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Using the Music of English Creatively
in the ESL Classroom

Jerome Young[1]

Abstract

In this paper it is argued that the inherent musical nature of the English language lends itself to intriguing classroom activities which, when implemented, can help English as a Second Language learners acquire a sense of the natural intonation and rhythm of English. The underlying logic of a person's first language can have a profound effect on how that person speaks English as a second language, especially when the two languages have dramatically different rhythmical logics, as Japanese and English do. English language education in Japan tends to emphasize grammar and translation, with the intention of helping students pass standardized written exams, and does little to help students learn to speak in English. This situation can be ameliorated, it is argued, by getting students actively and creatively involved in the music of English. During the autumn term of 2008, we conducted an experimental class at Keio University with the goal of getting students engaged in creative activities, some physical (singing), some cerebral (poetry writing), some a little of both (song writing), in order to strengthen their communicative sense of the natural rhythm of spoken English.

Introduction

Using music and song to teach language is something every parent has used to teach their children their first language. For this reason, it is only natural that teachers of English have been experimenting with ways to incorporate music and song into the English language classroom. Carolyn Graham's work with Jazz Chants[2] paved the way for the singing of songs as an aid to learning the natural rhythm and intonation of spoken English. Her work has been groundbreaking in the sense that she used songs/chants in a methodical way to reinforce specific linguistic lessons, whether it is giving students practice with grammatical patterns, vocabulary, or idioms. The reason her work has been as successful as it has been

is because of the simple fact that English is a very rhythmical language and lends itself to song. Moreover, as music resonates with people, in a general psychological way, students studying English as a second language tend to find working with songs an enjoyable way to learn to speak English naturally. More and more English educators recognize this and have been developing ways in which to use song in the English language classroom, from student textbooks[3] to resource books for teachers[4] to serious linguistic analysis of the governing dynamics of intonation and rhythm in English.[5] Overall, this trend is a good one, especially in the case of English education in Japan. Japanese students of English receive an extensive English language education but it is one that needs to make more of an effort at enabling students to spend time *actively* developing their sense of the natural intonation and rhythm of English. Incorporating music into English language education is the obvious way to achieve a more balanced pedagogy. The end result of using song in the English language classroom would be giving students a greater sense of achievement and confidence in their ability *to speak* English.

One of the great advantages of learning English intonation and pronunciation patterns through song is the simple fact that music itself, on a psychological level, is enjoyable. In fact, in the student surveys, the overwhelming majority of students affirmed that music was important in their lives, confirming Nietzsche's pronouncement that "without music life would be a mistake."[6] Students may be bashful about their voices, about singing in front of others, but song is an easy way to reinforce important linguistic lessons in English, as Graham's Jazz chants so ably demonstrate. One need not work with Jazz Chants only, however. Because of its rhythmical nature, virtually any English text would work (though, for aesthetic reasons, popular songs or poetry would, of course, be better choices). As the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, "to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers, but to all in general,"[7] so combining learning English with music has distinct advantages in making the language learning experience more memorable, and the language lessons learned more phonetically and rhythmically accurate to the native ear.

Without doubt, English language education for non-native speakers presents many challenges to educators. In the Japanese educational system, students typically receive eight years of English education. Most students have had at least six years of English education starting from junior-high (not more than 1,000 hours at the outside) plus two years more if they go to college. Despite the number of years devoted to foreign language study, students are often uncomfortable, or even unable, to speak in English, with confidence or

otherwise. The main reason for this, it seems, is that classroom activities revolve around rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar, and translation from English into Japanese, and vice versa. The rationale for this pedagogical approach is simply to prepare students to take standardized English tests and get good test scores. Therefore, they study for college admission tests, which are designed to test whether the test-taker knows a lot about English and can translate it, with the tragicomic result that they "know about" English but don't have a good command of spoken English.

In the Japanese context, students receive very little opportunity to speak the language, and lack confidence in social situations in which English is spoken. The result of all these years of English education is, therefore, stilted spoken English. This is not the fault of the Japanese students of English because they are merely following what Steven Pinker described as their language "instinct." As he stated:

> Language is a complex, specialized skill, which develops in the child *spontaneously*, without conscious effort or formal instruction, is deployed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every individual, and is distinct from more general abilities to process information or behave intelligently.[8]

Besides the obvious differences between English and Japanese (e.g. Kanji vs. an alphabet), there is an underlying logic that differentiates how each language is spoken. While Japanese is a syllable-timed language, English is a stressed-timed language. The consequences of this difference are enormous, and understanding the difference helps to understand why, after so many years of formal training (a training largely lacking opportunities to speak English), Japanese students tend to speak English in an unnatural way: they are merely speaking English in a way that is *instinctive* to them, using syllables rather than stress to time their speech. Once students begin to understand this fundamental rhythmical difference, and study accordingly, they are well on their way to becoming fluent speakers of English.

