MindBrained Think Tank+

Music

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MindBrained Think Tank+

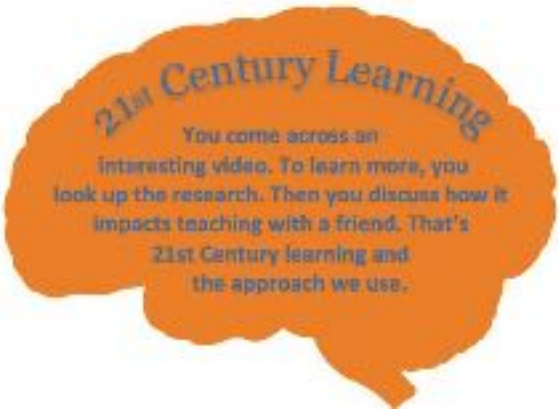
Music and Art in the Language Classroom

This month's source (it helps if you listen to it first): 日本語の字幕

DEEP	Tania de Jong's TEDxMelbourne Talk on how singing together changes the brain.	
LITE	Professor Sarah Wilson on How Music Works	

In this issue:

Tania de Jong, in her TED Talk and the article she has written for us, tells us about the wonderful benefits of singing together. Pushing the idea that creativity is the strategic tool of the 21st century, she says our voices have been silenced and that it's not doing us any good. She explains how singing is a survival mechanism, how it makes our hearts beat together, and how it can help us heal strokes and depression.



Skye Playsted follows up by telling us how music has helped her build literacy with refugees in Australia. **Herman Bartelen** reviews the science that advocates using music with young learners and offers suggestions on how to do so. Doing whole songs can be hard to schedule in, so **Tim Murphy** shows us how to use shorter "songlets" in class. Then, **Amanda Gillis-Furutaka** takes us into the mysterious corners of the brain and shows us how we use more than just the auditory cortex to "listen" to music: it is a whole brain experience. **David McLeish** continues that trajectory by taking us out of the auditory altogether; he explains how visual art in the classroom can be a vehicle for ideas. Indeed, this issue breathes talent. And for this month's *Plus*, **Jason Gold** tells us about a book that can help us cultivate our talents even more.

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About this issue: Music

Tania de Jong

12 Reasons to Make Singing Your Happiness Drug!

I don't drink or smoke, but I do get high! The fact is that, since I was of a drinking age, I have got high on singing, especially singing with other people in shows, choirs, groups and so on. The joy and bliss I feel when I sing is at a whole other level and the positive effects just keep compounding.

When I was fourteen, I desperately wanted to have singing lessons and my best friend started sessions. One night after school I went to her place and asked her to teach me one of the songs she had learnt. She told me that I should never bother having singing lessons as I was not good enough! I believed her (just like many of us believed it when we were told we couldn't sing), but finally in Year 11 I got up the courage to audition for the chorus of the school musical, Oklahoma. I received the lead role. Singing has been the greatest joy, passion and sustenance to me ever since.

Silent Voices

Can't sing? Won't sing? Told not to sing? Like me, about 85% of people have been told by their parents, children, partners or teachers that they can't sing. Our voices have been silenced and it's not doing us any good.

There was a time when everyone used to sing. We sat around campfires, at church and at school. We sang our stories and our dreams. We sang alone and we sang together. Nowadays not many of us sing. We worry that people will think we are strange or that we will be judged and found not as good as the celebrities we idolise.

Singing is not about being a star or knowing how to do it well. It's about enjoying the gift of our voices and sharing them with others:

We were born to sing. It's primal and it's tribal. Voice is the language of our hearts. It's how we express ourselves. And it's very important to our mental, physical and social wellbeing. Tribes have always sung and danced together to build social cohesion and ward off enemies. Singing is part of our human DNA.

Creativity Australia's *With One Voice* choirs welcome people aged 9 to 90 from all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. Through the program's unique social inclusion model, and the Wish List, diverse participants can connect to friends, mentors, wellbeing, joy, new skills and jobs.

My TED Talk How Singing Together Changes the Brain has sparked international interest, with pilot programs, *With One Voice,* now under development around Australia and globally. Creativity Australia won the 2016 Melbourne Award for Contribution to Community by a Community Organisation and has been named in the Anthill Smart 100 Innovations for the past 5 years.

"Something happened at the choir last week – I let go of my fears, inhibitions, self-consciousness; and the child within me came to the forefront. I thought 'wow, I can sing, I am doing alright, I am part of a large choir,' and my confidence kept growing. I feel on top of the world!" ***Marie***

Sing from the Heart, Spark Your Brain

Neuroscience shows that group singing makes us happier, healthier, smarter and more creative. Every time you sing, you fire up the right temporal lobe of your brain, and release endorphins, including oxytocin, which result in heightened states of pleasure, bliss, bonding and love.

These chemicals also enhance the neuroplasticity of our brains, boost our immune system, fight illness, depression and strokes and help us handle pain better. What's more, choral singers have been shown to have enhanced learning skills, synchronised heartbeats and to enter patterns of yogic breathing. To read some of the worldwide

research outcomes please visit:
https://www.creativityaustralia.org.au/research/choir-research/

So what better activity for one's mental health than a daily dose of song? **Singing together is a super-duper drug that integrates the mind and body and helps to heal our brains and enhance our learning abilities!** And it's free **because we all have a voice!**

And one of the most important things about singing is that it really connects you to the right side of your brain.

The right hemisphere of our brain is responsible for our intuition, imagination, and all our creative functions. It connects us to one another and all that is. The right side of our brain is our human battery charger.

The left side is the logical, analytical, rational side, and it keeps us separate.

Nowadays it has been estimated that we spend more than 85% of our time using the left side of our brains being overwhelmed by facts and figures. We are literally draining our batteries and isolating ourselves.

We talk more to boxes and screens than we do to one another. It is no wonder that loneliness and social isolation are considered the global epidemic of our era.

It is fundamentally important to nurture the attributes of humans that set us apart from machines: love, compassion, determination, empathy, creativity, courage and so on.

To do so, we need to recharge our brains and reconnect to a higher collective consciousness to feel better and to help solve growing social and economic problems.

Activities which recharge our brains include meditation, being in nature, connecting with loved ones and – you guessed it – singing with others!

Twelve reasons to make singing with others your drug of choice:

1. Release endorphins and increase levels of oxytocin
2. Improve posture, breathing and blood-flow
3. Save money: our voice is our free human instrument
4. Create new neural pathways and improve brain meta-plasticity
5. Ward off age-related decline by continually "exercising" your brain and improving your memory, language and concentration
6. Heal depression, strokes and speech abnormalities
7. Promote social bonding and cohesion; and rediscover your own identity
8. Relieve mental health issues; feel happier, better connected and supported
9. Connect with other diverse voices and your community
10. Be smarter, healthier, happier and more creative
11. **Raise your consciousness and build collective intelligence**

A Song for The Future

Our brains developed with singing and music as a survival mechanism. Before there were governments or nations, tribes and groups used songs and dance to build loyalty to the group, transmit vital information and ward off enemies. Those who sang survived.

As workaday stress, increasing uncertainty, accelerating technology and media consumption make us ever more isolated, rates of anxiety and depression rise. When we regularly engage in singing and other creative pursuits, we build bridges of understanding between diverse people and feel part of a bigger, connected universe.

Happy, healthy, empowered individuals and supportive communities are better-placed to solve some of society's biggest challenges, such as mental illness, loneliness and isolation, cultural tension and unemployment.

Together, we can change the world… one voice at a time.

"It's cost me virtually nothing, and yet it's given me a new dimension in my life completely – as it has the rest of us. You can't buy that." ***Gerard***

How to Find Your Voice

1. Join your *With One Voice* choir at www.creativityaustralia.org.au
2. Immerse yourself in diverse music, concerts, bands, musicals, chanting… you name it!
3. Get creative: write your own song and sing it with others

Do good. Feel good. Sing for good.

