

## Learning English through Lyrics.

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I love to sing! You can ask anyone who knows me and they will tell you that I love music and I'm always singing, even in the school cafeteria. So, naturally, I have always incorporated many songs into my classroom activities and themes. I firmly believe that children learn a lot through the lyrics in songs, rhymes and chants. I can still remember songs I learnt when I was the age of the children I am teaching now.

Howard Goodall (a composer) has the following to say about music, and I strongly agree, "Music can be used to reinforce challenging concepts, such as: numeracy, motor skills and language development. When children are singing they are taking in information and training the brain, but they don't think they are, they think they are just having fun."

Whilst living here in Korea I have learnt some Korean words because of Korean songs, for example: Nabiya Nabiya (butterfly butterfly), not only is this the word for butterfly, but it is also using the word correctly- Nabi, becomes Nabiya as a more endearing way of saying butterfly. This information I now use when calling children in class, I either add an 'a' or 'ya' to their name to make it more 'friendly', i.e.: Sang Won will become Sang Wona and Mira will become Miraya. I have also learnt some body parts, e.g. moree, ohge, murup, bal (head, shoulders, knees and toes).

In most of the First and Second Grade classes I teach, the pupils' English is not that good, so when I ask a question in class I have a few children raise their hands to answer but for the most part I am greeted with blank stares. However, when it comes to singing songs, like the "Good Morning greeting song", they all sing and do the actions with confidence. I believe keeping the songs fun, relevant and simple is the key, and repetition is also very important. So, I have tried to teach a new song each lesson, keeping them fairly basic. One day when I was walking to school I was blown away by the greetings I received, before I had even *entered* the school. They said the following to me, and most of it from songs learnt: "Hello, thank you", "Hello everyone", "Nice to meet you" and "I'm fine, how are you". This made me smile and it made me want to put in everything I have to teach these children English.

In March, we taught the Fifth Graders the song, "*Hello, I'm Vincent, where are you from? I'm from France. How are you doing? I'm great, thanks. How's it going? Not too bad, thanks.*" They loved it straight away and quickly learned the dance that goes with it. I then encouraged them to personalise the song and substitute their own information in, e.g. "Hello, I'm Hae Rang, where are you from? I'm from Korea....."

Now, more than 3 months later, almost every time I walk past a Fifth Grade student they break out into song "Hello I'm Hyeong Jun, where are you from? ....." They can be heard singing the song long after I've walked past them. We have since taught many more songs that have been great hits too, but this one was, what my co-teacher and I have referred to as, their 'debut' single. This will always be a great memory for me and them. I'm sure that if ever they meet someone called Vincent, they are sure to automatically reply "Where are you from?"

I believe that learning through the medium of singing is building their confidence, which is important when learning a second language. It is nice to see that my enthusiasm towards singing is returned

and every day I am blessed when I see the positive attitude most students have towards learning new English songs and chants. It is evident that they are able to incorporate what they are learning in the songs into simple English conversation. I can only hope that this enthusiasm continues and I look forward to many more ‘great hits’.



*The 3 best ‘Vincent’s’.*



Class 5-4, they really love the song, “Hello I’m Vincent.”



Learning a new song, “Hello, how are you?” This is the “I’m Wonderful” part.