STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE
Vol. **1**, No. **2**, **2010**, pp. 13-29

ISSN 1923-1555
www.cscanada.net
www.cscanada.org

Teaching English Rhythm by Using Songs

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Abstract: Songs become the most valuable educational tool that aids the language acquisition as well as the whole learner's physical and mental development. In this paper, attention is given to rhythm of English under the subtopics: definitions of rhythm and its related theory to metrical phonology. Rhythm teaching is dealt with perspectives on its importance in communication, significance as well as its obstacles. In the same way, theories and research supports for the use of songs in the classroom are also reviewed.
Keywords: rhythm; stress; metrical theory; song

1. RHYTHM AND ITS LINKAGE WITH STRESS

1.1 What is "Rhythm"?

Rhythm is familiar in life (Wong, 1987) as it is referred to "any kind of repetition or periodicity in the physical world", also to "any kind of correspondence in aesthetic experience", and, generally to "practically anything connected with verse experience as long as it is not clearly defined" (de Groot, 1968, p. 541, cited in Gong, 2002, p. 31). Rhythm can be heard anytime and anywhere in one's life, from the beating of a youngest child on a table with a spoon, of the heart, to the sound of a flashing light, of water dripping, the tick-tock of clock, the stroke of a swimmer or those of a tennis player, and even in music and poetry (Gong, 2002; Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996; Roach, 2000; and Wong, 1987). Additionally, Brown (1990) states all human physical activities such as breathing, running, walking, sewing, knitting, swing or peeling potatoes which are extended in time tend to be rhythmical activity.

Rhythm in a language, nonetheless, is "less familiar" because it is "less obvious" (Wong, 1987; Brown, 1990), and rhythm in speech is somewhat "exaggerated" (Ball & Rahilly, 1999). However, there are some who believe that there exits rhythm in every language. As Brown (1990) points out, there is a tendency for a rhythm to be established in speech and indicates:

> The rhythm is part of the general *look* of how the speakers of their language speak it. It is intimately bound in with the whole muscular setting which characterizes the speakers of

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* Received on March 13, 2010; accepted on June 3, 2010

> different languages- the way the head is held and move during speech, the way the lower jaw and tongue are held in relation to the upper jaw, the great variety of body movement of different kinds which help us to identify speakers of different languages even without hearing them to speak (p. 43, the author's italics).

Brown also claims that the contrast of stressed and unstressed syllables creates the rhythm of English, and it is the stressed syllables which carry the rhythmic beat. He illustrates that when watching an English speaker talking, it is clearly seen all the big muscular movements that he makes are in time with the stressed syllables from the wave of his arm, the nod of his head, the putting of his foot down, the raise of his eyebrows frowning, the wide opening of his jaw to the pulse of his lips. All these movements are done in time with the rhythm of speech. Likewise, Kenworthy (1987) further adds when hearing an unknown language, most people are very sensitive to the intonation and rhythm rather than to different sounds of that language. Thus, they often think that "language X is very melodic or sing-song", but always claim that theirs is "very flat and does not have much melody" (p. 39). This is partly because all languages have intonation and a characteristic rhythmic pattern, and these aspects operate at their unconscious level. According to Kenworthy (1987), rhythm of English, characterized by the alternation of strong and weak syllables, "is a product of word stress and the way in which important items are foregrounded through occurrence on a strong beat, and unimportant items are backgrounded by their occurrence on a weak beat" (p. 30). Holding Kenworthy's view, McCarthy (1991) states "the impression of rhythm may arise out of a feeling of alteration between strong and weak 'beat' in various patterned recurrences" (p. 90).

Meanwhile, several authors have conceded that the rhythm of spoken English is based on a unit with different terms. This rhythmic unit is termed the foot by Roach (2000) and Halliday (1970, 1985). According to Roach (2000, p. 135), the foot "begins with a stressed syllable and includes all following unstressed syllables up to (but not including) the following stressed syllable". Similarly, Halliday (1970, p. 1) states each foot consists of "a number of syllables, one or more, and the first syllable in the foot is always salient or stressed". He compares the foot with the 'bar' in music, and realizes that it is somewhat similar. If the foot in English speech always begins with a beat since the salient syllable always carries the beat, the one of a musical bar may also begin with a silent beat, a rest. He concludes that the time taken by each foot in a rhythmic unit or in a musical bar is more or less the same. In addition, Halliday (1985) emphasizes that salient syllables always occur at regular distances in natural speech, and English speakers like their feet to be spoken with all roughly the same length. Likewise, Brown (1990) contends that when reading aloud, any speakers (or any writers) will set up a dominant rhythmic foot. This author argues that the dominant foot is mainly of *Aaa*-stressed, unstressed, unstressed pattern in which the beat comes on the *A*, and between the *aa* is a space. Brown also adds since the rhythm in speech is less obvious, not every foot is of this structure. The beat will be thrown off for a moment, and then reemerge, be lost again, reemerge and so on. The result is that some feet may be of the structure *A*, some of the structure *Aaaaaaa* rather than *aAa* or *aaA*. However, O'Connor (1986) does not refer to this unit as the foot, but suggests that the centre of the rhythm unit is a stressed syllable. Together with any unstressed syllables before or after it, they form the rhythm unit. Ur (1996, p. 48) claims that the basis of English speech rhythm is "tone units", a word or group of words which carries one central stressed syllable. If there are any other syllables, they are lightened. With a contrary point of view, some have argued that the typical rhythm of English is referred to as "thought group" that tends to have one prominent syllable (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000) or "stressed group", a stressed syllable together with any unstressed syllables which may follow it (O'Connor, 1986). The common point of the "thought groups" and "stressed groups" in an English utterance is that they are always spoken with the same amount of time. This can be seen the fundamental rule of English rhythm (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; O'Connor, 1986).