"Sing like no one's listening. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like no one's watching and live like it's heaven on earth." ***Mark Twain***

Tania de Jong **(AM)** is an acclaimed Australian soprano and one of Australia's most successful female entrepreneurs and innovators. She is the Founder of **Creative Universe, Creativity Australia, Creative Innovation Global, Dimension5 co-working hub, MTA Entertainment & Events, Pot-Pourri** and **The Song Room.** Tania presents keynote speeches and performs around the world. She has released 10 albums. She works across the public, private, creative and community sectors. **Tania's TED Talk** How Singing Together Changes the Brain **has sparked international interest.** Tania's mission is to change the world, one voice at a time!

Twitter: @TaniadeJong @CreativityAust

www.taniadejong.com www.creativeuniverse.com.au www.creativityaustralia.org.au

Two songs that stopped the killing:

Lili Marlene

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht

Think Tank: Music

Skye Playsted

Finding their Voice: Singing and Teaching with Refugees in Australia

I love to sing with my students. Trained as a music and language teacher, I've maintained a keen interest in the relationship between language skill development and singing for many years. But what is it about singing that complements language teaching so well?

Research into the relationship between music and language is fascinating and diverse. Studies in neuroscience, second language acquisition, music therapy and literacy development all show that music, and in particular singing with words, connects brain networks and has a positive effect on language learning (Jeffries, Fritz & Braun, 2003; Overy, 2006; Schlaug, 2015). Add to this the research on the social and emotional benefits of singing, especially group singing (de Jong, 2013; Wilson, Abbott, Lusher, Gentle, & Jackson, 2011), and there is little doubt that working with song and music in our ESL and EFL classes can be a rewarding experience for all involved.

If you do have any lingering doubts about the benefits of singing with your students, watch singer and motivational speaker (just two of her many roles and talents) Tania de Jong's inspiring TED talk on how singing together changes the brain. It is the introductory video for this issue. We all have a voice, Tania reminds us. Singing together can help us find our *singing* voice, and our voice in life (de Jong, 2013).

When we sing, scans have revealed different networks in the brain which are engaged. Motor, auditory, memory, planning and organization, language and emotional networks all light up in these scans, even when we are *thinking* about singing (Wilson, 2013). Reward networks are activated and dopamine is released in the brain (Jeffries et al., 2003; Wilson, 2013). Singing makes us feel good, and when we sing together, some studies even show that the breathing and heartbeat patterns of those singing start to synchronise (Müller & Lindberger, 2011).

Singing plays a part in social cohesion, motivation and group identity (Wilson et al., 2011). Some research suggests that the "preservation of actual words is higher in

singing than in storytelling" (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 2116). Such benefits are not a new thought for those in oral cultures which have long valued singing and music as a means of preserving identity, faith, culture and history. In the Yazidi community from Iraq and Syria for example, words have been preserved for centuries through hymns (called "qawls") that are passed down to each generation through singing (Allison, 2004). I have the privilege of teaching English to adult refugees from this community. Kurmanji (the Kurdish dialect spoken by most of the students I teach) is not widely taught in its written form, due to political restrictions in certain regions, and students have had few opportunities for formal education. As a result, most have not yet learned to read but have developed strong oral learning skills.

I began to search for ways to teach my students English by connecting their oral skills to emerging skills in literacy. Literate teachers, educated in cultures which prioritise written forms of communicating and recording information can find it challenging to adopt new ways of teaching that emphasise a *non*-literacy-based form of learning. As Keller (2017, p. 2) notes: "many literates…find it hard to accept that an emphasis on literacy is not always shared by other cultures". This was the place I found myself in when I started working with pre-literate adult refugee English learners. So I started to adapt my teaching style to one which prioritised oral learning skills. I am now discovering that singing is more than an enjoyable social experience for my students. It's also an important language teaching tool. Singing is a way of presenting content orally, and can form a bridge to future English literacy development (Keller, 2017; Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010).

There are several ways I incorporate singing into my lessons. With smaller groups of students at a refugee support centre where I volunteer, we usually start lessons by singing a short song together. Sometimes I create songs to suit a theme; other times I find songs from, for example Carmel Davies' and Sharon Duff's *Sing With Me* series. With beginners, a whole song may be too much to work with. I adapt songs, repeat certain sections or just teach one section of a song at a time. I learned early on that my "music teacher" ideas of what rhythmic and melodic structure is necessary in a song don't necessarily work in the language learning contexts I teach in now. Complex, musically well-formed phrases in traditional Western verse-chorus forms aren't always what's needed. Simple repetition of a melodic phrase can work well, even if it seems to me that it's "not going anywhere" musically. It needs to be enough to hook the language onto, and it needs to be planned and led just like any other teaching activity.

> ***Singing together can help us find our singing voice, and our voice in life.***

As part of the lesson, I sing in a call-and-response style with questions and answers in English. Individual students sing back a response to my sung question. I might introduce a simple sentence in a repetitive, sing-song style. We sit around a table in these lessons, where the learners are mostly mothers who have limited opportunities to learn and practice English while they're caring for their young children at home. They may have lived here for several years, but speaking fluently in English is still a challenge. I find, however that combining sentences with a simple melodic phrase promotes fluency. Students can sing the words more fluently than they can speak them. This has been noted in research which suggests that activating certain regions of the brain through singing can support "fluency-inducing effects of words produced in melody" (Jeffries et al., 2003, p. 754).

Singing with a large group of young adult refugee-background students is a real highlight in my week! We have around 70 young people across a few classes in the adult migrant English program where I live. Two other teachers and I have collaborated to include a group singing time with the combined classes each week. A local musician in the community, Josh Arnold has written and recorded songs with our students in the past. The lyrics in these songs are simple and reflect the feelings and aspirations of the students in our courses. They know the previous students who were part of the song-writing process with Josh, so the

motivation to understand, learn and sing the lyrics is understandably high: these are *their* songs.

As well as providing us with a time to experience all the benefits of shared singing, group singing has given students an opportunity to work on features of English pronunciation. We generally begin with a warm up exercise. There are a number of simple vocal warm ups and breathing exercises that can be used and I have students follow the rise and fall of my hand to become more aware of their sound as a group.

Rhythmic awareness is also important. Although extemporaneous or unrehearsed speech doesn't mark out a regular pulse, how we hear the prosodic features (rhythm, stress and rising or falling tones) of a language is influenced by our first language (Patel, 2010). As "people from different language backgrounds hear prosody quite differently" (Fraser, 2001, p. 30), it can be helpful for students to physically engage with English rhythm through body movement (Celce-Murcia, 2010). Stress often comes on the last syllable of a word in Kurdish (Rahimpour & Dovaise, 2011), so it can be difficult for these learners to hear and feel stress on initial syllables in English. We sway and tap or clap to the beat of the song, then begin to say phrases or chunks of the lyrics as they fit to these beats. One group can practise chanting these words while the other group sways to the beat.

I find that using Acton's (Acton, Baker, Burri, & Teaman, 2013) pedagogical movement patterns for specific vowels on the main stressed syllables of English words in song phrases can help students remember these sounds, linking the sounds with a visual and tactile cue. Using my hand to gesture also helps students become aware of the rise and fall of the melody in a song as I'm singing with them. Gesturing

for a particular word without singing the note can remind students of the pitch of a note and its associated word.

As a final note (I couldn't resist just one musical pun!): it is rewarding for teachers who work with refugees to watch their students grow more confident as language learners and "take risks with English" (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007, p. 13). I have seen women who can only say a few words of English give up on some classroom activities. They disparagingly wave their hands and say: "No English." But I've never seen this reaction when we sing in English. They don't give up when they're singing, which is why I love to sing with adult refugee students in my classes.

