THE USE OF SONGS IN “ENGLISH HABIT” PROGRAM
AT SMAN 3 MALANG

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ABSTRACT: The study was aimed at describing the use of songs in “English Habit”. It applied descriptive design. The selection of the songs was by selecting the songs which were had understandable lyrics. The activities were filling gaps and vocabulary exercises. The advantages were to make the classroom comfortable and to teach vocabulary. The problems were the limited time, some of the unmotivated students, and the facility problem. Many students gave positive response toward the use of songs.

Key words: songs, “English Habit” program

English, as an international language, is not only used as a media to communicate among people from different countries, but also to get a lot of information. Crystal says (2000:2) that English is a global language. It is spoken by politicians from all over the world. Whenever you enter a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, people will understand English, and there will be an English menu. To learn English, the students must practice it as often as possible and to make English as a daily habit. Harmer (2001:155) states that in learning a language, it should be provided with a lot of opportunities to communicate using the target language. By practicing a lot, their English will improve naturally.

In order to develop students’ English proficiency, many schools provide extracurricular activities focusing on English, including SMAN 3 Malang. SMAN 3 Malang holds a program called “English Habit”. The program was firstly conducted in the year 2010. This program is compulsory, which is conducted once a month usually in the last Thursday of the month and it have to be followed by the students. It is conducted right before the regular study time, for about 10 minutes. Related to that idea, according to Rivers (1992), the most natural way to learn a new language is to use it in some forms of involvements with community within the school community itself or in the wider community outside the school. It means that we need an environment that is conducive in which the students could have more opportunities to learn English.

The activities in “English Habit” program were listening to songs, sharing a story in English, or reading a poem or short story. Basically, the school wanted to make English as real life learning, so the students have a big chance to use English. Moreover, before conducting this study, the researcher had an informal interview to some of the students in SMAN 3 Malang. All of the students who had been interviewed said that the most interesting activity in “English Habit” was listening to songs. Ur (2004:107) states that it is worth noting also that listening activities based on simulated real-life situations are likely to be more motivating and interesting to do than contrived textbook comprehension exercises.

The purpose of using songs in “English Habit” program is to practice the listening skill of the students. Listening to songs is chosen as one of the “English
Habit” activities because the teachers agreed that everybody love songs, and they expected that songs can motivate the students to practice listening English. Listening to songs in “English Habit” program was also enjoyable and there was no such of test that sometimes made the students feel frustrated.

Moreover, listen to their favorite songs makes the students remember the words in the song lyrics, even though they rarely use them. Studying the lyrics of those songs makes the lesson more enjoyable and, hopefully, more effective. Harmer (2001:242) states that songs are powerful stimulus for students’ engagement precisely because songs speaks directly to people’s emotions while still allowing people to use their brains to analyze them and their effects. Songs can change the atmosphere in a classroom and prepare the students for a new activity. Songs can amuse and entertain, and also make a good connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning.

Considering the potential benefits of songs, the “English Habit” program involves the use of songs as it is one of the most preferred activities for the students. Related to that issue, the researcher decided to conduct a study on the use of songs in “English Habit” program at SMAN 3 Malang.

The purposes of this study are to describe how songs are used in “English Habit” in SMAN 3 Malang, which includes the selection of songs, the kinds of songs, and the activities in using songs, to describe the advantages of using songs in “English Habit” in SMAN 3 Malang, the problems of using songs in “English Habit” in SMAN 3 Malang, and the opinions of the students about using songs in “English Habit” at SMAN 3 Malang.

METHOD

This study was conducted at SMAN 3 Malang which was located at Jl. Sultan Agung Utara no. 7, Malang. This school was chosen because SMAN 3 Malang was one of senior high school in Malang which had the “English Habit” Program that involved listening to the songs as one of their preferred activity.

As the instruments, observation sheet, interview guide, and questionnaires were utilized in order to collect the data. In conducting the observations, the role of the researcher was as an observer sitting at the back seat of the classroom during the “English Habit” program and taking notes about all related activities that happened in the class. In addition, the observations were conducted on the last week of February 2012 and the last week of March 2012. The observation sheets were needed to note some activities happened in the observation.