Despite an extensive English language education, by the time Japanese students enter university, many have low self-esteem in terms of speaking English. There are, admittedly, many ways in which to instill a sense of confidence in students. One way is getting them to use their knowledge of English *in an active, i.e. creative, way*. Why is creativity important? Creativity gives students more freedom to express themselves and their self-worth, and this, ultimately, makes the learning of English a memorable experience. Because songs, poems,

and melodies are naturally memorable—they get "stuck in our heads"—active practice, working on the intonation, rhythm and phonetics of a text leads to a natural fluency in language use. As Rousseau cautioned, "extreme attention" can have a very detrimental effect on students' ability to learn so that "they will scarcely open their mouths."[9] When students enjoy the learning experience, on the other hand, and are not put under too much pressure to "open their mouths", the lessons learned have more resilience over time. As one student wrote in a survey, "studying the music of English is not stressful for me." In the Japanese English language context this is important because students experience a lot of pressure to do well on standardized tests. By using the music of English in the classroom, students become more playful and relaxed, and, though not quantifiable, acquire a deeper sense of confidence in their language ability, in their creativity, and in their own sense of self-worth—all worthy pedagogical goals befitting a university education.

During the fall semester of 2008, we convened an experimental four-week course, part of the Action-Oriented-Pluri-lingualism program at Keio University, aimed at tapping into both students' knowledge of English and their own inherent creativity. Even though each lesson challenged students to be creative with English, the atmosphere of the classroom was relaxed. Borrowing an insight from Carolyn Graham, we used music as a way to show the students the natural rhythm of spoken English. This was also the spark to get the students thinking creatively in English, through the writing of lyrics and poetry. The course was physically intense because students were obliged to use their hands and feet through many of the lessons. The course was also challenging intellectually because they were assigned difficult writing tasks. A course questionnaire, however, showed that the students found the lessons rewarding, and that, from the viewpoint of language learning, they felt the lessons improved their sense of the natural rhythm, pronunciation, and intonation of spoken English.

Finding the Beat

A recent scientific study argued that "beat induction" (i.e. the ability to follow a beat) is "active at birth, not learned."[10] As beat induction is an instinctual ability, showing students that spoken English has its own natural rhythm, one different from spoken Japanese, is easy to demonstrate. Students can hear the difference readily. However, getting them to acquire the "natural rhythm" of English can be hindered by the "natural rhythm" of the students' first language. For this reason, extensive practice is necessary: using music is an effective way to do this. This lesson was based on an insight by Carolyn Graham who pioneered the use of

Jazz Chants at the American Language Institute at New York University. She recognized the connection between Jazz music and spoken English, and developed a unique and innovative approach to help language learners develop natural sounding English. What she realized is that a Jazz song has a rhythm and tempo that conveys emotions; likewise, English has its own rhythm and tempo, its own "beat", that conveys emotions and intent. The beauty of her approach is the recognition that music enables students to tap into the natural rhythm of English. Through Jazz Chants, Graham developed a pedagogically useful method for getting students speaking natural sounding English in the classroom environment. The practicing of songs is an intense physical activity involving the vocalization of words, phrases, and melodies, and the stomping or clapping out of the beat. After an intense session, it was not uncommon for a student to approach me, with a smile, and say "I'm tired!"