Skye Playsted *is a teacher who studied ethnomusicology, cello and German. She taught German and music for 20 years and has always enjoyed singing and playing music with others. She now has a Graduate Certificate in TESOL and teaches English in a government-funded adult migrant English program in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Skye is completing her M Ed via distance education through the University of Wollongong in New South Wales, Australia.*

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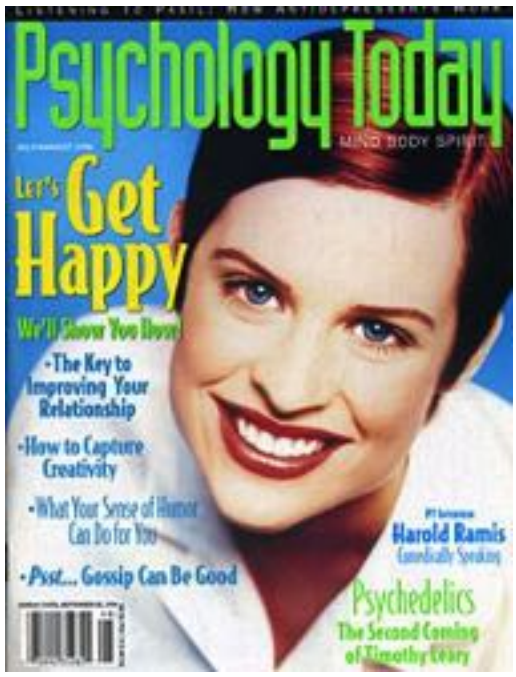
*Are artists different from the rest of us? Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of **Flow**, thinks so. Take a look at this fascinating article he wrote. And this piece by Epstein from the same issue, on how to increase creativity, is also a good read.*

This month's contributors, does Mihaly's article ring a bell? Tell us on Facebook!



Think Tank: Music

Herman Bartelen

Turn Up the Music Please! Music and Language Teaching for Young Learners

Turn Up the Music Please!

Image: Shutterstock

Nowadays, music can be heard 24/7 almost everywhere. It's in most places that we frequent outside of our homes, and can be heard on many, various types of devices and machines. In the world of TESOL, teachers can exploit the power of music in the classroom, and this has been done for years with sing-a-longs, gap-fill songs, and lyric-based discussions.

Neuroscience research indicates that the relationship between music, the brain and language is powerful and consequential. As a teacher trainer and curriculum developer for young learner classrooms, I believe that songs, chants and rhymes should become an even more powerful element in EFL/ESL classes, especially those with young learners. In addition, I feel that teachers should be well versed in the basic elements of rhythm and melody, and that parents should also be encouraged to be actively involved with the use of music for language teaching and learning at home. In this article, I would like to share some research about the positive effects of music on the brain and underline the importance of music for teaching English to children. Finally, I'll share some ideas for the classroom. *(Drum roll, please.)*

The Research

There is much brain research concerning the effects of music on language development and learning. Below are some findings that I believe should affect our approach to using music in young learner classrooms.

1. **Music activates multiple areas of the brain.**

Studies from various sources indicate that music provides greater brain connectivity. Neuroscientist and musician Daniel J. Levitin writes of his research and asserts that "(m)usical activities activate a widespread network of brain regions, in both cerebral hemispheres.... Musical experience leads to structural changes in the brain...." (p. 15). In an article in Frontiers in Neuroscience, researchers Miendlarzewska and Trost (2013) claim that "musical training in childhood not only enhances many cognitive functions but is accompanied by neuroplastic changes in brain structure and function."

2. **Musical training and language skills are connected.**

Recent brain research indicates the strong connection between musical training and competence in language. In her summary of research on the profound connection between music and language, Valerie Trollinger (2010) writes that "(f)indings have led many brain researchers to conclude that instrumental musical training, musical perception and processing, and language are strongly connected." In another study by Forgeard and her colleagues (2008), it was found that 8 to 11 year olds who studied music developed greater verbal and visual abilities than those children who had no musical training. Iris Rautenberg (2013, p, 12), in a study of primary school children in Germany, found that "there are positive correlations between musical skills and reading ability and that musical training has a positive impact on decoding skills at word level." Two other studies related to foreign language learning, one paper from the University of Edinburgh (2018) and the other a research paper in *Psychology of Music* (2015), show clearly how music and singing lead to better retention of a foreign language. For the Edinburgh study, students were taught Hungarian with three separate teaching styles, speaking normally, rhythmically or with singing. This study discovered that the group that sang performed better than the other two groups 80% of the time.

3. **The arts, including music and dance, are positive additions to learning.**

In her summary of brain research on creativity, Mariale Hardiman notes (2010 p. 231) that some researchers "found that during tasks regarded as highly creative, more areas of the brain are active than during tasks that require conventional or

customary thinking." Creativity was shown to help improve "self-regulation, self-monitoring, focused attention and inhibition" (Limb & Braun, 2008, p. 2, cited in Hardiman, 2010, p. 232), Emily Cross and colleagues (2006, cited in Hardiman, 2010, p. 234) demonstrated how music and dance assist memory processes through the mediation of mirror neurons." A study by Zentner and Eerola in 2010 posited that young children are more drawn to rhythm and beats than they are to language, and that young children are able to spontaneously dance to many kinds of music. These studies and others underline the need for teachers to include more creative activities in class, and to include singing, chanting, doing gestures and fingerplays with rhymes, and of course, dancing, as elements in the language classroom.

3. Music is an important element in human communication and development.

> ***"Music merits a central place in our understanding of human development.***

Music and language are mutually interdependent and have developed this relationship over thousands of years of evolution. Music is often regarded as being dependent on language and following linguistic development; however, recent studies suggest otherwise. In a study of the relationship between music and language, Anthony Brandt and his colleagues (2012, p. 1) argue that "music learning matches the speed and effort of language acquisition" and conclude that "music merits a central place in our understanding of human development."

The studies mentioned here are only a few of the many that show that music and learning are deeply connected in the wiring of the human brain. Teachers may agree with the findings but still struggle to make music part of their classroom practice. Below, I will list my top 10 activities or approaches that teachers, and parents, can use.

The Top 10

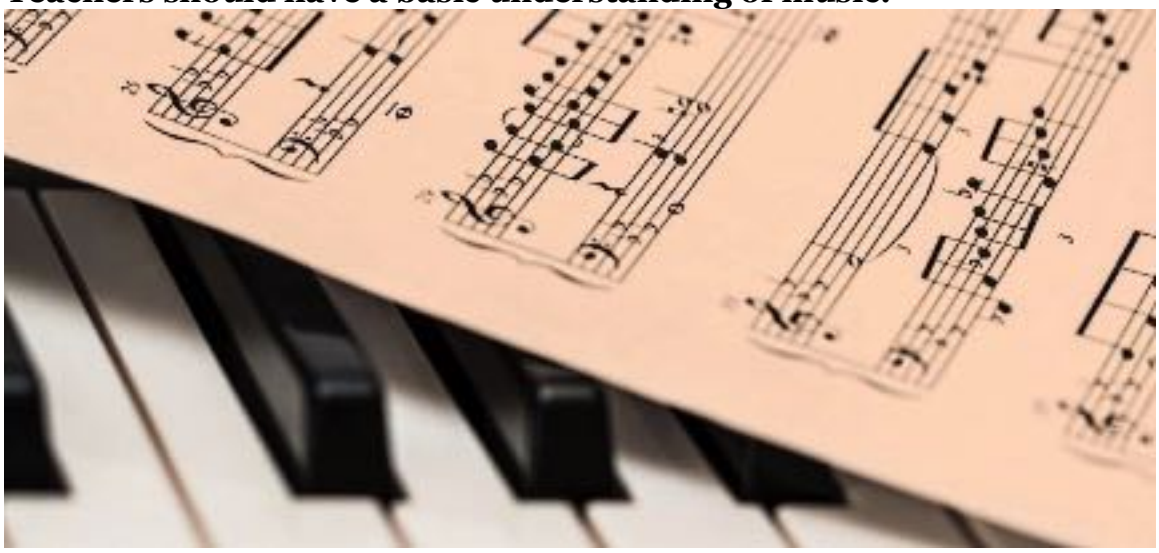
1. Play more music.

