

MUSICAL WORDS AND THEIR ROLE IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract:

Teachers, especially foreign language instructors, need innovative methods to create an engaging and supportive learning environment. One approach is using musical words through poems, songs, and similar texts. This article explores their role and benefits in foreign language learning.

Keywords

musical words – word music – foreign language learning – second language – teaching methods – instructional strategies

Introduction:

Through my experience teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, I have found that employing the musicality of the Arabic language is an effective solution to many challenges faced by both teachers and learners. This research aims to reveal the benefits of word music in teaching foreign languages in general and Arabic in particular. These benefits include:

1. Addressing the Problem of Monotony and Boredom:

During lessons, students often feel bored and disengaged due to the monotonous teaching methods used by the teacher. Therefore, teachers need innovative ways to create an enjoyable and supportive learning environment that makes students happy and eager to participate. One such method is using musical words in teaching Arabic through songs and other texts rich in musical elements. This approach introduces enjoyment, delight, and joy into students' learning experience, thereby effectively addressing the problem of monotony and boredom.

Several studies support this. For example, Asma bint Masoud's study on the effectiveness of using songs in teaching linguistic skills in Malaysian public high schools showed that songs helped alleviate students' boredom and frustration when learning Arabic, as they are attractive and enjoyable [4:117].

Similarly, Ahmed Khalaf Youssef, in his study on the effectiveness of songs in addressing phonetic difficulties for non-native learners of Arabic, argued that using songs in teaching Arabic helps break the usual classroom routine, thereby stimulating activity and energy in both teachers and learners [6:139].

2. Enhancing Linguistic Wealth and Improving Language Performance

Musical words encourage learners to repeat, chant, and sing texts, aiding memorization and enhancing linguistic fluency. Using short, melodic pieces – such as poems, proverbs, or sayings – helps improve pronunciation, eloquence, and expressive delivery, while enriching vocabulary and structures for speech and writing. Asma bint Masoud's study in Malaysian high schools found that learning vocabulary through songs improved memory and acquisition, boosting reading and writing skills in the experimental group, and recommends songs to address difficulties in memorizing Arabic vocabulary [4:117- 118].

Moreover, using songs in teaching Arabic increases knowledge of words, their synonyms, and antonyms, thereby enriching the learner's language [6:139].

Fatima Shaqini and Bekhadi Mohamed, in their study on the role of songs and memorized texts in teaching and learning Arabic, recommend activating the role of songs and memorized texts in the educational process because of their positive emotional and cognitive effects. These effects lead to improving learners' language performance, refining their language, and expanding their linguistic and intellectual wealth by adding new terms that help them express themselves more effectively.

Based on this, the researchers concluded that songs and memorized texts are important classroom activities that significantly contribute to developing learners' language performance. They support healthy linguistic growth, cultivate a taste and enthusiasm for the Arabic language, enhance memorization and recall abilities, raise awareness of the beauty of words, and increase overall language acquisition skills [5: 319- 320].

3. Increasing Motivation for Learning

One of the challenges that teachers may face in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers is the issue of low motivation. The insistence of some teachers on traditional teaching methods, which render students' roles passive and lack engagement, exacerbates this problem. Therefore, teachers should use instructional methods that stimulate motivation and enhance students' enthusiasm for learning [3:56- 57].

Among these methods are chanting, recitation, and singing, through which the musicality of words can be utilized to capture students' attention and increase their motivation. Studies have shown that learning Arabic through songs stimulates

learners' motivation, energizes them through poetic rhythm, and enhances their desire to learn, both inside and outside the classroom [4:117 ; 7:139].

4. Addressing Pronunciation and Phonetic Problems

Non-native learners of Arabic often encounter phonetic and pronunciation difficulties with certain letters and sounds due to language interference and the influence of their mother tongue. This can lead to transferring aspects of their native language into Arabic, as well as confusing letters that are phonetically similar, such as the pairs /s/ and /ʃ/, /ʻ/ and /ʼ/, /h/ and /ħ/, /d/ and /z/.

Such problems hinder proper language learning and may discourage learners from speaking Arabic due to shyness or fear of making errors, which undermines their confidence. Frequently, these issues persist even at advanced levels if the teacher neglects to address them. However, teachers can use the musicality of words to remediate these problems by employing songs or rhymed phrases that include target letters and compare them with similar sounds.

Studies indicate that using songs in teaching Arabic is effective for correcting pronunciation, ensuring accurate articulation, achieving proper phonetic qualities, and producing correct, clear, and aesthetically pleasing speech [1:171-172][2:16].

To verify the effectiveness of songs in addressing phonetic difficulties, Ahmed Khalaf Youssef conducted a study on the use of songs for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, using oral and written tests for two groups of learners:

- **Group 1:** Received instruction via songs.
- **Group 2:** Received instruction using traditional methods.

The results of the oral test showed that Group 1 scored 88 out of 110, while Group 2 scored 77 out of 130. The written test results showed that Group 1 scored 81 out of 110, whereas Group 2 scored 66 out of 130 [6:151].

These results demonstrate that using songs in teaching Arabic is an effective method for addressing pronunciation and phonetic problems.

5. Addressing Shyness and Introversion

Some learners may suffer from shyness and introversion, hesitating to speak individually, which prevents them from participating in classroom discussions. Using songs and other rhythmically musical texts that can be recited collectively helps address this issue. This approach allows learners to engage with their peers in chanting and repeating texts aloud without fear or embarrassment [5:307]. Additionally, when learners chant together, they feel a sense of self-importance and perceive themselves as active and influential participants [1:226].

Based on this, Fatima Shaqini and Bekhadi Mohamed, in their study on the role of songs and memorized texts in teaching Arabic, concluded that collectively performed songs and chants are effective in helping shy learners who fear speaking

individually. These activities encourage participation in all classroom tasks and promote social and linguistic engagement [5: 318–319].

Conclusion

Using the musicality of Arabic words effectively addresses challenges in teaching and learning Arabic, including monotony, low motivation, pronunciation issues, and shyness. It also enhances linguistic wealth, language performance, learning motivation, and provides a gateway to Arabic literature.

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