity that they enjoy most. Ara (2009) acknowledges the unlimited benefits

of songs in motivating learners to face up with their study and in calming the disturbed mind of learners saying:

When children do not pay attention to boring instruction in a language class as they are unaware of the significance of learning a language, they learn a language very naturally if they enjoy what they are doing in the class.

The point here is that, sometimes, teachers of the foreign language should make their class more enjoyable, lively and make the teaching and learning of the language as naturally as possible. Songs and music can be very effective tools employed by teachers to teach learners of foreign language like French in Nigeria. Psychologically, this of course can appeal to the learners' learning styles. Israel (2013) reiterates that "music creates opportunities for learners to develop a healthy self-concept, work as individual, and develop skills..." Indeed, when songs are used in language class, learners tend to pay more attention to the instruction passed and for the fact that they find learning amusing, they learn unconsciously and they enjoy the learning. In this way, learning takes place naturally and learners feel better about themselves and as a result, this makes them perform very much better because they perceive learning as an enjoyable activity.

Learners think more of songs or music as entertainment rather than study and for this very reason, they find learning French language to be fun and enjoyable if the teacher could use song(s) to enhance learners' interest (Millington, 2011: 136). In fact, using song and music effectively to boost learners' interest and motivation can really help them tremendously in retaining words and expressions and encourage them to freely communicate in the target language with friends and/or the native speakers.

### **Choice of songs or music for classroom learning**

To choose a song to use for teaching foreign language either audio or practical demonstration, the teacher must follow some modalities. It is no gainsaying that songs and music soothe the heart to increase an activity, we should get to understand that not all types of songs and music are healthy and beneficial. To choose a song or music for classroom use, the teacher must endeavour to consider the level of students' background knowledge on the language. He should first review closely the following: does this song I am about to use relate to the lesson? Is the song relevant to the aspiration/ purpose of my lesson? Will my students be able to easily learn the words of the song? Does the content of the song correspond to the theme to be discussed in class? Will it

enhance my students' learning in grabbing what I am about to teach? If yes could be the answer to these self-examining questions, then the song is adequate and students will definitely focus their attention on and grasp certain language features you are presenting/teaching. When the teacher uses inappropriate song to teach French as foreign language, it can make learners to face some difficulties in learning the language. So, the teacher should make adequate plan to select simple and educative songs that can motivate learners to learn the language according to their level. The teacher can consider a song that has some phonological, grammatical or lexical contents that he would like to use to teach the learners. The aim of the teacher should be to help learners acquire "knowledge of the vocabulary and the grammar" including the sounds of French language in a natural way (Ikediashi, 2003:368). For the young learners, it would be fine if the teacher plan for songs that have repetitive choruses that create chance/ opportunity for the learners to pronounce some basic sounds.

### **Making learners participate and practice chosen/selected song(s)**

To utilize a particular song with the learners, the teacher will have to consider three steps if he is dealing with an audio or recorded song. The first is pre-listening (the teacher needs to first arouse the learners' curiosity, preparing their mind on the task before them and he now introduces the title of the song to the learners), the second is listening period (teacher should allow learners to listen attentively to the song once. He should develop in learners the desire to learn. He may write a list of words on the board and let them take active participation by asking them to circle words they hear in the song) and the post-listening (the teacher gives them the transcription of the song, asks them to identify a number of elements in the clip such as difficult words, tenses in the clip ...) He thereafter considers the phonological, grammatical, cultural ... aspects of the language he has earlier planned to explore.

On the other hand, when it concerns a song initiated by the teacher to be sung together in the class, he should likewise consider the following three steps: the warm-up (the teacher mentions the title or probably the preamble to the song), singing the song (the teacher allows the learners to first listen attentively as he sings it for them once or twice, depending on the length of the song, then the learners follow in singing together with him) and the post-singing (the teacher writes out the wording of the song for the learners to see. He then proceeds on the aspects of the lesson



envisaged). The point is that the teacher should let his learners listen attentively and participate in singing to articulate properly the sounds and/ or words before providing the text.