Rhythm is considered not only at the segmental but at the suprasegmental levels as well. According to Lado (1964), rhythm includes stress, time and junctures[3]. Wong (1987, p. 22) also suggests that the

[3] Junctures can be considered syllable boundaries (For example: /ə neim/ (a name/ an aim) (Ball & Rahilly, 1999, pp.109-110)

rhythm of a language is characterized by "the timing pattern of successive syllables". That is, it depends on the typical variation of syllable length at the sentence level. Syllable length which is considered to be the "key" to the rhythmic system of English is affected by five factors: stress, accent, vowel type, structure and pauses. With a similar conception, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 31) define the pattern of rhythm as "the timing of syllable length, syllable stress and pauses". Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1996) state the combination of word stress and sentence stress (the regular patterned beat of stressed and unstressed syllables and pauses) creates the rhythm of an English utterance. Additionally, Avery and Ehrlich (1992) point out that "differentiation between stressed and unstressed syllables, the reduction of function words, the linking of words and phrases, etc., all combine to give English its characteristic rhythm" (p. 73).

Since pauses occur frequently in speaking and is one of the features of connected speech, rhythm may be coincided with "sense groups" and "breath- groups" with regard to pauses. If they are made for the purpose of taking breath, they are considered "breath-groups", but sense groups if for the purpose of making the meaning clear. A breath-group may comprise of at least one sense group (Jones, 1998).

Though different as they are, these definitions have many things in common. They help to account for the typical rhythm of English which is mainly based on the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, the timing patterns of strong and weak beats, and it is operated on both segmental and suprasegmental aspects. The typical unit of English rhythm, the foot, derives from a theory that its characteristics may be related to (see section 2.1.3 below).

1.2 The linkage between rhythm and stress

It cannot be denied that there is a close relationship between stress and rhythm. This is because once producing an English utterance with a rhythmic pattern, one cannot do it without stress. Scarcella and Oxford (1994, cited in Wei, 2006) explain that "Stress contributes to rhythm. Linguists use the term rhythm to refer to the measured movement or musical flow of language. English has a rhythm in which stress syllables normally occur at regular time intervals. Thus, in English, rhythmic patterns are based upon a fairly regular recurrence of stressed syllables. That is why English is often called a stress-timed language". According to Roach (2000), the theory that English has stress-timed rhythm implies that stressed syllables will tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by unstressed syllables or not. Underhill (1998) points out the principle of stress-timing. The more unstressed syllables there are, the quicker one has to say them in order to fit them into the beat. In other words, the time taken to speak each utterance depends on the number of stresses, but not on the number of syllables. Nevertheless, in the phenomenon of syllable-timing, the time taken to speak an utterance depends on the number of syllables. Some authors explain that for the word to be stressed, they must be content words or lexical words which convey the core information such as nouns, adjectives, main verbs and adverbs. Conversely, words that carry the grammatical function (e.g., articles, prepositions, personal and relative pronouns, auxiliary, verbs, conjunctions) are unstressed. However, the speaker can sometimes choose to stress "non-content' words (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005; Kuiper & Allan, 1996; and McCarthy, 1991). In addition, Kenworthy (1987) writes about the term "continuum" as the tendency to reduce the vowel length and vowel quality in unstressed syllables towards the stress-timing end, but to preserve the quality of the vowel sounds towards the syllable-timing end of the continuum. Hence, only in highly stylized and patterned language, such as poetry and nursery rhymes, are stress-timing and regular rhythms the most noticeable.

Consequently, there is a broad division into two kinds of rhythm in languages, either stress-timed or syllable-timed. Arabic, English, Dutch, German, and other Germanic languages may be called stress-timed languages. Conversely, in comparison with English, many languages of the world such as French, Spanish, Hind, Yoruba, Bantu, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Polish are syllable-timed (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Ball & Rahilly, 1999; Ellis & Tomlinson, 1980; Ladefoged, 1993; McCarthy, 1991; O'Connor, 1980; Swan & Smith, 1987; Nguyen, 1970 (cited in Nguyen, 2008); and Underhill, 1998).

English rhythm is a controversial matter (Kelley, 2000; Roach, 2000). Some writers support the

theory of the rhythmic structure of English speech such as Brown (1990), Halliday (1985), Kenworthy (1987), and Underhill (1998). Halliday (1985) uses the term "syllabic rhythm" referring to syllable-timing and "Pedalian rhythm" or "foot-timing" to stress-timing. He states "some languages may fit more clearly into one kind or the other while some languages are more a mixture of the two" (p. 271). Nevertheless, there are, indeed, a great many skeptics who believe that there is not strong evidence for the existence of stress-timing. As Roach (2000) points out that although there are many laboratory techniques for measuring time in speech, the results of that measurement of time intervals between stressed syllables in connected speech have not shown expected regularity. He doubts that using the same measuring techniques on different languages has been impossible to show a difference between "stress-timed" and "syllable-timed" languages. Ladefoged (1993) suggests that rhythmic differences among languages would be of three main types: 1) languages have variable word stress (such as English and German); 2) languages have fixed word stress (such as Czech, Polish and Swahili); and 3) languages have fixed phrase stress (such as French). Ladefoged also claims that there are many languages that do not fit into any of these divisions and there needs to be more upcoming research by phoneticians before having an agreement on typologies. Similarly, Rogers (2000), and Tajima and Port (2003) classify languages into three types: stress-timed, syllable-timed and mora-timed[4] (Japanese is the typical of this type). Ball and Rahilly (1999) further add the theory of stress-timing is somewhat "problematic" since the notion of stress-timed and syllable-timed languages has been questioned in literature, and seems not to be effectual in dealing with real speech. One more advocate for this debatable concept is McCarthy. According to McCarthy (1991), that notion is "unproven" because of the fact that it is "deeply rooted in theoretical and applied linguistics" and "has dominated approaches to the teaching of rhythm". He concludes that "perceptions of rhythmicality may have their own origins in other phenomena of connected speech" (p. 92).