A useful way to begin getting Japanese students vocalizing English is to explain fundamental linguistic difference between Japanese and English. We began by explaining the underlying logical differences between spoken English and Japanese, that is, that English is a stress-timed language, while Japanese is a syllable-timed language, and explained the consequences of confusing these two underlying linguistic logics. Although linguists are very much aware of this distinction, Japanese students of English are, surprisingly, usually unaware of it. Becoming aware that there is a fundamental difference between how these two languages are spoken is immensely valuable in getting the students to speak a natural English. While spoken English intonation follows an "up and down" pattern, with recurring stresses, or "beats", spoken Japanese intonation, on the other hand, tends to be flat, with an emphasis on syllable alignment. Therefore, for Japanese speakers of English as a second language, being aware of this difference makes all the difference in the world between speaking a natural or unnatural sounding English. We used a graph of an EKG (electrocardiogram) machine to demonstrate the difference between what we called "Living English" as opposed to "Dead English".
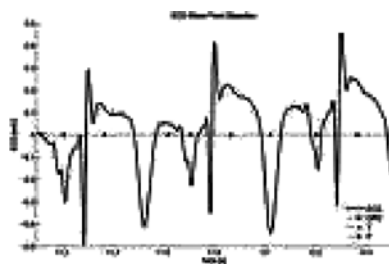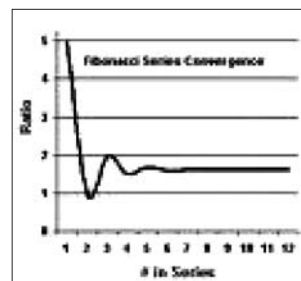
Living English   Dead English

The point of this graph was to show students, in a visually interesting way, how using the underlying logic of spoken English produces one pattern, while using the underlying logic of spoken Japanese to speak English produces another pattern. Native English speakers expect, albeit unconsciously, a "living" English intonation and rhythm pattern when speaking with others in English.[11] When Japanese English speakers use the underlying logic of spoken Japanese in their English conversations, it produces an intonation and rhythm pattern that strikes the native English speaker as strange.

The next step in this process was to help students be able to "find the beat" in an English text. We began with the assumption that every English text has a natural rhythm to it. Therefore, being able to find the beat is necessary to learn to be able to speak English naturally. The natural rhythm of English is such that each important word or syllable in an English sentence bangs out a beat of its own, much as Graham argued with Jazz Chants. What the students needed to do was identify the words/syllables on which the beat falls. Although this may sound difficult, it is made easier by the fact that the length of intervals between beats is always the same. What complicates this is simply that the less important words (no matter how many there are) have to be squeezed into the gap by speaking faster. Moreover, in some cases, a word has to be stretched in order to produce the proper emotional effect, one that captures the speaker's intent. An integral ingredient of this process involved students either clapping their hands or stomping their feet. Working as a group, we would all "keep the beat" as each student, in turn, would deliver a line or verse from a song or poem. At first, students were a bit skeptical about the process but as soon as they began to practice a text they realized that "finding the beat" is a useful way to learn the natural rhythm and intonation of English.

For practice, we gave the students a poem by Christina Rossetti. Admittedly, Graham's method focused on situational English, targeted at getting students to master the proper intonation patterns of "everyday" English. In contrast to this objective, we chose a more abstract academic subject, i.e. poetry, in order to give the students a deeper appreciation of the fact that *all* English obeys the same rhythmical logic. An easier approach would be selecting a well-known popular song and have the student work on it.[12]

When I am dead, my dearest,

Sing no sad songs for me;

Plant thou no roses at my head,

Nor shady cypress tree:

Be the green grass above me

With showers and dewdrops wet;

And if thou wilt, remember,

And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,

I shall not feel the rain;

I shall not hear the nightingale

Sing on, as if in pain:

And dreaming through the twilight

That doth not rise nor set,

Haply I may remember,

And haply may forget.[13]

Though Rossetti's English is somewhat archaic, students were able to get a feel for the natural rhythm of her English, i.e. of the underlying linguistic logic of her poem. The archaic English (e.g. "thou" and "doth"), in fact, was pedagogically useful as a way to help the students work on producing the correct pronunciation of "th". Phonetically speaking, the sound "th" does not exist in Japanese. For this reason, it poses certain problems for Japanese speaking in English.[14] Students usually labor, at first, to get the sound right—they are simply not used to sticking out their tongue to produce sounds. Some students are able to get the hang of it fairly quickly, but others really struggle to produce the sound and to do so consistently. We encouraged the students by telling them that, with a concentrated effort, they could easily master this sound. As student surveys indicated, they found these lessons in pronunciation to be useful. One student said, "Studying pronunciation helped me!" and another said, "my pronunciation has improved." This exercise was successful both in terms of the students finding the "beat" and in terms of finding the natural intonation of Rossetti's English. Students were able to recite the poem, and even sing it, in a natural way.

