



Teaching Idea: Inspiring Students' Expository Essay Writing Through Song Approach

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Abstract

Expository essays are divided into several different types, and the most common ones are: (i) compare and contrast, (ii) definition, (iii) example essay, and (iv) cause and effect. Using songs in the teaching and learning (T&L) of writing skills in higher education can help adult learners improve their expository essay writing skills. Research has found that using songs in teaching the writing subject can help improve their: (i) idea generation, (ii) motivation, and (iii) reduce writing apprehension. This approach has long been used in the teaching and learning (T&L) of English language in primary education, to help improve the young learners' language skill improvements. In university settings, this approach carries different results to different learners, yet is still proven to be beneficial at improving their writing skills. To compose an expository essay, the basic structures of: (1) introduction, (2) body paragraphs, and (3) conclusion must be present. The song approach helps the learners build their main ideas and elaborate them better, since song lyrics carry useful additional ideas that speed up the learners' point developments, make the session much more interesting, and provide them with a relaxing and safe learning environment. Therefore, this study discusses literatures written by various researchers that are relevant to the benefits of song approach in English writing skills in general, among adult learners.

Keywords: *Song approach; writing; idea generation; motivation; apprehension*

INTRODUCTION

In English essay writing, difficulties in terms of idea generation, motivation, and apprehension are among the problems faced by the students. Developing own original ideas is perceived as a difficult task by the students (Cindy Mutiara Saprina, Abdul Rosyid, & Yanti Suryanti, 2021), apart from having poor motivation and apprehension to write, as stated by Suhaimah Bulqiyah, Moh. Arif Mahbub, and Dyah Ayu Nugraheni (2021), who found that writing difficulties are derived from the students' interest, self-confidence, anxiety, and motivation in writing.

In addition, in English learning, ESL students are gaining more exposure to various different approaches to enhance their language competencies. Among the approaches, the use of learning materials that are based on music and songs are becoming more popular among educators. This type of approach uses various types of songs that are relevant to the essays to be composed in the classroom.

New approaches in teaching writing to adult learners need to be practiced in class, since it can be clearly seen that the essay construction involves cognitive skills that can be exhausting for the learners as they need to develop their own ideas that involve several phases. Therefore, writing becomes the most apprehensive component to learn, compared to reading, listening, and speaking. According to Indrawati and Ayob (2017), in language learning, writing is proven to be the most difficult part in the process, since both cognitive and language skills are needed for the construction of the essay, and the students' achievement in writing will be hindered if there are weaknesses in the instructor's teaching approach. The instructor must carefully choose the best approach based on their

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students' language capacity to ensure that the learning of writing become more fun and enjoyable, rather than distressing – to ensure their better achievements in writing. For instance, prior to the actual essay's construction, developing an outline could ensure a better organization of the prospective essay. The contents are thought beforehand, before producing an actual essay. This stage is also called as the "pre-writing" stage. According to Flower and Hayes (1980), less-skilled writers are less likely to create an outline for their essays, let alone adding ideas to the outline. The outlining or the pre-writing stage can be aided by the song approach, to help the learners develop a certain component of ideas, before developing them into an actual essay. It is important to realize the benefits that the pre-writing stage carries, as Kellogg (1990) demonstrated that creating an outline before beginning to write an actual essay can produce a higher quality composition. In the pre-writing stage, brainstorming is involved to produce raw ideas at a limited time, so that any relevant and possible ideas can be written unrefinedly, since they will make more sense once the actual essay is produced, bolstered by the further elaboration and examples. According to Manktelow (2000), in learning writing, learners are aided to generate ideas using some strategies like problem solving, attribute listing, morphological analysis, brainstorming, and checklists. Some of these strategies can also be aided through the song approach, as the lyrics carry certain ideas that can be further developed by the learners who listen to the songs, after receiving some explanations and elaborations by the instructor, to help them expand those ideas. These are some of the strategies that could be followed to help them build their creativity too. The song approach can provide ideas that allow the learners to freely jot down points that are relevant to the questions that they are given, by writing at a certain speed under a certain time limit given by the instructor. Any appropriate points could be written down on paper, based on anything relevant that cross on the students' minds, as they should not be censoring their thoughts at this stage. The song approach let the students' minds create ideas freely – just like how the song lyrics bring them into putting deep thought to understand what the song writers meant to say. The written ideas may appear substandard at the beginning, but the relevance can be seen as they start to write the actual essay later, since their elaborations and examples will support their initial thoughts in the pre-writing stage. In relation to this, Mogahed (2011) said that idea generation could be aided by the brainstorming technique, as it is a useful way of getting started, especially when they are stuck with idea production, before moving on to the next phase.