In short, whatever kind a language belongs to, there exits in itself the relationship between stress and rhythm. They both play a special role in real speech. In this respect, they make a language different from each other. Due to this difference, nonnative language learners always find it difficult to produce English with native-like rhythm. It is because rhythm training in the classroom can only work with textual *products* rather than the process of creating a rhythmic talk and practicing stressed and unstressed syllables into regular rhythm without referring to the *speaker's choice* as to what is stressed and what is not (McCarthy, 1991, the author's italics).

1.3 Metrical theory of rhythm

English stress has been the subject of extensive research in recent years (Rogers, 2000). This work is known as metrical phonology which is a relatively successful theory that attempts to explain stress systems in language. It is related to phonological, and even syntactic rather than phonetic natures of the syllables (Rogers, 2000; Tajima & Port, 2003).

The metrical stress theory was first proposed by Liberman (1975), and then developed by several writers such as Liberman and Prince (1977), Prince (1983), Hayes (1985) (cited in Menezes, 2003). Obviously, Liberman and Prince (cited in Coutsourega, 2004) point out the hierarchical organization of the internal metrical structure of word. That is, segments are organized into syllables, and syllables into feet in which a (metrical) foot can be seen above the syllable and defined as a phonological string containing at least one stressed syllable.

In order to show this representation, Liberman (1975, cited in Menezes, 2003) uses two kinds of signals. One of them is the binary branching metrical tree structure (Figure 1) with strong (s) and weak (w) nodes. The most prominent in the tree, called designated terminal, is that node dominated only by s syllable and the root. The s node corresponds to primary stress. The same hierarchy applies to a phrase or an utterance. In addition to metrical tree, Liberman also uses metrical grid (Figure 2) to present the temporal patterning of the terminal elements of the metrical tree. "It is 2-dimentional device consisting

[4] Mora-timing is to describe languages in which each mora has roughly the same duration (Thomas & Carter, 2006, p. 333).

of hierarchically organized parallel horizontal levels" (Coutsourega, 2004) in which the higher the column of Xs above a syllable, the more prominent the syllable is.

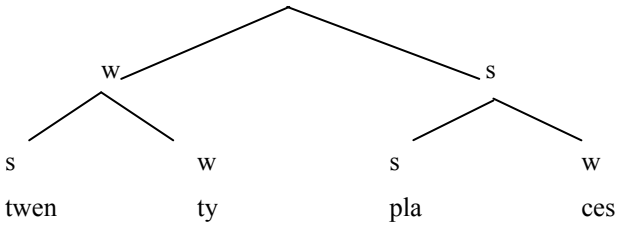

Figure 1: Metrical tree (Roach, 2000, p. 136)

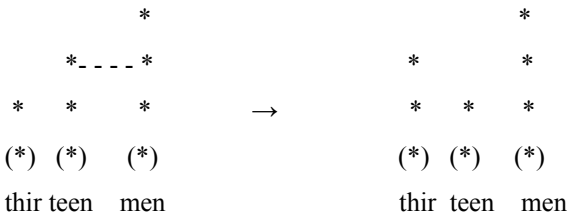

Figure 2: Metrical grids for stress-shift (Coutsourega, 2004)

According to Roach (2000), the metrical grid may be correct for very low speech, but not always for the rhythm in normal speech. This occurs when two stressed syllables are too close to each other. Take the example by Coutsourega (2004), the word "thirteen" spoken in isolation is stressed on the second syllable, but on the first syllable if it is put before "men". This phenomenon is called "stress-shift" (Roach, 2000) or "stress clash" (Liberman & Prince, 1976, cited in Coutsourega, 2004) since it accounts for the alternation of stress. That is the alternation between two strong stressed syllables when they are intervened by a weak stressed syllable. And by analyzing speech in these ways, it is easy to show the relationship between strong and weak elements, and the level of stress (Roach, 2000).

2. TEACHING ENGLISH RHYTHM

2.1 Role of English rhythm in communication

There is no doubt that rhythm in communication is important. Since rhythm is one part of the suprasegmental aspects, its importance is considered together with other aspects such as stress and intonation. On the one hand, rhythm and intonation are considered the "key elements" of English pronunciation (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Wong, 1987). This is because rhythm is the guide to the structure of information in the spoken speech (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Brown, 1990; and Wong, 1987) and indication of "what goes with what" in an utterance (Underhill, 1998). Likewise, Halliday (1970) argues that "rhythm is important, not only for its own right, for the purpose of understanding and being understood, but also because of the part it plays in intonation" (p. 3). Additionally, Gilbert (2008) compares rhythm and melodic signals as the "road signs" for they help the listener to follow the speaker's intentions, and to "focus attention on the information structure of a discourse" (Underhill, 1998).

Halliday (1985), on the other hand, argues that the rhythm is maintained subvocally in the speaker's as well as the listener's consciousness. In other words, rhythm relates to both the production and the perception (Ball & Rahilly, 1999). On the part of the listener, Gilbert (2008) confirms that understanding English rhythm involves in the ability not only to identify and count syllables, but to hear and produce the word stress patterns of English as well. With regard to the speaker, Laroy (1995) asserts that it is impossible to speak without rhythm and intonation. Wong (1987) adds if a nonnative speaker does not know the rhythmic pattern of English, he is interfered with communication in general and misjudged. O'Connor (1980) confirms that if a speaker whose mother tongue is syllable-timed speaks English with the same length on every syllable, this leads to the "effect of machine-firing" and makes the utterances very hard to understand. Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1996), and Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) further point out when utterances with incorrect rhythm or inappropriate prosody are produced, some serious or humorous errors in comprehension may occur. If learners use improper rhythm and intonation contour, they can be considered abrupt, or even rude; and if the speakers produce nonnative like stress and rhythm, they may not be understood at all (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 1996).