This lesson aimed to get students to recognize how spoken English and spoken Japanese are

fundamentally different, that each works according to a different underlying linguistic logic. We showed them that tapping out a beat can help them to locate the natural rhythm of an English text. We suggested using one of their favorite English songs as a way to further their studies. Though we cautioned that a song with a "tighter" rhythm would be easier to master than one with a "flowing" melody, we encouraged them to tackle any song in which they had an interest. In this lesson we gave them a difficult English text, a poem, but they were able to put the English into a natural rhythm, they were able to find the beat. There were variations in how students expressed the poem, but each had its own merits — students learned that language is not a static enterprise, but very much a spontaneous, improvised, creative activity.

Finding your Poetic Voice

Most people feel they cannot write poetry. Perhaps they feel intimidated by poetry because it seems to require an advanced level understanding of language, or worse, a "special talent". This is a concern for native speakers of a language, and is an even more pronounced concern for students studying a foreign language.[15] In Japan, students who study English frequently lament about their "poor" language ability, so asking them to write poems in English is a distinct challenge. Their knee-jerk reaction is to say, "I cannot write a poem!" Some might even argue that poetry is irrelevant. However, as Maley and Moulding so eloquently put it, "we ignore the poetic function of language at our own peril. It is the cutting edge of linguistic creativity and innovation, and the key to a feel for the soul of a language."[16] To overcome any resistance, is simple enough: all that is necessary is to provide the students with a clear method. By keeping things uncomplicated, the students are able to rise to the challenge and create a poem. This may not seem significant, but by writing *one* poem they gain confidence, not only in their ability to write poetry (which is a great accomplishment in itself), but in their ability to use English. Admittedly, this is an entirely creative use of English but, for this reason, it taps into a deeper human need — to express oneself, or, in the psychologist Maslow's expression, to actualize the self.[17]

The question as an educator is "How do I get students to write a poem?" Most people would say, "Poetry relies on intuition, and a deep understanding of language, so students will not be able to do it." However, if the teacher takes a relaxed approach to the task, giving positive feedback every step of the way, then the students will have a positive learning experience, one which could have a profound lasting impact on their lives. Writing one poem will lead, in theory, to more. The method we used to get students headed down the "expressive"

path is very simple. We began with a classroom activity, a "game" so to speak. We ask the students, "Can someone give us an English word? Any word." A student replies, and then the word is written on the blackboard. Next we ask, "Can someone else give me a word that rhymes with this word?"[18] Normally, after they think about it for a moment, someone eventually produces a rhyming word. This process is then repeated—two rhyming words. After that we ask for one more word, one that is non-rhyming. For pedagogical reasons, this process should be repeated twice. What we end up with is a sequence of three sets of words. For example:

   a) Friday, okay, sock, clock, spoil

   b) apple, jackal, brake, fake, pencil

   c) Concentrate, translate, television, division, blue-jay

This exercise is a fun one, usually involving lots of laughter. Once this task is finished, we then move on to writing a poem.

  For the poetry-writing phase of the process, we instruct students to take one of the three sets of words and write a poem using these words as *the final word* of a sentence. At the same time, we encourage the more adept and adventurous to write a poem for any and all they like. Before they begin writing, it is important to tell students that they should not worry about grammar or semantics. To help students relax and feel comfortable with this challenge, it is useful to explain what "poetic license" means, that is, "the right of a poet to deviate from the conventional rules of syntax, grammar, etc."[19] This is a particularly important lesson for Japanese students because they have been taught to pay "excessive attention", to use Rousseau's expression, when it comes to English: telling them not to worry about grammar or semantics can be a liberating way to experience English (for some, at least).

  Here are a few results:[20]

    Going another way on that Friday

    At that time, I was absolutely okay

    But now, I see the washing of socks

    In the lonely room, listening to the sound of clocks

    For that memory with you, I'm to spoil. (Shogo T.)

Let's party! It's Friday!
Staying out late is okay
Unlike Christmas, when we hung the socks
Looking at clocks
Going to bed early so the magic won't spoil (Yuki M.)

Thank God it's Friday
The weather is okay
What I hear in the room are the busy clocks
So, I decided to put on my cute little socks
And play with my cat, nothing but a spoil (Yuh M.)

Cute red apple
Dripped in the Snapple
With the sudden car brake
The cup broke because it was fake
So I had to eat it with a pencil (Yuh M.)