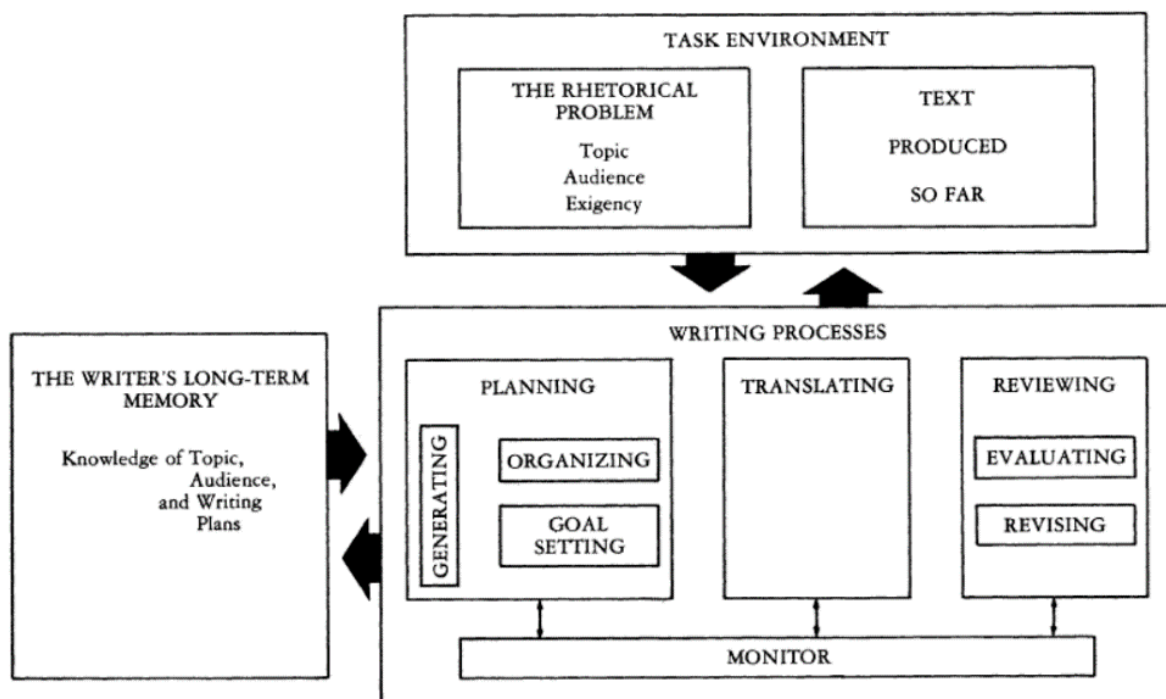
However, the song approach does not only aid the pre-writing stage, yet it can also aid the writing stage, or even the conclusion stage – based on the instructors' creativity at using this approach to their students that come from various backgrounds. For instance, according to Coss (2019), embedding music exploration in a classroom enables the students to build mental flexibility, disposition, and the skills needed for improvising and composing. The different atmosphere that students feel in a song-embedded classroom allows them to feel a different environment that differs from the normal classroom that is lecture-based, without any use of any song-related media. The use of songs can be rewarding in the idea-generation-stage, as its use can make English classes become more interesting and allow the students to be more creative and genuine at pouring down ideas on to their papers. This is supported by Aditya Rizkiyanto (2014), who did a comparison between using authentic song lyrics and pictures to teach narrative text, and the results showed that the authentic song lyrics were the ones that helped the students write the narrative texts, leading to his conclusion of authentic song lyrics are more effective than pictures in helping the students write narrative texts. In Aditya Rizkiyanto's (2014) study, he explained that the students managed to capture the story being told in the lyrics, and they used their own words to deliver their own authentic stories in their piece of writing, making them be told in a vibrant manner. He added that the use of song lyrics stimulated the students to think creatively as the story is told to them in the form of song. Ridout (1990) said that comprehension must be encouraged as many children as possible and adults sing songs, but hardly comprehend the implied messages, sequence of events, etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flower and Hayes' Theory of Writing