In everyday speech, however, the regularity of rhythm varies according to the context of oral discourse (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Gilbert, 2008; and Kelly, 2000). The factors that decide speech rhythm may range from the speaker's conversational style, the listener's ability to make inferences, the relationship between the speakers, their confidence, nervousness, tiredness, excitement or impatience and uncertainty, to personal habits of accent and dialect (Kelly, 2000; Wong, 1987). The rate of speech also makes a contribution to the variable rhythm. Speakers may choose to speak very rhythmically or arhythmically (that is, without rhythm) (Roach, 2000); either more quickly or more slowly (Halliday, 1970; Rogers, 2000). Hence, there are full of false starts, stops, hesitation, repetition and the like in colloquial speech. These are related to the speaker's level of politeness, of cultural appropriacy and compliance with social rules (Brown, 1990; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Roach, 2000; Rogers, 2000; and Underhill, 1998).

Briefly, when speaking English without stress and rhythm, nonnative speakers cannot make themselves understood at all. That is the reason why they should be made aware of these factors in the classroom.

2.2 Role of English rhythm in English teaching

According to some researchers (cited in Gong, 2002), rhythm plays a vital part in language acquisition and competent language use. Rivers and Temperley (1978, p. 61) argues that "the use of appropriate rhythm and intonation patterns makes students' speech sound much less foreign and more English, frequently compensating for other faults of pronunciation". Avery and Ehrlich (1992) indicate that "when a student does not produce utterances with appropriate rhythm, the result can range from incomprehension to annoyance on the part of the listeners" (p. 189). With this in mind, Avery and Ehrlich (1992) assert "developing fluent and comprehensible speech in our ESL students is the primary goals of training in the spoken language" (p. 89).

Fischler (2005, p. 42) investigated that "non-native speakers have a natural tendency to impose the stress features from their first language onto their interpretation and pronunciation of English" since English word and sentence stress differ even from other stress-timed languages. Therefore, when teaching pronunciation, "it is important to make students not only aware of the universality of rhythm, but also of how to compare the patterns of their native language rhythm to those of English" (Fischler, 2005, p. 33), and it is imperative for the unique rhythm of English to be explicitly taught to all ESL learners (Benrahah, 1997, cited in Fischler, 2005).

2.3 Ways to introduce English rhythm

The rhythm of English becomes one of the most difficult features not only for nonnative speakers to learn, but also for native speakers to unlearn when studying other languages (Brown, 1990; Wong, 1987). It does not mean that language teachers ignore it in the classroom because of its difficulty. As stated

earlier, the typical rhythm of English is mainly based on the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, the timing patterns of strong and weak beats and it is operated on both segmental and suprasegmental aspects. Hence, a variety of practical kinesthetic, visual, metrical, non-metrical and aural teaching tools and activities are then presented to introduce English rhythm based on its characteristics in the hope that these ways can make the teaching of English rhythm in the language classroom more meaningful and effective.

2.3.1 Using gestures

Rhythm is related to human physical activities. Therefore, using body movement becomes one of the most favorable activities to introduce it (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Celce-Murcia & Olhstain, 2000; O'Connor, 1980; and Wong, 1987). Teachers can help students to make the connection between rhythm in general and the rhythm of language in particular by tapping their toes, clapping their hands, or nodding their heads. It is useful to beat the rhythmicality on the table with the tips of the fingers, or with a pen, a pencil or a ruler. Another gesture that teachers are advised to employ is conducting (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Gower *et al.*, 2005; Kenworthy, 1987). That is, teachers can move the arms and the hands, like a conductor in an orchestra, with the rhythm, stress and intonation of a word, phrase or sentence. However, one beat or one movement of the arm must be coincided with exactly the same time between each pair of beats or movements.

The question here is that how teachers decide what words or syllables go together in a "rhythm unit". O'Connor (1980, pp. 99-100) points out the rules:

1) Any unstressed syllables at the beginning of a word group must go together with the stresses group.

2) If the unstressed syllable(s) is part of the same words as the stressed syllable they belong to the same group.

3) If the unstressed syllable(s) is closely connected grammatically to the stressed word, although not a part of that word, they belong to the same rhythm unit.

4) Whenever you are in doubt as to which rhythm unit unstressed syllables belong to, put them after the stress rather than before it.

Underhill (1998) points out another technique to introduce English rhythm. It is finger correction (Figure 3) which helps teachers "assign either the single sounds of a word, or the individual words of a sentence, one to each finger". Underhill states this technique is a "quick, specific and supportive of the learner's capacities" (p. 160). This author also divides finger correction into two complementary functions:

Function 1

The fingers are used to separate and slow down the flow of speech into the component parts, to examine or identify the parts, and to put the parts back into a seamless flow.

In other words the fingers are used to move down a level from a flow to the components of that flow, i.e. from connected speech down to individual words (Level 3 down to Level 2) or from individual words down to individual sounds (Level 2 to Level 1).

Function 2

To change, improve, correct, shape an utterance.

The fingers are used to shape what is there, or to add something, to remove something, to induce self correction.

	Level 2	Level 3
Function 1	Fingers are used to break words down into their component sounds and to build the sounds back into words.	Fingers are used to break connected speech down into its component words and to build the words back into connected speech.
Function 2	Fingers are used to shape and correct words and the individual sounds they contain.	Fingers are used to shape and correct connected speech.