Tomorrow is Friday
That is okay
We don't have to put on socks
We don't have to watch clocks
We can spoil (Yusuke Y.)

After everyone had had ample time to write, we then opened the floor, and asked the students to share their creative work. As we can see from this sample of student work, they seized the chance to create, and generated some interesting stanzas.[21] Grammar didn't matter, semantics were in flux, and pragmatics was thrown "out the window". It was a creative, expressive moment for each and every one. Yet, meaning remained, understanding remained, psychology remained. On top of it all, students were laughing. Each enjoyed hearing the other's poems, and lively discussions about the meaning, rhythm, and logic followed. Positive feedback is crucial during the discussions afterwards. By giving lots of positive comments about students' creative efforts we, as educators, are boosting their self-

esteem and, thus, helping them on their life journey. We can never underestimate how important this is because by feeling good about their creative work the students also feel good about their language ability and, therefore, have a greater overall sense of self-confidence.

The results of this exercise are highly qualitative. The end result is that everyone was expressive and creative, and very individualistic. Even though all the students began with the same sets of words, their own distinctive voices came through in their poetry. Students marveled at each other's creative use of English, and were entertained by each other's poetic insight. Although they may have been afraid to write a poem to begin with, they enjoyed playing with the English language and, with their classmates' discussion and support, had a very positive learning experience. Feelings about inadequacy, in terms of linguistic fluency and accuracy, were replaced by a personal investment and an enhanced "feel" for the English language.

Writing a Song

Listening to music is something most, if not all, people enjoy and many, though not all, people enjoy playing musical instruments. Music is a language unto itself and, therefore, appeals to people on many different levels. This lesson drew on this key point and aimed to get students expressing themselves, actively and creatively, through the writing of songs.[22] Songs and poems are similar to each other: Each creative writing form has an inherent rhythm and intonation. The fundamental difference is that a lyric is meant to be sung or set to music. Writing songs is challenging for students and teachers alike for this very reason: one must think of melody, song structure, and accompaniment. Singing in front of others is a demand in-and-of-itself,[23] but writing a song and a melody requires a more sophisticated, though not extremely complex,[24] understanding of music. With this in mind, we began with a little basic theory about song structure, and then proceeded to improvise lyrics and a song.

The lesson began with a brief explanation of the basic difference between a song (lyric) and a poem, i.e. that a lyric requires a melody (singing) while a poem requires an intonation (a vocalization). The intention of the lyricist is to create a sequence of words to be sung. Songs themselves have various standardized structural forms (i.e. Blues, AAA, AABA,[25] and verse-chorus)[26] to which lyricists adapt their words. To keep the discussion simple, we focused on a form commonly used in popular music: the verse-chorus form. Through the use of a basic chart (below), we showed two typical patterns characterizing the verse-chorus form.
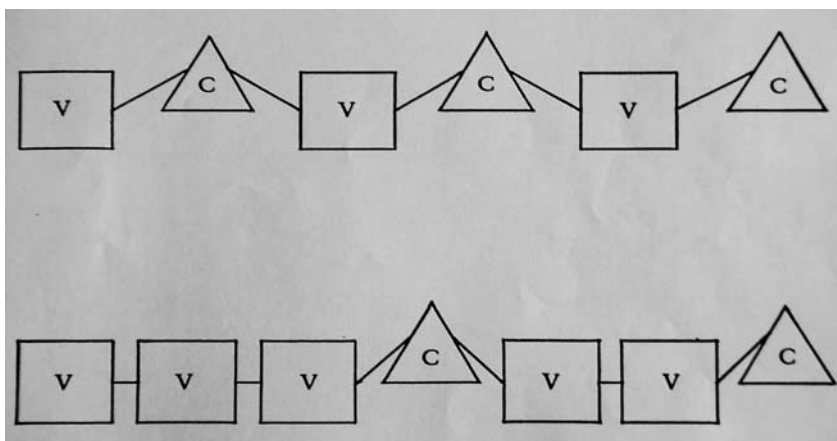
After students were familiarized with how the verse-chorus form is structured, we then set about the writing of a song. As songwriters write typically about their experiences, we began with the question: what is an important part of a student's life? The answer, not surprisingly, was test taking. Using this as our theme, we began, as a group, to improvise lyrics, beginning with the verses, of which we wrote two together. Every verse, we explained, is musically the same (identical, or nearly so) but lyrically each is different (though in popular songs verses may on occasion be repeated). It was a fun exercise, and these are the verses we came up with:

No way! Not again! We didn't know!
He did this before! Yes, he did this before!
I hadn't heard about it—I hadn't!
Let's do it next week—it's not fair!
You should have warned us

I can't understand any of the questions
Oh, what can I do to save my grade?
I'm never going to take this class again
I should have stayed at home in bed!
I should have stayed home in bed!