Music lowers stress levels in class and acts as a positive mood enhancer. Lowering the stress filters in class is good for the brain, and allows learners to focus more on the tasks at hand. Play music as students enter or leave the room, or while they work on other projects, such as writing. Singing allows children to pronounce

words without worrying about the pronunciation and helps them overcome worries about pronunciation difficulties. Teachers should play a variety of styles of music in order to stimulate the learners' brains and arouse curiosity. I once played Indian sitar music in class because we were reading about Bollywood. I asked students what they thought and one student answered, "It makes me hungry. I want to eat curry."

Another idea is to use videos for the songs you use in class. Some videos for children are very good at connecting the lyrics with images, and this can help students make a visual connection with the song. Today, video has much power. I can't help but recall a story I read in the past. A father and son are listening to a song on the radio. The father says: "So, what do you think of the song?" The son replies, "I don't know Dad. I haven't seen the video yet."

2. Teachers should have a basic understanding of music.



Teachers of young learners need to know the basic elements of music and familiarize themselves with its language. They should be able to count musically and understand how melody and rhythm are used to create songs. Although this may seem daunting at first, there are certainly books and online videos available. Teachers of young learners should regard this as essential teacher knowledge.

3. Choose songs that have repetition.

Teachers should be sure to choose songs that repeat certain sections several times. By teaching the easy and repeatable sections first, teachers can ensure that students will successfully remember the song. A simple rhythm is also important for retention.

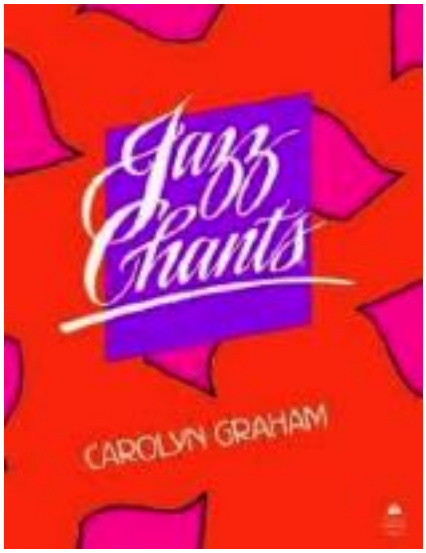
4. Sing word lists.

Music researcher Valerie Trollinger (2010, pp. 2-3) suggests that music teachers should use singing for word lists, or ask students to sing word lists in their own preferred way. In the TESOL classroom, teachers could develop their own techniques for singing word lists with children. Trollinger adds, "If children sing vocabulary lists, paragraphs from reading assignments, or poems in a recitative style, this may help develop comprehension, vocabulary and grammatical understanding."

5. Have musical instruments readily available in class.

By having simple instruments ready for use in class, we teachers can help our young students develop a sense of rhythm and instrument appreciation. A Finnish study, conducted by Eerola & Eerola in 2012, found that overall satisfaction and achievement levels were higher for students involved in music education. There is no need to give students an in-depth study of rhythm or melody, but rather it is essential to ensure that students can follow a beat, and also to allow them to be creative with their singing and playing. Teachers can also make their own instruments in class. Make instruments from cans or containers that can hold rice, beads or other shaker-like elements. And for those teachers who love to be creative, teach students to use their bodies creatively to make sounds.

6. Use and exploit word chants.



Chants are rhythmical readings of conversations, short grammatical phrases, or vocabulary lists. Obviously, they are useful for teaching vocabulary, grammar and common spoken expressions. A search for Carolyn Graham on YouTube or in a bookstore will give you inspiration and ideas. Graham created the initial jazz chants that linked music, in this case, jazz, to the rhythms of spoken English. Graham has spawned a whole generation of learning chants that are now common in young learner textbooks. In TEYL classes, rhythmical chants are fun to create and perform. I recently taught the original "London Bridge" song to a class, and at the end of class, had students create a simple grammar-based chant based on the song's simple and memorable melody. They all performed brilliantly and created their "song" chants in less than 5 minutes.

7. Use dance and gestures for songs.

Research shows that involving more of the senses helps with learning and retention. Teachers should encourage the use of gestures, finger plays and dancing in class. By getting students more physically involved with English songs, music and learning, they will become more active and motivated. Play a drum solo for adults and they will probably find it tedious, but play it for children and you will see pleasure, fun, and plenty of movement.

8. Get students to sing together often.

As a social activity, music can bring everyone together in a common task and can have the ultimate goal of enhancing learning. Use songs often and aim to have many "homerun" songs. These are the songs that you know so well and thoroughly that you can teach them confidently to any age level.

9. Teach musical culture and biography.

For young learners around junior high school age, music is intrinsically linked to other content. Lyrics usually revolve around a topic, and every singer, band and genre of music has a story that is waiting to be told, or exploited in info-gap materials, gap fills, or guided presentations.

10. Involve parents.

It is very easy to include parents by teaching them about connections between music, learning and brain development. Encourage parents to play English music at home and sing along with their children. Make a list of song suggestions or websites, like the British Council one, that families can use for listening to English songs, rhymes and chants. Don't forget to remind parents to dance or do gestures to follow the songs along with their children.

Turn Up the Music!

Music can heal and relax; music can inspire and motivate; music is "like a bridge over troubled water." Music has been with human civilization for thousands of years. The earliest archeological evidence of human instruments is from about 42,000

years ago (Welsh, 2012). These were flutes made of bone in the area of the Danube River in present-day Germany, while the first cave paintings are from almost the same time period. Human thought and language have a long and deep connection to both music and art, and are instruments for communication. And that's why I feel that there should be more music, chants and rhymes in young learner English classes. Even 2500 years ago, the ancient Greeks understood the power of music. The philosopher Plato wrote, "Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." I couldn't agree more, and that's why I believe that there should be more music in young learner classrooms. Turn up the volume please!

Herman Bartelen *is a teacher and curriculum developer at Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages in Tokyo. Herman has written thirteen EFL textbooks and has a Masters in TESOL from the University of Birmingham, U.K. In his free time, he travels, creates art, and plays and writes music.*

Our own Curtis Kelly conducted pre-natal experiments on his daughter, Alice. While his wife was 7-9 months pregnant, he played the Brothers Cazimero's "Home in the Islands" song to her. Later, he tested whether Alice would recognize the song or not.

What do you think?

Think Tank: Music

Tim Murphey

Songlets for Affective and Cognitive Self-Regulation

Vygotsky apparently insisted that emotions and thinking be considered together (in Russian with the single word "perezhivanie") and that they were integrally related (Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman 2015, p. 73). Songs and music also allow us to realize our thinking and emotions are tightly entwined.

In a preview of a book chapter, Krueger (2011) writes:

> I argue that music, like other tools and technologies, is a beyond-the-head resource that affords offloading. And via this offloading, music can (at least potentially) scaffold access to new forms of thought, experience, and behavior. I focus especially on music's capability to scaffold emotional consciousness, including the self-regulative processes constitutive of emotional consciousness—although I will say some things about how music can scaffold other cognitive processes, too. (p. 2)

What an idea! Emotional and cognitive offloading and scaffolding of music, and particularly songs, which have been a longtime tool for our species. This is very evident in my students after teaching them these songlets as they often write in their reflective action logs: They tell me they sing them when they want to be happy, when they want to try harder, when they make mistakes and want to keep going. In short, they use them to self-regulate themselves (stay happy, weather through mistakes, make new friends, make the world a better place, etc.)

I invite you to explore them yourself and see how they may be useful in certain situations. The first four are *kaeuta*, i.e melodies borrowed from other popular songs, but feel free to make up your own tune if you like. All 8 bilingual songlets are taken from a longer article of mine (Murphey 2018).

To make the songs more salient, we (my students and I) have connected them to an everyday question. Thus, you can use them as a "call and response routine" in the classroom. The songlets can be taught through speed dictations:

1) I tell the class that, in pairs, one person should write the first line and the other write the second. Then I *say* the songlet at a challenging speed one time or more and they write. After that, I ask them to share and rewrite the whole thing with their partners and put their parts on the board, where I can correct them.

2) Then I *sing* it to them and invite them to sing with me.

3) Finally, I tell them to ask the question for the songlet, "Ask your partners, 'How are you?'" and they go into the singing routine. I repeat this task every 5 or 10 minutes until they really get it.