Underhill (1998, p.160)

Figure 3: Finger correction (Underhill, 1998, p. 164)

2.3.2 Using notions

Although stress and rhythm are not presented in written form, the helpful way is to use visual aids to introduce them. Gower *et al*. (2005); Kelley (2000); Kenworthy (1987); Lado (1964); Rivers & Temperley (1978); and Ur (1996) all refer to the indication of rhythm by marking notions on the board. The first task is to identify the stress patterns of the content words in the material-the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. After the stress of these has been marked, teachers can read aloud entire lines so that students can practice. These notions include:

a) Capital letters (e.g. based on Underhill's (1998, p. 192) example)

I LEFT my Office/ in a RUSH/ this afterNOON.

b) A short vertical line above or before the stressed syllable

I left my office/ in a rush / this afternoon.

c) Italicization

I *left* my office/ in a *rush*/ this after*noon*.

d) Underlining

I <u>left</u> my <u>o</u>ffice / in a <u>rush</u> / this after<u>noon</u>.

e) Circles, boxes, or dots above the stressed syllables

○ ○ ○ ○

I left my office/ in a rush/ this afternoon.

Another activity involved in notions is using Cuisenaire rods (Figure 4) that are suggested by Gower *et al*. (2005), and Underhill (1998). Each syllable in the word can be presented by a rod. The basic convention for Cuisenaire rods is that a taller one is used for the stressed syllable and a shorter for the unstressed syllable.

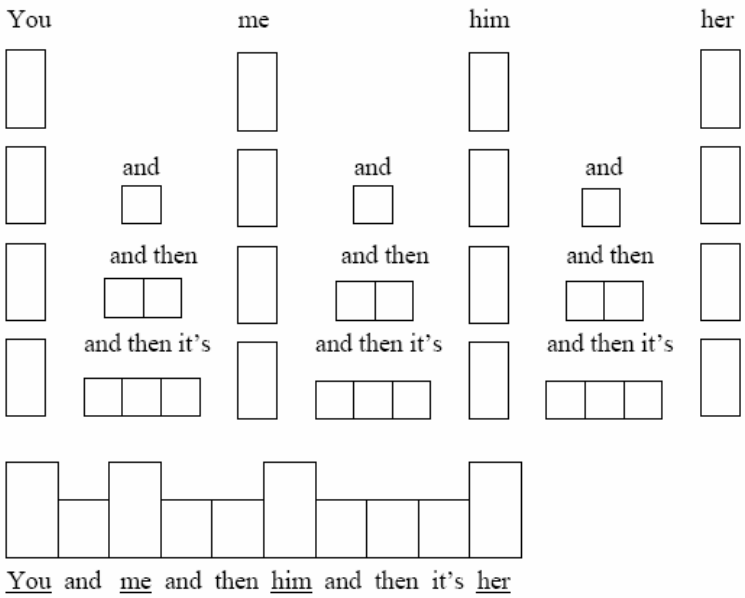

Figure 4: Rods give a visual dimension to the rhythm (Underhill, 1998, p. 179)

Additionally, Lado (1964) advises to use dots on a scale (Figure 5) which is used to present intonation, stress, and juncture for teaching. This pseudo musical notation is learned quickly and is easily read.

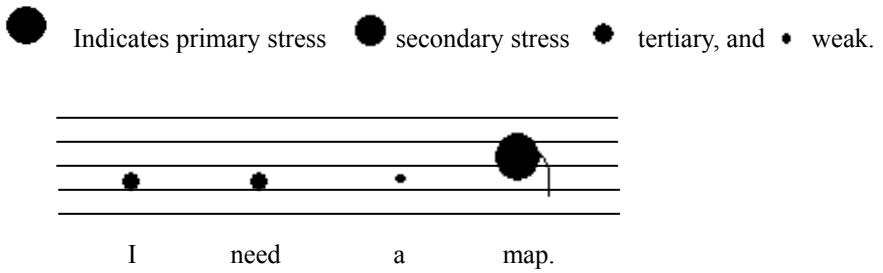

Figure 5: Dots on a scale (Lado, 1964, p. 81)

It can be said that these techniques can provide students with visual images of the relationship between English stress and rhythm in connected speech. However, in case teachers decide to present the material in written form, they can use a kind of rhythmic fill-in-the blank exercises that are blanked out a word or phrase. Students then listen to the tape recordings and fill in the blanks with the missing information (Kenworthy, 1987). Perhaps, one of the most exciting gap-filling exercises that students are interested in is the one of strictly metrical material.

2.3.3 Using strictly metrical material

Since the rhythmic pattern is similar to the rhythm of a musical phrase (Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1996), strictly metrical material is very useful in teaching rhythm. According to Avery and Ehrlich (1992), Kenworthy (1987), and Underhill (1998), material which exaggerates and emphasizes the rhythmic qualities of English are nursery rhymes, verse, and limericks. Celce-Murcia *et al*. (1996) explain that stress-timed rhythm is the foundation for the meter in English poetry, chants, nursery rhymes and limericks. Celce-Murcia and Olhstain (2000), Murphey (1992) and Orlova (2003) suggest using songs

and jazz chants by Carolyn Graham. They "[songs and chants] make the business of stress easy and uncomplicated since it does not have to be explained" (Harmer, 2007, p. 91). With the same view, Wong (1987) argues that music, rhymes, songs and chants are a wealthy source of rhythmic examples to introduce English rhythm to young children. Teachers can use tape recordings of these metrical materials in stead of using written presentation. The rhythm of them can be beaten out, conducted, or indicated by any of the techniques discussed above. Avery and Ehrlich (1992), and Lado (1964) endorse the use of the "nonsense syllable". That is, teachers can substitute a simple syllable such as *da* (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992) or *la* (Lado, 1964) for the syllable of a word or sentences. Take Avery and Ehrlich's (1992, p. 211) example: "What did you do with it?" can be replaced by nonsense syllable such as:

Da da da Da da da? or LA la la LA la la?