Next, we considered the chorus. As we explained, nearly every popular song has a chorus. The chorus is distinct from the verses musically; however, lyrically it is a sequence of words that are repeated, many times throughout a song, for effect. In addition, we noted that a truly effective chorus has a "hook" in it; that is, a "catchy" phrase that is easy for people to remember. We discussed what it feels like to take a test, and agreed students typically experience feelings of anxiety during a test. The central question became: How do students express that anxiety? We discussed many ways the anxiety manifests itself, but felt that one interesting behavior during a test is that we look frequently at our watch or the clock. From this vantage point, we decided upon the following as the chorus for the song:

> The clock keeps on ticking, tick-tock, tick-tock,
>
> And the clock keeps on ticking, tickity-tock, tickity-tock.

After acquiring these pieces of the puzzle, the next step was to put the lyric to music, i.e. to give it a melody and an accompaniment. Using a very basic rock guitar progression (with three chords), we then experimented with the melody, with the rhythm and intonation, of the words. Eventually, we came up with something that seemed to work *well enough*. Given the emotionally charged nature of a "pop quiz" and the anxiety it can cause, the melody itself was very forceful, very emphatic, while the chorus, on the other hand, was more relaxed and steady.

Although this lesson was very challenging for everyone involved, it was successful. From a pedagogical viewpoint, this is not a lesson every teacher would feel comfortable trying. Nevertheless, like the lessons before, it engaged students on a creative level, and inspired them to come up with some novel and even provocative insights about human nature, and the human condition, all while working on developing a sense of the natural rhythm and intonation of English. Although students may by shy about singing, helping them get comfortable "finding the beat" in English texts gave them confidence when it came time for them to sing one of their own creations. To be sure, writing and singing a melody requires students to tap into their creative sense. Moreover, it requires practice. For those students willing to put in the effort, the practice certainly pays off.

Recording Session

Digital technology revolutionized how people record, store, and edit artistic material. It has,

in fact, revolutionized how we experience the world. This revolution began with the personal computer in the 1980s, but witnessed tremendous development and innovation in the 1990s with the introduction of both powerful computer software and easy-to-use, compact, and inexpensive, gadgets for making digital recordings, whether with lenses or microphones. The goal of the final lesson of this experimental class was to use these innovations to create a digital record of students' creative work. The "grand" purpose in mind for doing this was to share students' works with others, either through a university-based class homepage, or through one of the many social-networking-servers available on the Internet (e.g. MySpace or YouTube, both of which are capable of streaming audio and video feeds). Even though using this technology requires a certain amount of preparation (and a little foresight, to anticipate potential "technical" troubles), it is easy to use. For this reason, we believe it should become an integral part of university education in the not-too-distant future.

The final lesson of this course was a recording session. The aim was to make digital recordings (both audio and video) of a song or poem chosen by students. We had one week of recess, in order to allow students to practice melodies, and then met to record. As it happened, we had only one student who was ready for the final session. The good news is that he really "rose to the challenge" and made a considerable effort to write a song. We began by warming up with two traditional folk songs, one in English ("Solomon Gundy"), and the other in German ("Die Gedanken sind Frei"). The purpose of this exercise was to get our voices stretched for the recording session and to help everyone feel relaxed and comfortable, before the lens and the microphone. We then practiced the poem "Eldorado" by Edgar Allan Poe[27] many times. At first, not surprisingly, our student was reluctant to make the recordings—he had never done anything like this before, and was uncertain about whether or not he would feel comfortable doing audio and video recordings. However, after he warmed up his voice, and we laughed a lot, he relaxed. The practice session is important because students may not feel confident about their voices, or the melody they have created. However, practicing the song together several times produced confidence in the melody. It was at this point that we placed our digital recorders before us and pressed "record".