### **Examples of an adaptation of short but simple songs**

Learners of all ages (young or adult) are naturally inclined to know things more efficiently if conveyed in cadence (Brendan, 2019). Naturally, our brain is capable of processing easily data and even language in different forms if presented in a given tempo. Songs can therefore be best used to bring out this treasure from our brain. However, the choice of a song should be in consideration of the level of the learners so that the teacher does not add to the learners' problems. This exercise should motivate and create a happy mood in learners to learn. Let's consider here some examples of songs to be sung in the class and the aspects learners are to enjoy in learning, putting into consideration three different levels of language education: (1) the beginners (2) the intermediates and (3) the advanced levels.

(1). The beginners:

i. Memorizing of greetings in French

Bonjour Bukola  
Bonjour Bukola  
Comment vas-tu?  
Comment vas-tu?  
Je vais très bien merci  
Je vais très bien merci  
A bientôt  
A bientôt

This short but repetitive song helps the beginners learning French language to be acquainted with simple greetings among friends. The song is initiated by the teacher.

ii. Memorizing some parts of human body in French

Tête, épaule, jambe, pied  
Tête, épaule, jambe, pied  
Yeux, Oreilles,



La bouche, le nez

Tête, épaule, jambe, pied

jambe, pied (3X)

The aim of the teacher here is to inculcate into learners' mind how to recognize and memorize parts of the human body with this exciting song to motivate them. He can even ask individual after the song to mention two parts of the body they have retained in French. They will surely be eager to mention some more. From there, assignment could be given to them. The teacher can ask them to write down other five parts of the body apart from those sung in the song.

(2). The intermediate level

**Titre:** joie des vacances

Mes amis

Reprenons gaîment

Le chemin

De notre maisonnette

Mes amis

Reprenons gaîment

Le chemin de notre logement

Allons, amusons-nous

Pendant le temps de nos vacances

Allons, amusons-nous

Ces beaux jours-là sont perdus pour nous.

With this level, the teacher may consider to work many aspects of linguistic skills with the learners such as pronunciation, vocabulary, tense of the verb, and even aspects in culture and civilization.

## Pronunciation

/ã/ → gaîment or gaiement /gẽã/; vacance /vakã/; temps /tã/; pendant /pãdã/  
/õ/ → reprenons /RẽpRẽnõ/; allons /alõ/; amusons /amyzõ/; sont /sõ/  
/z/ → maisonnette /mẽzõnẽt/, amusons /amyzõ/, mes amis /mẽzami/

/ʃ/ → chemin /ʃəmɛ̃/

Liaison → mes amis /mɛzami/

### **Vocabulary**

Gaîment or gaiement (cheerfully) comes from adjective gai(e) = cheerful, fun, nice, pleasant

Chemin = path, track, way road

Maisonnnette = small house. It comes from the word maison which means house. \* The fragment “ette” usually denotes something smaller in French. Learners can be helped to discover some other words with that structure: camionnette, lunette, chevrete, marionnette ...

Beau(x) = beautiful, handsome, lovely, fine, noble (beaux jours = beautiful/ lovely days)

Amusons = from verb “amuser” = to amuse

Perdus = from verb “perdre” = to loose, to miss (ces beaux jours-là sont perdus pour nous = we have missed those beautiful/lovely days).

With this exercise, learners tend to increase firmly their pronunciation and vocabulary skills. The accumulated knowledge of new words can also be used in sentences to improve the quality of their communication skills.

3- Advanced level

Une photo, une date,

C'est à n'y pas croire

***C'était*** pourtant ***hier***,

***Mentirait*** ma mémoire

Et ces visages d'enfants,

Et le mien dans ce miroir

Oh, c'est pas pour me plaindre,

Ça vous n'avez rien à craindre

La vie m'a ***tellement*** gâtée,

J'ai plutôt du mal à l'éteindre

Oh mon dieu, j'ai eu ma part,

Et bien plus à tant d'égards

Mais quand on vit trop beau, trop fort,

On en oublie le temps qui passe

Comme on *perd* un peu le nord

Au *milieu* de trop vastes espaces

A peine le temps de s'y faire

À peine, on doit laisser la place

Oh, si je *pouvais*...

Encore un soir, encore une *heure*

Encore une larme de *bonheur*

*Une faveur*

*Comme une fleur*

Un souffle,

Une *erreur*

Un *peu* de nous,

Un *rien* de tout

Pour tout se dire encore

Ou bien se *taire* en regards

Juste un report,

À peine encore,

Même s'il est tard

J'ai *jamais* rien demandé

Ça *c'est* pas la *mer* à boire !