4) A nice follow-up homework assignment is to have them teach the songlet dictation to someone out of class and write about it in their reflection logs.

I use these songlets often. In fact, my students often tell me that my three most frequent words are "Ask your partner…" followed by one of the questions below. For example, I often tell my students to ask their partners "How are you?" at the beginning of class and they end up singing the "*superhappy*" songlet.

Songlets

Ask your partner…

1. Question: How do you succeed? (Reply below)

Sung to *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. It is useful to show students native-like blended pronunciation of "doidagin" ("Do it again"). The lyrics are:

"Doidagin x 8 + *Make many mistakes and Doidagin!*"

2. Question: How do you eat well? (To the same song as #1)

"*Take a little bit of (alidabida) this, Take alidabida that (x2) Diversify and balance your life!*"

3. Question: How do you stay fit? (To the same song as #1 and #2)

"Walk a little bit (alidabit) here, run alidabit there (x2) Dare to take the stairs and be a bear! GROWL!"

4. Question: How are you? Sung to Disney's *Supercalifragilisticexpiallidocious*

"Super happy optimistic joyful and prodigious"

Students can also be asked to make their own greeting to the same tune and fit some words in. My second one for this tune is "*truly awesome so tenacious lovingly vivacious.*" In Japanese, I sing "*sugoi kampeki subarashi sekyiokuteki genki!"*

5. Question: What's the weather like?

Sung to the refrain of the 1950's hit The Witchdoctor (Oo ee oo ah ah..) Answer: *It's raining cats n' dogs and it's cold outside, my sunshine is deep inside."* Japanese: *Hari toki doki kumori Ame doshaburi!* with gestures.

6. Question: What are the 5 ways to happiness?

Sung to *The 12 Days of Christmas*. Answer: *When you want to be happy, there's (#) thing you can do...*(#: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc). *1. Smile from ear to ear. 2. Breathe in deep. 3. Look up at the sky. 4. Sing a melody. 5. Dare to show your love.*

Lyrics & audio are available on my podcast page, and here is an article to go with it.

7. Question: How do you make friends?

Sung to the old Girl Scouts Camp Song.

Answer: *Make new friends / and keep the old. One is silver and the other's gold.* Japanese: *Tomodachi ni aite koe desu Yorokonde o tetsudaishimasu*

8. Question: Who do you love?

Make your own melody. Based on the book: *Love You Forever* - Robert Munsch

I'll love you forever. I'll like you for always. As long as I'm living, My baby you'll be.

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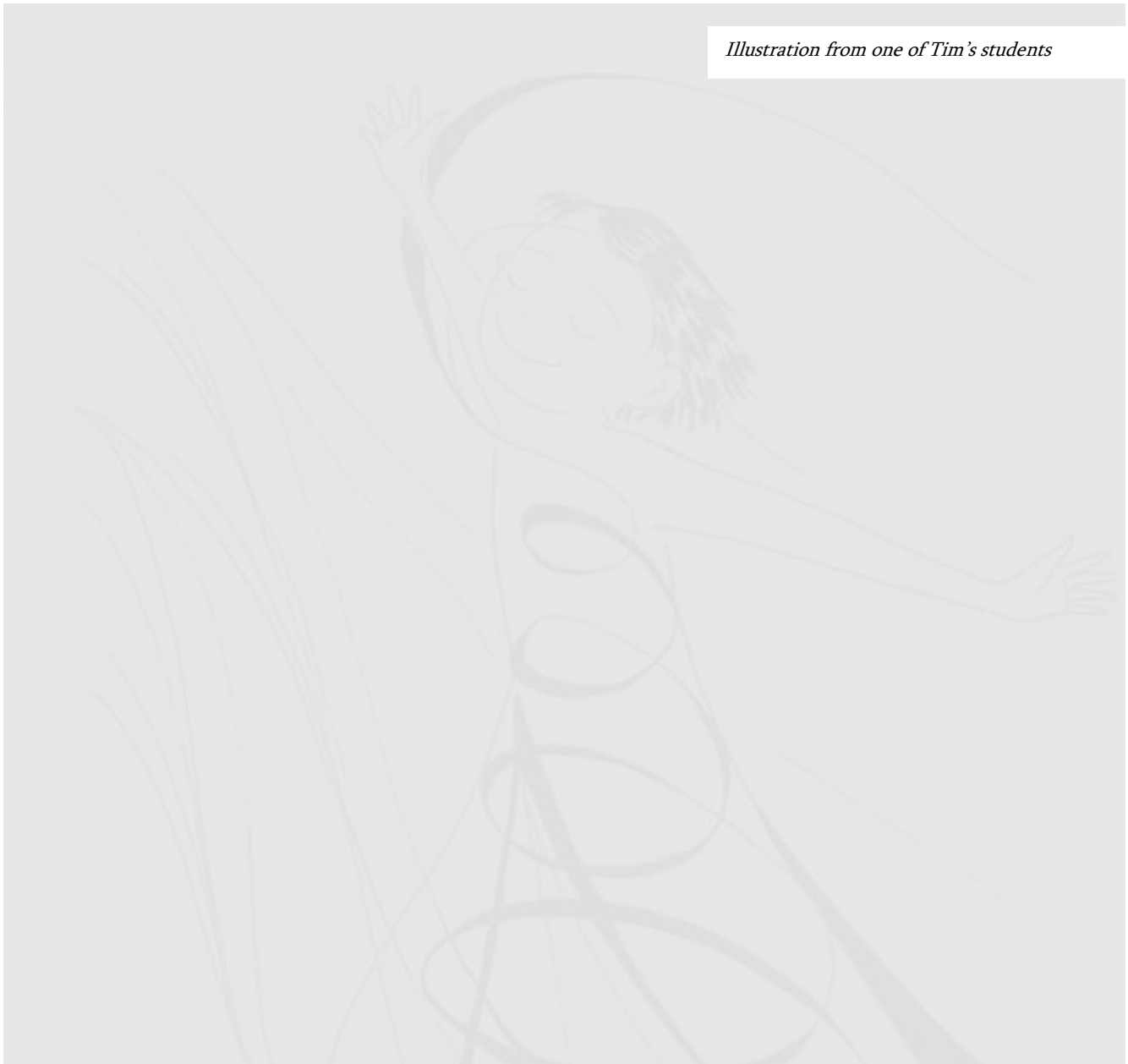

Illustration from one of Tim's students

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Think Tank: Music

Amanda Gillis-Furutaka

How do we hear music? And why is listening to and performing live music so thrilling?

These two questions are linked and I will show the connection by explaining the experiences and ideas of four extraordinary musicians, together with some neuroscience findings, a dancing cockatoo, and a few ideas and experiences of my own.

How could a girl, who became profoundly deaf at the age of twelve, become a world-renowned percussion musician? How does she play a variety of percussion instruments if she cannot hear? How can she derive pleasure from music when she cannot hear it? These are the questions that sprang to mind when I first heard the story of Evelyn Glennie, and the answers made me completely rethink my understanding of the way we hear, and especially the way we hear music. In her TED Talk, and her 2015 Hearing Essay, Glennie explains how hearing is a form of touch. People with auditory circuits that are functioning well rely mainly on the electrical signals sent to their brain when sound waves touch their eardrums and cause them to vibrate. Evelyn Glennie has learned to use alternative parts of her body to detect these vibrations and send them as electric signals to her brain. For example, she uses her feet (she always removes her shoes when performing), her legs, arms, fingers, neck, and face to detect these vibrations. Her eyes send additional information, and her brain has learned to interpret these signals from new sources as musical notes, timbre and rhythm, and she hears the music inside her head. This kind of adaptability is called brain plasticity and to see and hear her perform is a truly amazing example of this phenomenon.