The class project produced three audio recordings, and two "takes" on video of our student's melodic interpretation of Poe's classic poem. Writing poetry and song is never easy to do. Our goal during this session was to take this process to the next level by producing a digital recording of students' creative efforts. Though only one student participated in this part of the experimental class, it was not for sentimental reasons we made the recordings.[28] The

student had prepared for the session, as had we. In terms of production, the audio and video recordings were made with hand-held processors, and were easy to use. As we had a limited amount of class time, we were not able to explore fully either the sound checks or the video conceptualizations needed, but we were able to capture the student's idea. Ultimately, it was an effective session. As the student expressed later, "I improved my sense of the natural rhythm and intonation of English through the practice of singing. At first, I could only say the words but, after practice, I was able to sing."

One may wonder how students benefit, from the viewpoint of language learning, from the recording session. One immediate benefit for students is hearing their "English voice". Based on our class questionnaire, we discovered that nearly half the students surveyed had recorded and heard their voices before, largely thanks to cell phones. The advantage to recording students speaking, chanting, or singing in English is that it is then possible to sit with students and analyze their voices. Whether it is discussing the melody, the intonation, or the pronunciation of words, having the recording makes it possible to examine a student's expressions objectively. By listening to the recordings *with* the students we are then able to offer suggestions on how to improve their sense of the natural rhythm, pronunciation, and intonation of English. Although some people do not like the sound of their recorded voice, by explaining to students that listening to their own voice, recorded in English, is a useful way to spot problems and, thus, to work on improving their spoken English, they readily assent to the exercise.

Another way the recordings would be beneficial is by making them available to the student body as a whole. If students could access language lessons or students' creative works on-line, we believe they would do so. By seeing other students engaged in creative work in a second language it could inspire others to do the same thing. Moreover, it would be quite possible to design targeted audio-visual educational material, to be made available on-line, to help students to master the natural rhythm and intonation of spoken English. A tasteful use of "before and after" recordings, for example, would help show prospective English students that great progress can be made in becoming a fluent speaker of English.

The future of language education lies in using digital technology to help students master the art of *speaking* languages. Technology can in no way replace one-on-one interactions with native speakers, but the power of technology certainly can be used to help students acquire a sense of the target language they aim to learn. At present, it is possible to go on-line and get instructions on almost any subject (one only has to check You Tube to see the truth of this

statement). It makes sense, therefore, that a similar effort with language education, targeted for specific audiences (e.g. Japanese students of English), is a worthy pursuit. Moreover, with a web-based site it is possible to create a virtual library of students' creative efforts. Students could use this library either for language study, or to inspire them to come up with something equally creative. As students these days are tech savvy, they are always looking for new ways to use digital technology. Without doubt, in terms of language education, further innovation is on the horizon.

Conclusion

These lessons, though experimental, showed that it is possible to get students to engage in using English as a second language in a creative and active way. Moreover, the students learned that singing in English is a very effective way to improve their sense of the natural rhythm, pronunciation, and intonation of spoken English. From our class questionnaire we received several promising remarks: "The experience improved my English skill", "In this class, I met 'living' English", "Now I enjoy singing!" and "I think I can see a new world by this class." The only negative remark was that a number of students said they would have liked "more time" to practice singing in English. This latter remark is encouraging because the students recognized that the lessons were valuable in helping them to acquire the natural rhythm and intonation of English.

Each of these lessons had its own distinct challenges, for both students and teacher, but none of which could not be overcome. We conclude that the use of music in the language classroom helps to motivate students to acquire a natural sense of the rhythm and intonation of English. Through actively practicing English texts, accompanying them with a steady beat, students improved the way they spoke in English. Moreover, we concluded that the beauty of using music in the classroom is that it works not only for English, but for other languages too. As Rousseau said, "All our languages are the result of art,"[29] and music is a universal language from which all language learners and users benefit. We made the lessons challenging, and along the way, taught students important ways to improve their understanding of English intonation and phonetics, and showed them that they have the innate capacity to be creative with language, even a second language.

Notes

1) Jerome Young is a foreign lecturer at Keio University. He wishes to express kind thanks to Professor Kiyoto Hinata of Keio University for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

2) Cf. Carolyn Graham. 1978. *Jazz Chants: Rhythms of American English for Students of English as a Second Language*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

3) Cf. Herman Bartelen, *The Story of Popular Music*. Tokyo: Macmillan Languagehouse, Ltd., 2007.