The interview guide was the list of questions which were used when the researcher interviewed the teacher. The researcher interviewed the teacher at the teacher’s spare time. The interview was conducted on 1 march 2012. The researcher recorded the interviews upon the teacher’s approval.

The questionnaires consisted of nine multiple choice questions. The questionnaires were written in Bahasa Indonesia to make it easier for the respondents to interpret the questions. The questionnaires were distributed to the students and would be related to the data obtained from the interview and the observations. The questionnaires revealed the students’ response and opinions about the use of songs in “English Habit” Program.

The data gained from the observation were analyzed using the qualitative analysis and then reported descriptively. The data of this research was analyzed in
a descriptive way using the technique that was proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984). There were three activities used in this research, which were: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing/verification.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS
1. The Use of Song in “English Habit” Program

In this research, the researcher focused on three things, which were the selections of song, the kind of songs and the activities in listening using songs.

The Selection of Songs
From the interview, the English teachers in SMAN 3 Malang prepared the songs two days before having the activity. The songs were old and popular songs. The teacher chose the old songs because he expected that the students rarely listened to them and it was a good technique to learn the vocabulary from the lyrics. The teacher would also choose any songs which were easy to understand. However, according to Harmer (2001:243), there are two ways of dealing with choosing the right song. First, the teacher can ask the students to bring their favorite songs to class. Second, the teacher can bring an old song.

Related to the selection of songs, Lynch (2005) also states that there are three criteria in selecting songs:
1. Use songs that are popular with the students whenever possible.
2. Songs must have clear and understandable lyrics.
3. Songs should have an appropriate theme. Songs with any type of negative theme should be avoided. Some lyrics in songs may be offensive or inappropriate, so teacher should always be cautious when choosing the songs.

The Kind of Songs which are Used in “English Habit” Program
The genre of the songs used in “English Habit” program was pop-songs. Since most of the students were fascinated with pop songs and stars, the teachers paying attention to popular culture in foreign language teaching and learning, and try to make the students to be aware to that. Lynch (2005) states that popular songs are well known worldwide. Songs bring culture from other country to learn. The value of English pop-songs in motivating students to learn English and enhancing their involvement was acknowledged by teachers.

All popular songs were eternally occupied with variations on the same themes of love, friendship, joy, sorrow, dream, and the rest, which were the common feelings of humans. Therefore, more time and attention to pop music in the “English Habit” program increased the students’ motivation because those kind of songs were connected to their lives.

The Activities in Listening to Songs
The day when the teacher decided to use the songs, the teacher prepared it by giving and sharing the song to the other teachers, and played the song in their class from the teacher’s room which could be heard from the speakers in each class. Before the program started, the teacher prepared his laptop and his speaker because the speakers were broken. The teacher distributed the piece of paper with a missing gap lyric. Then the teacher played the song and all of the students listened to it carefully. Some of the students sang the song happily and tried to fill in the blanks, and some of them grabbed their dictionary to look up the meaning of some difficult words in the song’s lyrics.
Exercises in listening songs are important. According to Brown and Nation (2010), exercises take a useful part in a language course in helping learners to be formally accurate in their speech and in helping them to quickly learn a useful collection of phrases and sentences that allow them to start using the language as soon as possible.

There were lots of possible activities that could be done in the classroom by using songs. The teacher, himself, during the interview, shared a list of possible activities, which were:

- discussing the topics of a song
- grabbing words / pictures
- ordering lines of song
- filling gaps
- creative writing
- correcting mistakes in the lyrics
- predicting vocabulary
- reconstructing the text, writing down as many words as you remember
- video (lyrics of the song – how would the students make a video)
- project work – making posters, drawing pictures, info about singer, band etc.
- singing

The teacher, however, used more filling gap or predicting vocabulary exercises. It was more because the teacher felt that he did not have enough time to do other exercises.