Allez ! Face à *l'éternité*,

Ça va *même* pas se voir

Ça *restera* entre nous,

Oh, juste un léger retard

Y'en a tant qui tuent le temps,

Tant et tant qu'ils le *perdent* ou le passent

Tant qui se mentent inventant les *rêves en* des instant de grâce

Oh, je donne ma place au paradis

Si l'on m'oublie sur **Terre**

Encore **hier**...

Encore un soir, encore une **heure**

Encore une larme de *bonheur*

*Une faveur*

*Comme une fleur*

Un souffle,

Une *erreur*

Un *peu* de nous

Rien de tout

Pour tout se dire encore

Ou *bien* se taire en regards

Juste un report

À peine encore

Je sais, il est tard

C'est pas grand-chose

**Rien** qu'une pause

Que le temps, les horloges se reposent

Et caresser, juste un baiser

Un baiser

Encore un soir

Encore une **heure**

Un peu de nous

Un rien de tout ....

Un soir

With this level, the teacher may equally consider to work many aspects of linguistic skills with the learners such as pronunciation, vocabulary, tense of the verb, and even aspects in culture and

civilization but in a deeper sense including the transcription and the comprehension using the first approach suggested above.

First, the teacher lets the learners listen and pay attention to the song for the first time while he cloisters its transcription. After the first listening, he may ask the following questions:

- Est-ce que vous aimez la chanson ?
- Est-ce que la chanson est intéressante pour vous ?

He makes them listen to the song once again. After the second listening, he may ask for example:

- Comment s'appelle l'auteur de la chanson ?
- De quel pays vient l'auteur ? (a) - France (b) - Canada (c) - Espagne
- Quelle émotion suscite la chanson en vous ? (a) - la joie (b) - la peur (c) - la tristesse

He makes them listen to the song the third time. After the third listening, he may ask:

- Quelles images trouvez-vous dans la chanson ?
- Quel est le titre de la chanson ?
- Quels sont les mots que vous pouvez relever de la chanson ?
- Quels sont les deux sons les plus dominants de la chanson ?
- Quels sont les temps des verbes dans le clip ?

From this song, the teacher can make the learners work different sounds. He can ask them to note the words where the following sounds are found: /œ/ ; /ɛ/ ; /j/ ; /ø/ ; /ɔ/. These sounds are important to us here because learners find mostly difficult to pronounce these very sounds due to their absence in learners' native language (Yoruba). The teacher can therefore do well to help his learners articulate very well those sounds they find strange in order for them to be more efficient in pronouncing them.

## Conclusion

Songs/music boosts learning especially a foreign language. The use of songs and music in the teaching and learning of French language is very useful in motivating the learners to learn the language. Music is fun and French is a language of music so learners can have fun learning French language through music. By trying to sing genuine/ authentic song, learners would grasp the opportunity to listen and get along with the pronunciation in wide-ranging varieties of that language. Songs and music of course are unquestionably motivating factors for learning as they

“offer a realistic context for developing all the four language skills” such as listening, speaking, reading and writing which could be integrated into pronunciation of French words, basic vocabulary and grammar (Bokiev, Bokiev, Aralas, Ismail and Othman, 2018). Songs and music can equally gear them up to build more interest in the topic/lesson taught by the teacher. The song sung in the classroom could help to keep in memory some vocabularies which they can use on daily conversation or writing. This can equally help in pronouncing correctly some words that may seem difficult for learners to express. So the use of songs and music fantastically allows and enhances learners to be eager to learn and present points in French language without much stress.

### **Recommendations/ Suggestions**

In view of the tremendous effects songs have on learning and the multiple benefits learners may derive from the use of songs and music to learn a foreign language like French in Nigeria, this paper suggests the following recommendations:

- Teachers of French language should endeavour to consider using songs and music in the class to enhance their teaching
- They should endeavour to purposefully choose songs that focus attention on pronunciation, vocabulary and some other aspects of grammar which will increase learners’ communication skills
- Teachers of French language should equally plan and choose adequate songs/music that impact instruction so that learners may retain more expressive and receptive vocabulary and other linguistic skills which in return could be used in their daily communication in the language.

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