This looks like the way that young children learn songs in their mother tongues. Some children who are not naturally musical or perhaps slightly deaf prefer to hum or la la the tune to help them learn the melody first, and add the words later (Hicks & Littlejohn, 2004). The singing with vocalization seems easier for the children to sing language than to speak it (Murphey, 1992). Additionally, Laroy (1995) points out some activities that aim at arousing a sense of rhythm in general. These activities consist of 1) walking the rhythm; 2) feeling the rhythm; 3) speaking rhythmically; 4) rhythm round; 5) talking hands; 6) writing your own song, and 7) speaking musically. Most of these activities are related to both musical material and aesthetic body movement.

2.3.4 Using non-metrical material

In addition to metrical material, teachers can take a good advantage of presenting English rhythm by using non-musical way. These can be tape recordings of everyday conversation. Students can listen and then mimic, imitate and chant the rhythm of the natural conversation (Kenworthy, 1987; Lado 1964; McCarthy, 1991; Underhill, 1998; and Wong, 1987). Moreover, teachers can make students aware of subtle and hidden rhythms in the given texts by using sense groups, which is considered the "learner's subjective impression about which words go together to make up one bit of meaning", not a fixed unit (Underhill, 1998, p. 187).

The notions of rhythm teaching above are especially helpful to perceiving rhythm, stress, and other aspects of connected speech. Regardless of whatever ways are employed to teach English rhythm, teachers must, however, take into account of choosing the techniques that appropriate to their students' levels and abilities (Gower *et al*., 2005; Kenworthy, 1987). Among the strictly metrical material, songs can be considered to be powerful for language teaching and language learning.

2.4 Challenges in teaching English rhythm

In spite of its significance, however, rhythm is often ignored or not systematically taught to Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, etc. learners of English (Gong, 2002; Jesry, 2005; and Wei, 2006) because teaching English rhythm involves a variety of challenges (Gilbert, 2008).

One challenge is that English rhythm is considered the most difficult area for language learners to master. This is because English rhythm does not exist in the writing system, but in speech (Gilbert, 2008; Wong, 1987). According to Wong, students have learned English "through the eye rather than though the ear" as they think that "words should be pronounced the way they look on the printed page, each one separated by blank spaces" (pp. 48-9). What is more, several researchers have pointed out that it is even more difficult for language learners whose mother tongues are syllable-timed when they transfer their own mother tongues' rhythm to that of English. Additionally, they are always afraid of making mistakes in vocabulary, grammar and so on. These make them feel uneasy and "sound foreign" when they hear themselves speak with the rhythm of a second language. Thus, the influence of mother tongue on the second language can be seen as a major barrier to improve intelligibility in the second language (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Celce-Murcia & Olhstain, 2000; Celce-Murcia *et al*., 1996; Ellis & Tomlinson, 1980; Gilbert, 2008; Jesry, 2005; O'Connor, 1980; Spicher & Sweeney, 2007; and Wong, 1987). In this regard,

students should be made aware not only of the nature of English stress-timing, but of other factors that affect English rhythm in connected speech such as linking, assimilation, dissimilation, deletion, pauses, etc. (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Rivers & Temperley, 1978).

Another challenge stems from the part of the teacher. On the one hand, there are not enough teaching materials, teaching strategies or techniques which are available in the classroom. Together with these shortages, limited guidance research and literature makes them difficult in designing of teaching English rhythm (Wei, 2006; Gong, 2002). On the other hand, teachers are also bound by time constraints. They often find that they do not have enough time in class to focus on English rhythm. Even when they do, they just pay attention to the presentation and practice of segmental aspects of pronunciation such as vowels, consonants, or sounds in isolated words (Gilbert, 2008; Wong, 1987). What is worse, Gilbert (2008) and Gong (2002) add nonnative teachers tend to lack confidence and experience in their field. Consequently, they find it difficult to master stress, rhythm and intonation as the students do (Wong, 1987). They are, therefore, required to have good listening recognition skills and a grasp of the Prosody Pyramid structure of English (thought group → focus word → stress → peak) (Gilbert, 2008).

Although rhythm is considered the "unteachable" of pronunciation, it does not mean "unlearnable" (Laroy, 1995). Rhythm training can be seen as an integral part of what goes on in the classroom (Jesry, 2005; Kelly, 2000) and as "product" rather than process (McCarthy, 1991). In order to be successful in teaching English rhythm, it requires a lot of efforts on both teachers and learners.

3. SONGS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

3.1 The benefits of songs towards English language teaching

All children love music and like to sing songs. Based on this nature of the young learners, music has been utilized in the EFL/ESL classrooms. There exists much of literature evidence showed that music can have a beneficial role in teaching young learners. As Read (2007) notes, the use of songs enhances children's language learning and language acquisition. In order to instruct the second language, songs can be utilized in different ways. Clearly,

> Rhymes, chants, and] songs…can be used as a ritual part of starting and ending lessons, or as an integrated part language, story or topic-based work. They can also be used to reinforce knowledge and skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example, numeracy or citizenship issues, such as looking after the environment. (Read, 2007, p. 182)