4) Cf. Tim Murphey. 2002. *Music and Song*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

5) Charles Lowe "The 'Music of English' – A New Model of Communicative Intonation and Rhythm" 2003.

6) Friedrich Nietzsche. 2003. *Beyond Good and Evil*. New York: Penguin books.

7) Aristotle. 1997. *Poetics*. Tr. S.H. Butcher. New York. Dover Publications, Inc.: 6.

8) Steven Pinker. 1994. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.: 4-5.

9) Jean Jacques Rousseau. 1911. *Emile*. Barbara Foxley, trs. New York. Everyman's Library: 37. Rousseau's comment rings very true for Japanese students studying English in Japan: many are so terrified about "making a mistake" that they cannot utter a sentence. They are so focused on speaking English correctly that they become linguistically paralyzed because of their "extreme attention" to detail.

10) I. Winkler, G.P.Haden, O. Ladinig, I. Sziller, and H. Honing. 2009. "Newborn infants detect the beat in music." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 106, No. 4, Jan. 26.

11) The same can be said for speaking "living" Japanese. Native Japanese speakers expect a syllable-timed intonation and rhythm when speaking with others in Japanese. Native English speakers in Japan frequently do to the Japanese language what Japanese do to the English language, i.e. apply their own underlying linguistic logic to the targeted foreign language, with comic results.

12) Of course, one issue in this regard is selecting a song that would resonate well with the students. If a teacher is not certain which song to select, then the best method for selecting a song is based on whether it has a "tight" rhythm or a "flowing" melody. The former works well in any situation, while the latter could prove difficult if students are not ready for it. For this reason, it is best to save songs with difficult melodies for a time *after* students have gotten a firm grasp on how to find the beat.

13) *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 3rd edition. 1983. New York. W.W. Norton and Company: 817.

14) This situation is made worse by the use of English words in Katakana. Students readily recognize a word as being "English" but what they don't often realize is that the pronunciation they are using is Japanese. Words like "thanks" and "mouth" are thereby rendered "sanksu" and "mouse", the latter of which I point out has an entirely different meaning in English.

15) In our course questionnaire, we asked two basic questions about poetry: Do you like poetry? Do you write poetry? Not surprisingly, less than 30% of those surveyed said they "liked" poetry, and only about 20% said they had ever tried to write a poem.

16) Alan Maley and Sandra Moulding. 1985. *Poem into Poem: Reading and writing poems with students of English*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press: 134.

17) Abraham H. Maslow. 1968. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

18) NB. For some classes, it may be necessary to explain what "rhyme" means.

19) *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*. 1991. New York. Lexicon Publications.

20) NB. The texts are presented as they were written, improvised, in class.

21) For pedagogical reasons, it is useful for the teacher to also write poems for the three sets of words. Students are frequently shy about sharing their very personal work, so if the teacher has something to share, it can get the conversations started.

22) Cf. Pat Pattison. 1995. *Writing Better Lyrics*. Cincinnati, OH. Writer's Digest Books.

23) At her Teacher Training workshop at Keio (11/07), Carolyn Graham cautioned that telling people to sing, even teachers, was asking a lot. As she said, some people feel self-conscious about their voices and will be reluctant to sing in front of others. As in all things pedagogic, encouragement seems paramount to getting participation (as is a willingness on the teacher's part not to be afraid to look silly).

24) To demonstrate this, I showed students how the Rossetti poem (mentioned above) could be rendered into a song by playing only one chord on the guitar.

25) AAA is a musical structure that relies on a repetition of 8 bars of music repeated, theoretically, indefinitely. AABA is different in that it adds a "bridge", a musical and conceptual "release" from the repetition of the AAA pattern.

26) Cf. Sheila Davis. 1985. *The Craft of Lyric Writing*. Cincinnati, OH. Writer's Digest Books.

27) Edgar Allan Poe. 1991. *The Raven and Other Favorite Poems*. New York. Dover Publications, Inc.: 36.

28) In 1999-2000 I conducted a similar course at Keio University's Shonan-Fujisawa campus. In that instance, because we had more advanced facilities, we made recordings for about 25 songs students had written. This involved a whole range of activities in addition to those discussed in this paper. As the SFC campus has an audio studio, complete with computer and state of the art audio engineering software, the students worked in the studio to make their multi-track audio recordings. It was a very demanding class, for both students and teacher alike, but the results were quite impressive.

29) Rousseau, ibid., pg. 32.