According to Flower and Hayes (1981), there are a few stages of writing: pre-writing, writing, and re-writing – called the Stage Models of Writing. These stages are followed to write a good essay. They added that revision is carried out by skilled writers, as a process of re-seeing and re-vision of that is ongoing while composing a piece of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). However, having good ideas do not necessarily produce good prose, because sometimes, the output of one stage could not easily be transferred to the next stage. A basic thinking process is needed to unite the planning and revision phases to produce good writing.

Figure 1: Structure of the Writing Model (Flower & Hayes, 1981).



Three major elements of (i) the task environment, (ii) writer's long-term memory, and (iii) the writing processes are involved in the act of writing. For instance, task environment includes all things outside the writer's skin, the element of writer's long-term memory is related to the stored knowledge, and the writing processes contains planning, translating and reviewing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In the composing protocols, those elements need to be explored in detail, to uncover how each element contributes to the overall process. In this study, the task environment can be set by the instructor to induce the best ambience for writing to happen, which is the song approach.

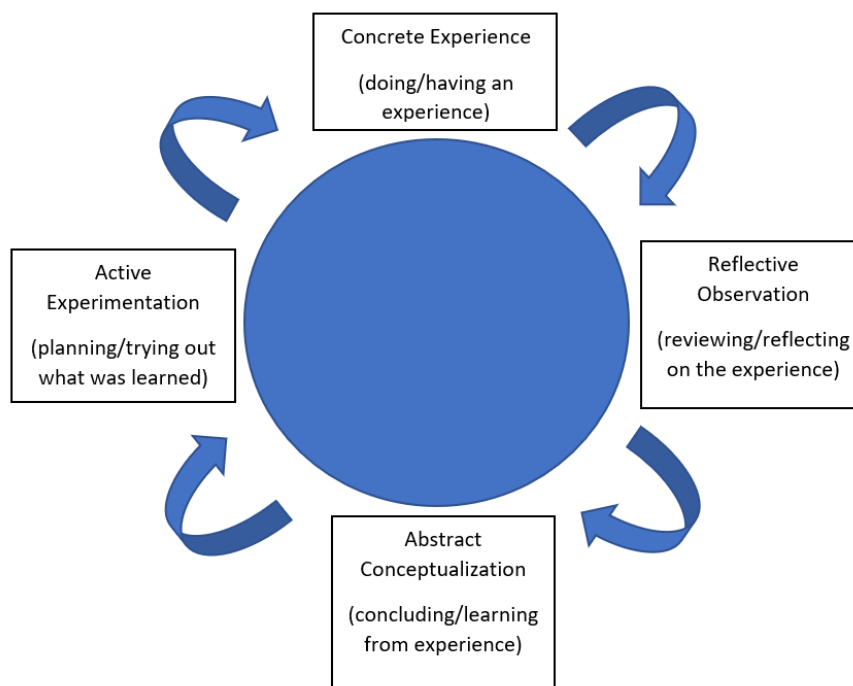
Writing also involves long-term memory which exists in mind, and outside resources like books – the mind is a storehouse of knowledge about topic and audience, writing plans and problem representations (Park, 2005). Sometimes, from the long-term memory of a writer, a writing cue can spark the stored information to be taken out of the mind, which allows the writer to start writing effectively. Song approaches allow the learners to recall past memories based on song choices that come from various era, generation, or years. The lyrics allow the learners to revisit whatever memories they have in mind, and connect them with the essay question at hand, and start writing. Park and Festini (2016) explained that long-term memory is different from short-term memory since it is more