Mandy Harvey, a pop singer and songwriter lost her hearing at the age of eighteen when she was majoring in vocal music at university. Her father encouraged her to continue to write and perform live and she has recorded four albums. She shot to world fame (and my attention) when she was awarded a Golden Buzzer and came fourth in the 2016 live finals of *America's Got Talent*. (Yes, one of my guilty pleasures is watching these shows on YouTube!) Like Glennie, she removes her shoes so that she can detect vibrations through the floor and feel the beat, and she feels the bass in her chest. When writing and learning a new song, she uses a visual electric tuner, her perfect pitch, and muscle memory. She can find middle C in her mind and then move to the right note to sing. Her band members use eye contact to signal when a solo is to start and finish [link]. Like Glennie, her brain has also learned how to hear, write, and perform music without needing to rely on her auditory circuit.

Music is attracting the attention of a great many neuroscientists partly because fMRI scans of people listening to music show that multiple areas of the brain are activated, not just the auditory cortices. For example, instrumental music, not just music with lyrics, activates cognitive areas associated with language [link]. Also, motor areas are active when we are listening to music, even when we are sitting still, because rhythm and physical movement are connected. Humans are able to make an internal representation of a beat we hear with far greater ease than other species. This is called entrainment and it allows us to catch and follow the beat very quickly and to continue to reproduce it or move to it when the cue is stopped [link]. A famous cockatoo called Snowball, who shares my own love for the music of Queen, and monkeys in a lab have demonstrated this ability to a limited extent.

Knowing that hearing involves sensing vibrations which touch multiple parts of our body, and that muscle memory and our eyes help us to hear and produce sounds, and that we automatically notice and follow a rhythm explains, to some extent, why so much of our brain is activated by music. Let's now change direction a little and think about the work of David Byrne, a hearing musician of Talking Heads fame, who

discusses the effects of reverberation in performance spaces, both in his book, *How Music Works* (2012) and his TED Talk "How Architecture Helped Music to Evolve."

Byrne explains how music and the venue where it is performed need to be well matched for the music to sound good (and I would add, to *feel* good, too). For example, West African music is performed outdoors, which is perfect for its fast and complex rhythms and key changes because there is no reverberation. Byrne asks us to imagine how terrible this music would sound if performed in a Gothic cathedral. Music written specially for a cathedral sounds perfect there because the notes are long, it doesn't change key, and there is no rhythm. Moreover, the reverberations in such a room actually improve the music. Mozart wrote music for much smaller, less reverberant rooms, with the result that he could write very intricate, frilly music. However, concert rooms got bigger, and a lot more reverberant, so the music of the great symphony composers of the 19th century had to be less rhythmic and more textural.

It is important to remember and appreciate that all audiences of music until the turn of the 20th century only experienced music being performed live. Although they were no doubt unaware of the fact that they were hearing the music with their whole body, not just their ears, this was undoubtedly the case because, as we have just seen, music reaches our brain through many routes and activates many areas of the brain.

A big change in the way we hear music occurred when recordings and radios became venues for music. Microphones enabled musicians and composers to completely change the kind of music that they were writing. Performers could sing and play right into our ears. It was at this point that music diverged. We now have live music and recorded music and they are not the same. We also have private listening and public listening. At discos, where musicians performing live are not needed, people started recording music specifically for these venues with good sound systems. Meanwhile, successful live performers ended up in ever larger performance spaces, such as sports stadiums and arenas, which are terrible venues in terms of acoustics. So musicians, such as U2, started writing arena rock (medium speed ballads, with medium tempos and big sounds), which works perfectly. Another modern music venue is the car sound system. Music with a wide frequency spectrum (from bass to high end with the voice in the middle) works well in a car and, more often than not, it is music to share with others inside and outside the car. Nowadays, we also have the private music player through which we can hear every single detail. Pop music today is written so that you can hear extreme detail but with little dynamic, so that we don't need to adjust the volume of the music playing while we multitask.

Listening to recorded music through headphones in this way has become integral to our daily lives. We take it for granted that we can carry music with us on a digital device and switch on wherever and whenever we want or need to. We can pick up a piece where we last left off listening and know that it will sound the same each time we listen. It is comforting to be so familiar with musical pieces that we know what will come next. One reason why this is so pleasurable is that the brain loves repetition because it creates familiarity, and when we recognize music, we mentally start to participate in it by predicting what will come next and singing along (either in reality or just mentally) and we start to move as well. (For more about this, see the animated talk by Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis called "Why we Love Repetition in Music."

Listening to familiar recorded music is relaxing and pleasurable, but is it as thrilling as a live performance? Is live music more exciting because it is not completely predictable? Our brains love and learn best with surprises. (See the work of Russian educator Petr A. Stepichev, who demonstrated the power of surprise in language learning at a conference I attended in Russia in October. This is his website, which is only in Russian.) Or is live music more exciting because we can see the performers as well as hear them? Certainly, the costumes, lighting, other special theatrical effects and the (dance) movements of the performer(s) enhance a live performance. There is also the reaction of the audience around us that creates a shared moment … another source of human pleasure.

I think, however, that there is an additional element that thrills us and which is absent in a recorded performance heard though headphones. When we are listening to music in the presence of the performers, we are experiencing the vibrations through our whole body, not just through our ears. I love Japanese traditional drumming called *taiko*.

It makes all the listeners reverberate. It is a whole-body experience and one in which I am conscious of hearing the music in the same way that Evelyn Glennie and Mandy Harvey hear music. It could be said to be a "whole brain" experience, too.

Recently, I joined a choir and we are learning the final movement of Beethoven's 9th symphony. This is a piece of music that has always been exciting for me, but the more I understand and learn it, the more in awe I am that it was written by Beethoven when he could no longer hear through his ears. He had no modern technology, only his memory, imagination, and plastic brain to guide him. (He would hold a pencil between his lips and, with the other end, feel the vibrations of the soundboard to hear the notes when composing.)

Beethoven experienced intense anger, frustration and despair at losing his ability to hear. Nevertheless, this masterpiece is truly an "Ode to Joy." It is met with rapturous applause whenever it is performed and is currently an earworm that powers me through the day. It is a celebration of the music he could still create and enjoy in his "mind's ear." [link]

I belonged to my high school choir many years ago, but we were all girls. Singing in a choir with tenor and bass voices as well as sopranos and altos has added a velvety rich new dimension. I can feel their low reverberations through my legs! Being among those hundred and fifty voices is electrifying when the voices come together in Beethoven's exquisite harmonies. Neuroscience shows that this is not romantic fantasizing on my part. I am

experiencing the combined dopamine and oxytocin rush that music, and especially making music with others induces, together with the reverberations through my body, all of which are helping me truly savour what our choirmaster calls these *oishii* (truly yummy) moments. I would love to see a scan of my brain experiencing this live music performance, but this is not possible yet. I am hoping that scanning equipment will soon be able to measure such responses.

My advice? Treat yourself to the full brain and body experience of a live musical performance when you have the chance, and pay attention to how you are hearing the music, moving to it and being moved by it!

More great stories about two deaf musicians and a dancer:
https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-london-46071832/signkid-the-deaf-hip-hop-artist-who-feels-the-music

https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-45747512/lal-daggy-rapping-in-sign-language

https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-44636454/how-can-you-dance-without-music

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Amanda Gillis-Furutaka *PhD, program chair of the JALT Mind, Brain, and Education SIG, is a professor of English at Kyoto Sangyo University in Japan. She researches and writes about insights from psychology and neuroscience that can inform our teaching practices and improve the quality of our lives, both inside and outside the classroom.*

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Perfect for the season: A little girl offers a gift to a street musician and gets a nicer one back.

Think Tank: Music and Art

David McLeish

Opening Doors through ART in the Classroom

What do you think? How do you feel? What is your opinion about _____?

These types of questions are what I call “LOCKED DOORS” for learners who have rarely experienced a classroom setting where an instructor has asked or even cared about the students’ emotions, feelings or opinions. Art allows these doors to open and true expression to begin. It takes the students and instructor to a place above grammar, spelling, testing and most of all, fear of expression. The power of art is ownership of language and thought.