First, songs can be used to generate language skills. Since they are acquired though the ear, they can help to improve listening skills of the young learners (Blodget, 2000; Orlova, 2003; Read, 2007; Saricoban & Metin, 2000; Spicher & Sweeney, 2007; Yoo, 2002; and Yuliana, 2003). Some activities suggested to improve this skill by using songs include: listening comprehension, listening for summarizing or writing, listening to isolated vocabulary and listening for word order (Griffee, 1992, cited in Yuliana, 2003), focused listening (with or without music), listening for contrastive features, marking prosodic accent or stress by tapping with a pencil, hand clapping, or foot stomping and counting rhythm patterns (Spicher & Sweeney, 2007). In addition, when songs are introduced, speaking is the second skill that children benefit from (Cebula, 2003; Orlova, 2003; Read, 2007; and Yuliana, 2003). According to Yuliana (2003), after children listen to the song, they would attempt to sing it. Since the words in the refrains are repeated several times, and part of a child's linguistics may be formed when the song is learned by heart, this combination makes the song memorable. Thus, the refrains are easy for the children to remember the words, and as a result, children can produce or utter the words without hesitation. Cebula (2003) further adds songs encourage them to speak English without the fear of making mistakes. Like listening activities, speaking activities should be practiced in class, and then reinforced as homework such as humming singing, reciting lyrics without melody, creating new lyrics to fit within the prosodic patterns of songs, memorization and creation of rhymes, tongue twisters and songs, practice of

articulation according to standard dialect variation (Spicher & Sweeney, 2007), matching songs with pictures, saying the phrases that they choose and telling their friends the reasons for choosing it (Yuliana, 2003). By these ways, songs can help to promote speaking fluency. In some cases, songs can also develop reading and writing skills when children read a short poem or rhyme, or write their own version of a chant (Read, 2007); or when children listen to the song and write it as a dictation, of fill in the blanks with some missing words (Yuliana, 2003). With the help of mixed activities, chants, songs and rhymes can make students' speaking abilities grow, their pronunciation get better and their awareness of the language improve (Klancar, 2006).

Second, songs help to reinforce children's linguistic skills. Songs supply children with a variety of tenses and grammatical structures (Blodget, 2000; Lynch, 2005; Murphey, 1992; Saricoban & Metin, 2000; and Yoo, 2002). What is more, the vocabulary in the song is authentic-simple, natural and meaningful context. It is also presented in themes which are very familiar to young children such as boys, girls, circus, family, animals, city life, etc, and in extensive chunks of language, not in isolated words or sentences (Blodget, 2000; Cakir, 1999; Cebula, 2003; Lynch, 2005; Hancock, 1998; Murphey, 1992; Paul, 2003, Read, 2007; Saricoban & Metin, 2000; and Yuliana, 2003). So it is easy for the children to remember words and patterns in a natural ways thanks to the authentic, thematic, rich and colorful language. Added to this, words seem to be more emotively and personally significant when are linked to rhythm and music, they are memorable (Reilly & Ward, 1997). Furthermore, Cebula (2003) indicates songs allow no time for translation. As a result, children try to guess the meaning of words rather than to translate everything. This accounts for the way children learn by meaning that Cameron (2001) states.

Third, songs enhance all aspects of children's pronunciation in an implicit way. Singing songs and rhymes in a good way help young learner hear syllables in words, distinguish individual or difficult sounds e.g. vowels, consonants, or minimal pairs (Cebula, 2003; Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Read, 2007; and Reilly & Ward, 1997). Older children can, however, benefit from rhymes, chants and songs a particular aspect of pronunciation such as stress, pitch and intonation in an explicit way (Read, 2007; Spicher & Sweeney, 2007). They also take advantage of practicing features of connected speech, e.g. linking, elision, contraction forms (Paul, 2003; Read, 2007; and Yoo, 2002) when singing as songs lend itself a rich texture. Above all, children can experience a variety of accents (Lynch, 2005). They can be exposed by different kinds of English: British English, American English, and Caribbean English. Different regions and different types and formats of music such as Gospel, soul, R & B, pop, rock, reggae, jazz chants also make songs well accented. Since young children are considered excellent mimics (Reilley & Ward, 1997), they are particularly good at copying these accents, intonation and rhythm. Accordingly, children sing and talk at the same time unconsciously and their pronunciation is improved since they are concentrating on sounds rather than meaning (Klancar, 2006; Reilly & Ward, 1997).

The use of songs in the classroom not only stimulates the individual sounds and sounds in connected speech, but promotes rhythm as well. The melodies of rhymes, ballads and folk songs are always rhythmic because they are based on the pitch, stress and rhythm of the language of a particular culture. Thus when they are sung, they become narratives (Spicher & Sweeney, 2007). Likewise, when reviewing literature, Orlova (2003) finds out that among the methodological purposes with which music, songs and chants are used in class; it is possible to rank the purpose of practicing the rhythm, stress and intonation patterns of English the first place. Furthermore, songs can add a feeling of rhythm to language practice of those whose mother tongues might be flat (Paul, 2003). Reilly and Ward (1997) believe the usefulness of songs, chants and rhymes in a stress-timed language such as English because "the rhythm forces [us] to put the stress in the right places and to observe the strong and weak form" (p. 24). Saricoban and Metin (2000) state although the prosodic features of the language such as stress, intonation and rhythm are cut up into a series of structural points, they become a whole again when presented in the form of music. In order to make children be aware of rhythm, Read (2007) suggests several activities that employ songs, for example, clapping the rhythm of a rhyme on the content words that receive the main stress, and on other words and syllables that maintain the same rhythm and stress pattern.

Last but not least, songs can expand children's cultural awareness. As music arises from diversity of geographical place of creation, and cultural and social environment, it naturally transmits and reflects itself the culture in which it created (Blodget, 2000). Likewise, song lyrics are relating to situation of the

world around. They are the means through which cultural themes can be presented effectively (Saricoban & Metin, 2000). They can be means of protest for civil rights, worker's rights as well as reflection of every social theme or cause, e.g. pollution, crime, war (Lynch, 2005). Especially, the use of traditional folk songs, rhymes and chants provides an opportunity to introduce children to aspects of target culture from the English-speaking world (Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Read, 2007; Saricoban & Metin, 2000). Griffee (1995, p. 5, cited in Rosová, 2007) notes, "bringing a song into the classroom entails bringing the culture of the song with it", and songs can be used as "a way of looking at a culture and comparing with other culture".