stable compared to short-term memory. From the right cue, it allows a network of useful knowledge to be retrieved from the brain, as aided by the songs. In Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) words, flow is “a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it”. The right songs are beautifully written, and some of them embed poems, tragedies, stories, memories, and even thread of events that are shared with the listeners. When listened carefully together with the rhythm, the learners could also experience flow, and able to write better. This includes a better idea generation, a higher motivation, and a lower writing apprehension.

Learning Style Inventory (Kolb's Learning Cycle)

This model was developed by David Kolb in 1984, related to internal cognitive processes. His experiential learning theory works on two levels: (1) a four-stage cycle of learning, and (2) four separate learning styles. Kolb states that learning involves the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations. In Kolb's theory, the impetus for the development of new concepts is provided by new experiences. It is possible to enter the cycle at any stage, and follow it through its logical sequence. The LSI theory is shown below:

Figure 2: Kolb's Learning Cycle



According to Kolb (1984), effective learning happens when all four stages in the LSI are progressed by a person: (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test a hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This methodology employs the integration of songs within classroom settings to impart various language skills to students. The study delves into the advantages of utilizing songs as instructional tools in classrooms to enhance expository essay writing abilities among adult learners. Essentially, the song-based approach entails instructors selecting specific songs that align with the

theme of the expository essay topic being taught. For example, if the essay prompt revolves around "The Importance of Protecting the Forests," the chosen songs must relate to environmental conservation or nature preservation. This method is designed to stimulate idea generation, boost motivation, and alleviate apprehension among students. By integrating relevant songs into the curriculum, instructors aim to foster a deeper engagement with the writing process and facilitate a more meaningful learning experience for adult learners.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Idea Generation

Zimkhitha Kalipa (2014) interviewed a participant in her research about what teaching strategies were important to improve writing skills, and the interviewee replied the following: "I always say listen to English programmes, listen to the news in English try and listen to good English songs, get away from the American nice versions and try to go back to the good proper English, but I think for me, story writing of your life, introduction your body and conclusion and to get the structures right." Based on the interview answer above, research done by Bello (1997) quoted the following list of activities by Kazemak and Rigg (1995), to react to a text or stimulus: "Learners can record their reactions to various stimuli. They might do a free writing or an LEA (Language Experience Approach) piece in response to a piece of music; a photograph or drawing; a sound, such as water being poured; or even smells, such as the aroma of different spices or flowers". Mohan and Thomas (2020) stated that music is a common phenomenon that crosses all borders of nationality, race, and culture. A tool for arousing emotions and feelings, music is far more powerful than language. An increased interest in how the brain processes musical emotion can be attributed to the way in which it is described as a "language of emotion" across cultures. Be it within films, live orchestras, concerts or a simple home stereo, music can be so evocative and overwhelming that it can only be described as standing halfway between thought and phenomenon. A study on the influence of songs on learning in the light of different theoretical perspectives and the role of working memory capacity found that an interaction between songs and working memory capacity carries the following result: the higher the learners' working memory capacity, the better they learned with songs (Lehmann & Seufert, 2017).