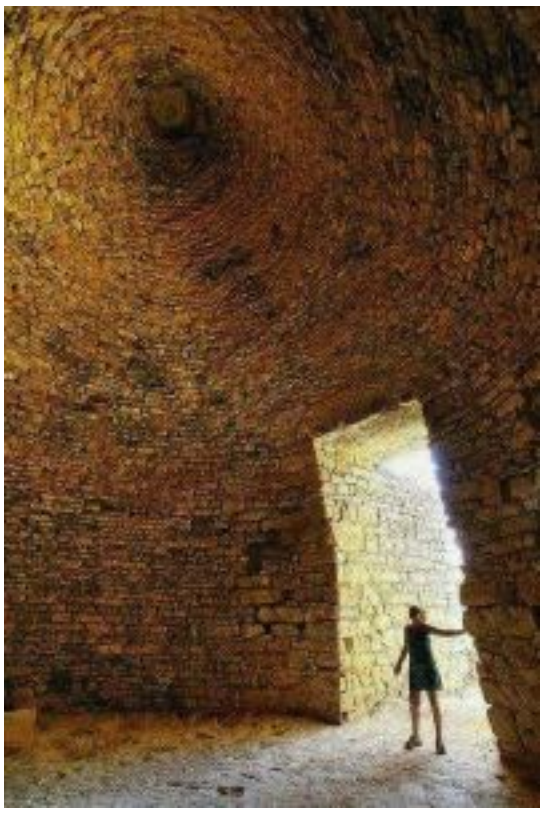
Currently, as a professor in Japan, I am designing an “English Through Art” course at Reitaku University. I have tapped into my experiences as a professor of Art at Florida State University, as well as my work as the creator of Voice Thru Art Foundation (VTAF.org), an NPO working with veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress. I am going to take you through my process of opening these doors to expression and communication in my classroom.

I turned my attention to art therapy as a resource. What I discovered has profoundly changed my approach to teaching. The common thread in both is overcoming fear to share oneself with others. Both trauma victims and language learners sometimes share this overwhelming fear that what they have to offer is not worthy or not valued. For whatever reason, there seems to be an honest struggle to express one ’s thoughts in both situations.

The key in both cases is helping the individual open doors that they might be reluctant to explore.

The first door to open is the door to the concept of fun. For most people art was fun when we were six years old. I think back to the days when I was free of the inner critic and the internal doubter. When a dragon existed, or my bus looked like a house or possibly a dragon bus, I had no fear of embarrassment, and this is the key at the beginning of the process.

I start with a simple assignment - draw like a six-year-old. To help achieve this, I have students draw with their non-dominant hand and then also write fifty words with that same hand. This impossible task is saved by the fun drawings of Dragons, in laughter and fun. Perfection is impossible and therefore letting go of the need for the perfect product starts to happen. The first stage of this transformation, to relax and have fun is introduced and supported throughout the term by following up with many more low-stress follow-up activities, not focused on the product but instead on process and feelings, enabling the students to begin to truly relax.



Door number two is a bit more difficult, moving on to stating an opinion. As we all know, art is one of those areas where a point of view is the key to creating quality discussions. We all form opinions each day about a wide range of topics. Japanese students do as well. Permitting students to state their beliefs in an open forum is the challenge. For cultural reasons, this is not promoted in a Japanese-style classroom. That is a major stumbling block in using art in a Japanese classroom.

The key, in my humble opinion, is time. Allow that space for some drawing, followed by writing and discussion amongst the students. They have opinions, but they need the time to access them and push aside the thought that they could be wrong. I state over and over that there are no wrong answers. All opinions count and all opinions matter. As the figurehead of the classroom, this only works if I refrain from giving my own opinion.

Once the students are sold on the idea that art is fun, and their opinion about an artist, artwork, or life matters are accepted, I introduce door number three: ownership of their opinion and what they want to say about their art and life. If the first two doors are open, this is the step that yields an enormous amount of success and catapults their confidence in communication. We are now at a place of ownership. The power of property is threefold: one it is internal; two it is emotional; and three it is never forgotten.

There is a lifetime of stored or internal knowledge in our students. Memories, opinions, and feelings are available through life experiences. This internal resource is waiting to be tapped into by the teacher. External input is the vocabulary needed to express those feelings. This area is where we as educators come in as a support system for language learning. I am a firm believer that the need to communicate one's internal thoughts is the greatest motivator. A prime example is that when a child needs something, they will figure out a way to express their need. They learn the word "milk" early on for good reason: survival.

The second stage is an emotional connection. The quote that "one might forget what is said, but one will never forget how they felt" is the essence and it transcends words. One way to achieve this is, first, to ask students to draw/paint in any style the word " LOVE." Then, name ten feelings around the word. Finally, I ask them to write a "love letter." In this exercise, they are tapping into the emotions felt for a specific word and toward one particular feeling and formalized to one specific person.

Every step throughout the process is using art as a vehicle to tap into emotion, culminating in a real-world product. Through the art exercise, the student brings forth the vocabulary to describe the word "love." This vocabulary is then used to attach it to a person place or thing, resulting in a tangible expression of feelings.

> ***"... using art as a vehicle to tap into emotion***

This personal approach is the key to getting away from the technicality of language, moving toward making the emotional connection and having students create language to express themselves.

With this step, our students take the vocabulary, the emotional connection, and the idea that language is fun, outside of the classroom, thus bringing us to ownership of language. They now understand, that language is a personal conveyance and that

equals communication of need. The vocabulary learned is not for some test, but to be carried through life. They can ask for milk and express why they love it.

When asked “How do you feel (about your art or your life)? What do you think (about this art or a political topic)? What is your opinion (about Picasso's work or the future of Japan)? The students have the practice through their art classroom experience to transfer their new skills to real-life topics. We move the student from talking about art to talking about themselves and the world around them.

A hidden door to open is the instructor’s, and when teachers saying “I know nothing about art, I could never teach it in my classroom,” my reply is — close your eyes and remember yourself at six years old, remember the joy of creation and of telling someone about the drawing. Your dragon/house/bus/ spaceship-looking thing was surely not perfect, but I am willing to bet, no matter what YOUR picture was, you remember the feeling you had when communicating your thoughts. That is the gift we can offer our students.

You are with a good friend.

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Links:

Articles on the merits of Art Therapy:

https://arttherapy.org/art-therapy-helps-children-make-sense-of-the-insensible/

https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/art-therapy/#adults-art-therapy

Useful Links for easy lessons to try out:

https://www.nursingschools.net/blog/2011/01/100-excellent-art-therapy-exercises-for-your-mind-body-and-soul/

https://busyteacher.org/5973-how-to-use-art-to-teach-esl-concepts.html

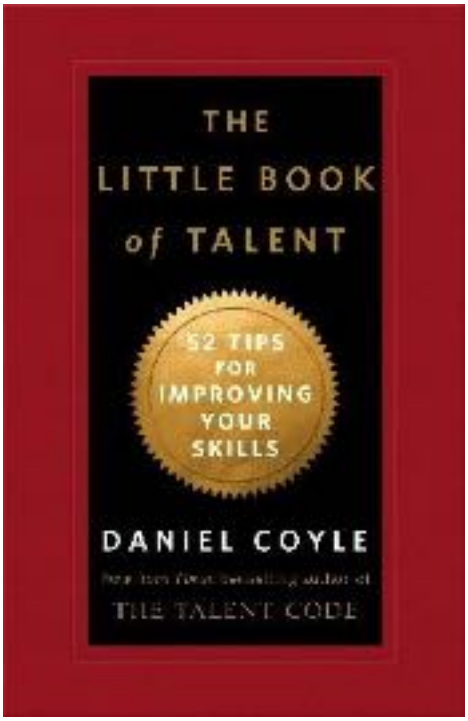
https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-art/

Review:
The Little Book of Talent

Jason Gold

The Little Book of Talent: 52 Tips for Improving Your Skills by Daniel Coyle

Coyle, D. (2012). The little book of talent: 52 tips for improving your skills. New York: Bantam.