In sum, songs are of great values in children's development of language skills, of linguistic knowledge, of pronunciation, and of cultural awareness.

3.2 Previous studies

Empirical research also proves the usefulness of songs in language classrooms. Horn in a study conducted in 2007 has proven the positive enhancement in listening skill among 72 second language (L2) Grade one learners, who were from an English primary peri-urban school in South Africa, where English is the medium of instruction. The participants were divided into two classes in which the control group and the experimental group had the same participants. First, a pre-test was conducted on both the groups. During the period of six month, music and movement was incorporated in the daily program for the experimental group, but not for the control one. After six month, a post-test was introduced to both groups. Her findings showed that music and movement may be successful in the early years of ESL learners' language acquisition. In addition, the study showed a positive outcome of the use of music to enhance the auditory and visual perception of the young ESL learners. Moreover, Horn (2007) cited many songs and arranged them into the purposes for which music could be used in the ESL class. For her, songs can be used as greetings, command, memory skills, vocabulary and creativity, relaxation and motivation, expression of joy, and community awareness. She also stressed on the cognitive and physical developmental skills of the learners with the idea to develop their abilities in English as a L2.

Novak (2007) examined the effect of melodic and rhythm intervention on typical hearing and deaf/hard-of-hearing preschool children's acquisition of selected vocabulary words. 30 participants were preschoolers aged 3 to 4 with typical hearing (n = 15) and varying levels of hearing loss (n = 15). Participants were pre-tested and post-tested on 24 targeted vocabulary words (main themes as plants, birds, animal, woodwind/string instruments, percussion instruments and vegetables) from four conditions. The two control conditions were 1) contact control/conversation (the selected vocabulary words were taught by using verbal instruction only), and 2) no contact control (no purposeful teaching of the selected vocabulary words). Meanwhile, the two treatment ones were 1) rhythmic condition (the selected vocabulary words were taught through rhythmic chants, signs and visual aids and 2) melodic condition (the selected vocabulary words were taught through songs). The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups on their overall abilities to identify the selected words. For the hearing participants, however, the contact/conversational condition was significantly more effective than the melodic and no contact control conditions. For deaf/hard-of-hearing participants, the rhythmic condition was significantly more effective than the other three. Despite of the significance of the study, Novak (2007) pointed out some limitations. One of them is the smallness of the sample size which may affect the results. The 15 participants who were deaf/hard-of-hearing were selected from four different educational programs. Hence, these educational differences among the groups might have also had an impact on the results. In addition to the variability in pre-test scores, the vocabulary, the melodies and lyrics chosen for the study as well as the short amount of exposure to teaching material also influenced the results. She hoped to do a further research on examining what characteristics of rhythmic chants such as their meter tempo, various note values and the choice of signed used to perform the chant appeal to students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing.

In another research done by Medina (1993, cited in Medina, 2002), the effect of music on second language vocabulary acquisition was explored among 48 grade two students of limited English proficiency. Her comparative design consisted of four treatment groups (Music/No-Music and Illustration/No-Illustration groups). In No-Music group, the subject students listened to an oral story

while the subjects in the Music group heard a sung version of the same story. For the Illustration group, she used pictures of target vocabulary words to illustrate and no pictures for the No-Illustration group. The results of the study revealed significance. Obviously, the amount of the vocabulary that the students picked up were extended from the lowest gain in the No-Music and No-Illustration groups, to the Music, and to the highest in the Illustration group. She concluded that when music and illustration were combined, they had the greatest power on vocabulary acquisition.

Besides exploring the positive effect of rap-based instruction on students' production of appropriate English words, Fischler (2005) investigated its impact on sentence stress. The subject sample was comprised of six ESL students in grades 9 to 12 who have been in the US for two or three years. The subjects all carried over pronunciation characteristics from their primary languages, which interfered with their pronunciation of English. Two of them were from Asian language background (Thailand and China), one Somalia, and one Afghanistan, the other two from West Africa (Ghana). The students voluntarily attended a four-week action research project. They were taught to emphasize accented syllables or words by stretching rubber bands, standing up and down, tapping on desks, clapping and beating drums by speaking to the rhythm of rap music. All the progress was daily tape recorded and journal entries taken. Five of the six subjects demonstrated improvement when the speech samples were compared before and after the course (based on the results of the diagnostic and assessment tests). They correctly identified suprasegmental and segmental aspects of speech, stress patterns of English and anatomical terms of speech mechanism and especially gained confidence in their daily communication. The limitations of Fischler's research were somewhat the same as Novak's (2007). First, it was conducted in a short time. Second, the speech samples obtained (mainly unrehearsed speech and picture prompts) were not very natural and authentic. Third, it was the sample size. Because the course was conducted during the summer holidays, it was not the best time to expect perfect attendance, according to Fischler's explanation. She doubted that the results would be different when the project was lengthened, and a more spontaneous speech samples such as tape conversation would be employed. She posed many questions for further research. Among of them were her wonder whether this methodology could be used effectively with lower English proficiency levels, and whether elementary students would also enjoy and grasp the concepts imparted though this method.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

"No one knows why songs are powerful, but everyone knows from a personal point of view they are" (Griffee, 1995, p. 4, cited in Rosová, 2007). Songs become the most valuable educational tool that aids the language acquisition as well as the whole learner's physical and mental development. Like rhythm, songs can be considered an integrated part of a sequence of work in the classroom so that they can maximize their effects for the learners, especially for the young children.

The review of literature showed that the research chiefly focused on the values of music and songs on promoting young learners' vocabulary acquisition. Perhaps the most importantly, the majority of the research was done on the ESL or native students who have much more exposure to English. Although the research showed significance, they may not fit "the particular needs of Asian elementary school children learning English as a foreign language" who "rarely feel it is either natural or necessary to learn English" (Paul, 2003, pp. 1-2).

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