Motivation

Drifa (2012) wrote research entitled "Language Learning Through Music", and used pop music that was soft and relaxing for his class. The song calmed the students and made them become more focused with their work. Drifa (2012) added that songs have been extensively researched, and since adolescents use songs as a healing tool and a source of enjoyment, they need to be carefully chosen in order to influence and enhance their maximum learning in the classroom. Brewer (1995) also stated that songs stimulate internal processing and creativity and encourage personal reflection. It is a good approach to use songs to change from the normal classroom environment that is normally quiet, to setting the right mood for the session to acquire the best results. Much research has proven that songs are a powerful tool that can enhance students' creativity and lead to a peaceful state of mind. Brewer (1995) said "Music stabilizes mental, physical and emotional rhythms to attain a state of deep concentration and focus in which large amounts of content information can be processed and learned". Naveen Kumar (2016) did research entitled "The effect of listening to songs on concentration and academic performance of the student: Cross-sectional study on medical undergraduate students". The data revealed that 47% believed that music helped them to concentrate while studying, whereby 29% said songs could calm them down, and 17% said it could prevent sleepiness. From this study, listening to songs while studying does not carry any harmful effects. In fact, it could actually improve students' performance in academic perspectives, as the experimental data showed 75% correct answers were given by the participants while listening to soft songs than other fast track or instrumental songs.

Results should be clear and concise. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in great detail. Please highlight differences between your results or findings and the previous publications by other researchers. The next sub-heading should be formatted as follows:

Writing Apprehension

Writing apprehension is a situation and subject-specific individual difference concerned with people's general tendencies to approach or avoid writing (Daly, 1973). In other words, writers with low writing apprehensions will write better than those with high writing apprehensions. The problems of anguish and apprehension are also raised by Rubina Akhtar, Hanita Hassan and Aminabibi Saidalvi (2020), as they researched about the effects of ESL students' attitude on academic writing apprehensions and academic writing challenges and found that the students became stressed-out when they fail to generate ideas about the given topic, not able to generate new ideas, need to adhere to time limitations, and the need to follow their teacher's expectations.

For writing apprehension, Latif (2007) said that it is a situational-specific anxiety that the writers feel, as their uncomfortable feelings appear during essay compositions. The uncomfortable feelings could exist due to poor English language competency that require grammar and vocabulary knowledge. As the writers feel uneasy due to their inability to write effortlessly, frustrations and dissatisfactions are experienced, leading to such apprehension in writing (Shaharizam, 2005). This apprehension is felt by many ESL writers as a good language capability to write in English is required, to ensure the essay is readable and interesting to read. Writing apprehension occurs when the students feel that writing sentences in English essays are a heavy task to do.

For writing apprehension, Magno (2008) stated that this is a significant predictor to measure an ESL learner's rate of mastering the English language. In fact, whether a student has apprehension (anxiety) to write, it correlates with their performance and quality of writing (Hassan, 2001). problems include simple main ideas – ideas that are very modest and repeatedly used in the same topic of writing, same supporting details – ideas that can be merged as one rather than being separated into different ideas, elaborations that are insufficient – fragmented as the readers will be expecting for further elaborations. In line with this issue, Che Musa, Normazidah & Koo, Yew & Azman, Hazita (2012) said that the learners' performance and capability to score high in writings skills are often the only evaluation done for them, making this to silent their voices, and being alienated and separated from a meaningful language use.

The Use of Songs to Enhance Students' Writing

Ridout (1990) proposed a reading/singing strategy that was based on the directed reading activity, which she modified with the use of songs. This strategy fosters vocabulary, word recognition, writing, and comprehension skills, apart from leading some sense of appreciation of the songs that the students heard. A few domains like the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor are addressed for the students. In general, the strategies were done to children, as opposed to adult learners. Ridout (1990) presents eight steps of this strategy:

Table 1: Reading/Singing Strategy (Ridout, 1990)

Reading/Singing Strategy (Ridout, 1990)	
I	Motivate the students so they will eagerly anticipate the lesson. The motivational aspect of the reading/singing strategy is important because it gives the students a positive attitude toward the lesson. The motivational step may be as simple or as making elaborations as the instructor chooses a song. The students' prior knowledge should be utilized at this point so a brainstorming (pre-writing/pre-reading) activity would be appropriate.