2. The Advantages of Using Songs in “English Habit” Program

Based on the observations, listening to songs was a good way to learn English. It was fun and most of the students and teachers loved it. The classroom became comfortable, happy, and enjoyable. Some students and teachers were singing together and they seemed enjoy the songs, even though some of them did not know the meaning of the songs. The songs in the classroom which made the atmosphere in the classroom became comfortable and joyful was good to motivate the students in learning. Stansell (2005) believes that songs positively affect language accent, memory, and grammar as well as mood, enjoyment, and motivation and that pairing words and rhythm properly helps to hold songs together, and to improve the ability of the mind to recall it.

In the classroom, the students were encouraged to know more about the song they had listened. Some of them grabbed their dictionary and found out every single word they listened. The researcher concluded that songs were useful to learn new words. By using songs to increase vocabulary, several conditions for teaching stated by Thornbury (2002:16) are met. In lyrics, words usually appear in context, the sound of new words was easily remembered along with the melody of the songs and by listening to the songs, the students were exposed to the new words many times.

3. The problems in using songs in “English Habit” Program

There were many problems faced by the teacher when using songs in the “English Habit” program. First, the “English Habit” itself was only conducted once a month. It was not adequate to have more activities in “English Habit”. Although the teachers in SMAN 3 Malang had already a lot of plans to do in “English Habit”, including another variation of using songs.
The second problem came from the students themselves. Some of them seemed unmotivated. From their answers in the questionnaires, they said that the activities are boring. Buttris (2010) states that some kinds of difficulties in listening are directly related to the students themselves. Since some students felt bored, they became noisy and it disturbed the other students.

And third, the problem to use songs in “English Habit” program in SMAN 3 Malang is the equipment. Some classes sometimes had a problem with the speaker. Sometimes the sound was too small to hear so the students cannot understand the songs.

4. The students’ opinion about the use of songs in “English Habit” Program

Based on the data from the questionnaire, 100% students answer that they like to learn English by listening to songs. 90% does not like to hear old songs. They commented that old songs were awful and they do not like it. They hope that the teacher chose other songs which were new and familiar to them. Based on Brophy (1993) that evidently, when the students are interested in what they are doing, they do it well. When they were interested in the content of a lesson, and were actively engaged in it, they would perform better.

Most students took songs seriously, especially their favorite music by their idols. The vocabulary of many songs might be poor of quality and full of dialect, but so is the natural language used in everyday situations, therefore it is necessary that students get acquainted with the slang.

CONCLUSIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

One of the activities in “English Habit” was listening to songs. The songs that the teachers had chosen were old and new popular songs that most of the students were familiar with. The popular songs were also chosen because they are good to increase awareness of the cultural context of the songs. The students can also learn new vocabularies, certain structures, and the content. In the process of listening to songs, the teachers only gave one or two kinds of activities/exercises, such as filling gaps or predicting vocabulary.

Based on the data collected, the advantages of using songs in the “English Habit” program were to give chance to the students to practice their listening skill and to train their vocabulary, and also to make the classroom become joyful and comfortable.

It was also found that the students were motivated by the use of songs in the program, but the low frequency or the limited time of the program to explore the songs in term of the language and content, makes it difficult to sustain the motivation, and the problem with the speakers provided in the classroom. There were 100% of the students gave positive responses toward the use of songs in the “English Habit” program.

Suggestions

There are some aspects that need to be taken into consideration based on the findings and the discussions for the improvement of the quality on the use of songs in “English Habit” program at SMAN 3 Malang. First, it is suggested that the school should give more frequent time for “English Habit” so that the students have more activities and exercises in learning English. The frequency of English Habit itself should be more often, not only once a month, but more.
Second, the teachers should handle the class more intensively when they are listening to a song. The teachers should also be more active to encourage and motivate the students to listen to English songs.

Third, the school should check regularly the listening equipment such as the speaker in each class, for sometimes the speaker is broken and the voice is too small for a big class like in SMAN 3 Malang.

In addition, there are some other activities that teachers can do with students to teach English through popular songs such as studying grammar, reading songs for linguistic purposes, composing songs, making articles about songs, writing letters to singers, making questionnaires, discussing a song, translating songs, writing dialogues using the words of a song, using video clips in many ways, doing role-plays (as people in the song, or the artist/interviewer), dictating a song, analyzing the lyrics, practicing pronunciation, intonation, and stress.

REFERENCES