In **The Little Book of Talen**t, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Talent Code,* Daniel Coyle, shares what he learned from spending five years visiting the world's greatest talent hotbeds and interviewing numerous successful master coaches. This handbook is a goldmine of bite-sized research-backed tips for instructors and students of all types, from academia to sports to music to business, and focuses on practical answers to the question "How do I get better?" I came across this book a few years ago, and just reread it recently while searching for useful content to share with my students. I was amazed at how many of these excellent tips I had forgotten about, and I definitely see the value in passing many of these tips on to my students. 52 tips are a bit much to cover here, so instead below I'll just briefly go through each of the three sections of the book and share two tips from each I felt were particularly interesting, helpful, or unique. I highly recommend checking out the entire (little) book for yourself though!

> ***"Everyone possesses talents, but many of us are unsure how to develop those talents.***

Coyle starts off by stating that everyone possesses talents, but many of us are unsure how to develop those talents to their full potential. This book focuses on the "how," and is built on the idea that the best way to develop our talents is to follow the proven techniques of the "talent hotbeds," places that produce large numbers of world-class performers in sports, music, and various other disciplines. Each section of the book consists of a series of brief tips and interesting real-world examples of top

performers we all know. Brief, as Coyle explains, "not because they're oversimplified, but because simplicity is the point. While the underlying neuroscience is fascinating and complex, it all adds up to the basic truth: Small actions, repeated over time, transform us. It's about working hard, and working smart" (p. 14).

Part 1 of the book is titled "**Getting Started: Stare, Steal, and Be Willing to Be Stupid**." Coyle starts off explaining the commonly held (yet false!) prodigy myth that people are born talented, that talent is only genetic. From his experiences in the talent hotbeds, he instead puts forth the idea that talent "begins with brief, powerful encounters that spark motivation by linking your identity to a high-performing person or group. This is called *ignition*, and it consists of a tiny, world-shifting thought lighting up your unconscious mind: I could be them" (p. 16). This first section is full of ideas for igniting motivation, channeling its energy, creating a solid blueprint, and deeply practicing the skills you want to build.

Tip #3: Steal Without Apology

This was one of the more surprising ones for me! Coyle explains that "all improvement is about absorbing and applying new information, and the best source of information is top performers. So steal it" (p. 23). The more politically correct terminology for this is "influence." When watching and absorbing information from top performers, the key is to focus on specifics and capturing concrete facts, not just general impressions. For example, the angle of a golfer's left elbow at the top of the backswing; the precise shape and tension of a singer's lips as he hits that high note; the exact length of time a comedian pauses before delivering the punch line. The two questions we should always be asking ourselves are: 1.) What, exactly, are the critical moves here? and 2.) How do they perform those moves differently than I do?

I've been able to learn so much just by carefully observing expert teachers in action, as well as skilled conference or TED Talk presenters. While I'm far from a top performer, I also try to video record myself teaching a lesson at least once a term then watch that video, while reflecting on what I'm doing well, but more importantly on areas to focus on that I could/should improve in the future.

Tip #6: Choose Spartan Over Luxurious

Another tip I found fascinating was this one. While we love comfort, "luxury is a motivational narcotic: It signals our unconscious minds to give less effort" (p. 30). Many of the talent hotbeds that have produced today's top talent (ex. Olympic medalists such as Michael Phelps) are not luxurious, but in fact often quite the opposite – rundown camps, underfunded gyms or clubs, etc. The talent hotbeds and research show that simple, humble spaces help us to

focus our attention, not on luxurious trappings which relax our mind, but instead on the deep-practice task at hand: reaching and repeating and struggling. Thus when given the choice between luxurious and Spartan, choose Spartan.

Part 2 of the book is titled "**Improving Skills – Find the Sweet Spot, Then Reach**." This section is full of methods and techniques for making the most progress in the least amount of time. The key to this is *deep practice* – stretching yourself slightly beyond your current ability, spending time in the zone of difficulty called the *sweet spot*, embracing repetition, and creating a practice space that enables you to reach and repeat, stay engaged, and improve your skills over time.

Tip #13: Find the Sweet Spot

The sweet spot is that place at the edge of our ability where we learn best and fastest. In this tip Coyle distinguishes it from the two other zones, the comfort zone and the survival zone, and explains how to find it. If the percentage of successful attempts is 80% or higher, it's the comfort zone – things are easy and effortless, but because there is very little reaching or struggling, there is also very little growth. Here it's time to ratchet up the difficulty. However, if the percentage of successful attempts is below 50%, it's the survival zone – here there is too much confusion, desperation, and guessing, so again there is little growth or development. In this case it's time to ease things up a bit. Finally, the sweet spot exists in the space of 50-80% of successful attempts. Here there may be frustration and difficulty, but there is also full engagement and focus on an intense struggle towards a goal that is (almost) within reach.

Coyle explains locating the sweet spot requires some creativity: "Seek out ways to stretch yourself. Play on the edges of your competence. The key word is 'barely.' Ask yourself: If you tried your absolute hardest, what could you almost do? Mark the boundary of your current ability, and aim a little beyond it. That's your spot" (p. 56).

Tip #18: Choose Five Minutes A Day Over An Hour A Week

Most of us are busy in our lives, so tend to condense our practice into one longer session a week. However, for deep practice, small daily practice "snacks" are more effective than once-a-week practice binges. Coyle explains that the reason has to do with the way our brains grow — incrementally, a little each day, even as we sleep: "Daily practice, even for five minutes, nourishes this process, while more occasional practice forces your brain to play catch-up. The other advantage of practicing daily is that it becomes a habit. The act of practicing — making time to do it, doing it well — can be thought of as a skill in itself, perhaps the most important skill of all" (p.64).

Research has shown that establishing new habits takes at least a month, so by practicing a skill deeply in bite-sized portions every day, not only are we incrementally improving that skill, but we're also engraving it into our brain as an important daily habit, which will further fuel our development.

The final part of the book is titled "**Sustaining Progress – Embrace Repetition, Cultivate Grit, and Keep Big Goals Secret**." It consists of strategies for developing grit, overcoming obstacles and plateaus, staying motivated, and building habits for long-term success.

Tip #51: Keep Your Big Goals Secret

This was another surprising one for me, but one that I had also fallen victim to and hadn't realized it. It's natural and tempting to want to announce and share our big goals with those around us, but surprisingly it's smarter to keep them to yourself. As Coyle explains, "Telling others about your big goals makes them less likely to happen, because it creates an unconscious payoff — tricking our brains into thinking we've already accomplished the goal. Keeping our big goals to ourselves is one of the smartest goals we can set" (p. 128).

In my case, for several years I had been telling myself and those around me that I was planning on pursuing a PhD "in the future," and which prestigious schools/programs I was interested in. This had the exact effect Coyle described; instead of sucking it up and getting started on the arduous path of GRE studying and school applications, I kept telling myself I'd get to it next year when my circumstances were better, I had more money saved up, etc., all the while getting the unconscious payoff mentioned by talking about this imaginary ideal future. Without telling others, no one will know about your exciting big goals until you've already put in the time and effort to get them well underway and producing tangible results to show and share.

Tip #44: Have A Blue-Collar Mindset

This one I truly believe is one of the most important of the tips. While top performers seem to live easy, comfortable lives, especially after achieving greatness, success, and wealth, if you look more closely you'll find that they still continue to spend vast portions of their life intensively practicing their craft. As Coyle explains, "Their mind-set is not entitled or arrogant; it's 100-percent blue collar: They get up in the morning and go to work every day, whether they feel like it or not" (p. 112). One of my all-time favorite commercials, a Nike one of Michael Jordan,

illustrates this mindset perfectly. (Michael Jordan "Maybe It's My Fault" Commercial)

It's easy to become complacent once we've achieved success, or fall to the luxury narcotic of Tip #6. However, despite success the truly great never stop working or struggling to develop themselves and continue to improve.

To wrap up this tip (and review) I'll share a cool, fitting quote I recently stumbled upon that was written outside a Japanese music school near my apartment:

"Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

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Click on the picture to see a YouTube summary of The Little Book of Talent

How to Become Talented: The Little Book of Talent By Daniel Coyle Animated Summary

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