II	Introduce some special vocabularies in the song. The instructor should teach words from the songs that may be difficult for the students in either pronunciation or meaning.
III	Set a purpose for the students to read/sing the words of the songs. By setting a purpose, the students will attend to their reading and, hopefully, comprehend what they are reading (the lyrics).
IVa	Read the song's words orally/silently (Some instructors prefer skipping this part).
IVb	Sing the song. With the instructor leading, the students will sing the song as they carefully follow the written lyrics.
V	Ask questions pertaining to the song. When posing questions, ask literal, interpretive, and critical level questions. The students should skim for answers to promote study skills.
VI	Sing the song again. This is the place in the lesson where the song is practiced and the students who normally have difficulties become more confident with their word attack.
VII	Incorporate skills/strategies into the lesson. Choose one or two skills/strategies to work with. Choose skills that relate to vocabulary, word attack, or concepts used in the songs. song. Choose activities that require some writing.
VIII	Extend/enrich the lesson. Sing the song again with psychomotor involvement. Try to incorporate a writing activity at this point.

Based on the table above, Ridout (1990) suggested some ways that use songs to teach language-related matters to the students. In teaching writing to adult learners, steps like IVb, VI, VII and VIII can be skipped. Other research like Reasons for Using Songs in the ESL/EFL classroom (Schoepp, 2001), Songs in Language Learning (Richards, 1969), Music and MEXT: How Songs Can Help Primary School English Teachers Teach and Their Students Learn (York, 2011) are examples of studies that use song approaches in the classroom. This research study about how learners can learn better using songs. According to Schoepp (2001), if songs are used properly in coordination with language learning to ESL/EFL learners, they can carry beneficial values to the students, especially as the internet is making access to music and songs becoming much easier than before. As listening is involved when music/songs are used in the classroom, it is important to realize that the lyrics carry some meanings to the listeners, that lead to comprehension. Two important processes are involved in this: (1) bottom-up processing where the listener builds up the sounds into words, sentences and meanings, and (2) top-down processing where the listener uses background knowledge to understand the meaning of a message (Richards, 1990). From here, it is important to realize that listening comprehension can help the learners to think about the contents of what they heard and convert them into understanding and ideas.

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed some literature from previous research related to the use of songs in classrooms, in teaching language skills to the learners. The theory of writing from Flower and Hayes (1981) shows that learners' memories can be recalled by a certain stimulus, to ensure the stored memory to be used in writing. The Kolb's Learning Cycle on the other hand, allows effective learning to happen when all four stages in the LSI are progressed by a person. The song approach that uses songs relevant to the essay question given allows the learners to have a different experience when learning writing, compared to the traditional method of asking the students to brainstorm points and elaborations using their own personal experiences and knowledge. The learners' idea generation skills are aided by the song lyrics that trigger their stored memory in either their long- or short-term memory, to be poured down into their writing. Their motivation levels are increased too, since the formed ideas allow them to write based on the experiences and knowledge that they already have, that they can creatively develop just as those song lyrics that they hear. The writing apprehension becomes

lower because all the learners will write essays based on the songs that they have listened to together in class. The session itself shows the learners that writing is a fun subject, because of the usage of songs, rather than giving long texts to them to read and to understand. So, the current traditional teaching method in essay writing classes should be changed into something different and entertaining, to encourage and improve the learners' idea generation skills, motivation, and reduce their writing apprehension. Based on the previous discussions, it can be seen that the learners have different backgrounds and require different styles of teaching, and the instructors should change their teaching styles based on the students that they teach. It is important to realize that the current generation of students are different from the previous X and Y generations. They require a certain approach to encourage their learning motivation, that in turn will help improve their writing skills. So, the current instructors should observe whether their current learners are motivated to learn writing, when the traditional teaching method is applied, or not. Else, the song approach can be used to change their current styles of teaching to ensure an improved essay in various parts. However, it can be seen that many of the literature from this study only studied the effects of the song approach in teaching language to young learners. The effects to adult learners are still scarcely found, and require further investigation and future studies.

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