

# Using Song

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## Lesson Plan Part 1

**Date:** Thursday March 24<sup>th</sup> 2005

**Time:** 50 mins

**Level:** Intermediate

**Profile of learners:** The class takes place in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, Ireland. At the moment the class consists of a French, Iranian, Mexican, Argentinian, Polish and two Spanish students. These are evening students who attend classes 2 evenings per week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 7-9pm. Students can enrol any week for a minimum of 4 weeks.  
I taught this class for the first time last week.  
The French and Iranian students are new enrolments. The others have been attending for 2-4 months.  
Most of them are in their 20s. Two of the girls are au-pairs, one is a nurse and one works in a creche. Four of them have come to Ireland in the last 12 months in order to find work. Apart from the au-pairs, they live with people their own nationality, so do not use English at home. They use a limited range of English at work. Their reasons for attending classes are to improve their chances of getting better jobs.  
The exception is the Iranian student who is in his 40s and has been living in Ireland since 1980. His spoken English is fluent but inaccurate. He is doing a course in college for which he needs to improve his listening and writing.  
In order to get a better idea of these learners, I spoke to their previous teacher. They are intelligent, cognitive learners who are very sociable and willing to participate in a broad range of tasks and activities. Often they are tired after a day's work. Lessons need to have plenty of variety, especially Thursday's class.

**Assumptions:** The students have sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to understand the story and the song. However, some vocabulary will be new to them e.g. *to mind, proud, chat, dimmed, borrow, hassle*. They have had listening classes which have developed their bottom-up and top-down listening skills. I am assuming that the theme will be of interest to them and while touching on a sensitive aspect of family relationships, will not be disturbing to them.

**Learners' needs:** They need to be able to communicate fluently and accurately in everyday life. Because most of them have jobs which put them in daily contact with native speakers, they are highly motivated to improve their oral and aural skills. As a class, they are particularly

keen to increase their vocabulary. They have a good knowledge of basic grammar which most of them had studied at school. However, they are less successful in applying the rules that they have learnt. Their former experience of learning English placed a lot of emphasis on reading and listening which are relative strengths. I have the impression that they have particular listening difficulties with aspects of connected speech such as assimilation and elision.

**Main Aim:**

By the end of the lesson, learners

- 1) will have increased vocabulary associated with parent-child relationships and
- 2) had the opportunity to practise their reading and listening skills

This will be done by:

- a) reading a story based on the song “Cat’s in the Cradle”.
- b) listening to the song
- c) examining its lyrics and focusing on form and meaning of new vocabulary
- d) learning to sing the song

**Subsidiary Aim:**

By the end of the lesson students will have a greater appreciation of the value of listening to songs in English. Students will be asked for verbal feedback at the end of the lesson and the beginning of the next.

**Main focus:**

Vocabulary

**Supporting focus:**

Reading and listening

**Timetable fit:**

**Link with previous lesson.**

Topic: parent-child relations had arisen in a previous class.

Course book: Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate up to Unit 11

Grammar: “Used to” for past habits and states which are now finished. “Used to “ occurs several times in the lyrics

**Link with next lesson.**

The main focus of the next class will be pronunciation:. Taking the chorus of the song as the starting point, I plan to take some nursery rhymes and examine them for rhythm and intonation.

**Anticipated problems and solutions**

Problem	Solution
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Students won't understand the nursery rhyme references in the chorus	Explain these before second listening
Students will have difficulty understanding the perspective of the song's narrator	Show that the perspective is a moving one i.e. that the writer imagines the father at four different stages his relationship with his son by focusing on the meaning of the expression "the other day"
Students won't realize that the line in the song: "When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when" is not spoken by the same character	Type it out as two lines in order to emphasise that the first half of the line is the child's question and the second half is the father's reply
One of the students will recognise the story as a song and spoil the "surprise"	Have a quiet word, and ask him/her to keep it to him/herself

**Materials/Resources:**

**Story:** "I'm going to be like you" & **Questions**

**Song:** "Cat's in the Cradle" by Sandy & Harry Chapin

**Lesson Plan Part 2**

AIM	PROCEDURE	STAGE	FOCUS	TIME
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To stimulate interest in father-son relationships	Introduce topic by showing students a picture of my son. Tell them something briefly about him and explain how this story has made a big difference to our relationship	1. Intro	T-S	0-3
To read the story for gist	Show students the story. Tell them that it's not about me. Give each student a copy of the narrative. Ask them to read it to themselves and then answer the questions in pairs. Tell them to highlight any unknown vocabulary.	2. Read and answer questions	S-S	3-10
To focus on new vocabulary	Students give feedback on their answers, asking further questions for clarification if necessary. Write new lexical items on board. Elicit form, meaning and pronunciation. Explain further if answers are not forthcoming	3. Feedback	S-T	10-15
To give students practice listening for gist	Tell students that they are going to listen to a song. Fetch guitar from next room. Encourage students to relax and listen to the song. Sing the song	4. First listening	T-S	15-20
To get students to listen with the purpose of identifying new language	Give out song lyrics and ask students to listen again, underlining any words or phrases that are new to them. Explain nursery rhyme references in chorus	5. Second listening	T-S	20-25
To compare the language of the story with that of the song	Invite students to ask questions about the lyrics. Write new lexical items on board. Elicit form, meaning and pronunciation. Explain further if answers are not forthcoming. Ask students about the similarities and differences between the story and the song. E.g. "stressful" corresponds to "a hassle" and "hung up the phone" = "put down the phone"	6. Language focus	S-T	25-35
To prepare students for singing the song	Focus on intonation and rhythm in the chorus: e.g. "The <b>CAT'S</b> in the <b>CRADle</b> and the <b>SILver SPOON</b> ". Clap and chant the chorus with them before singing it to show that the beat falls on the stressed syllables and that "in the" and "and the" are weak forms	7. Pronunciation work	T-S	35-40
To give students the chance to practise singing the song	Students sing the song. Begin by teaching the chorus.	8. Singing the song	S-S	40-45
To get feedback on use of song	Ask students informally what they thought of the class	9. Feedback	S-T	45-50

**Commentary**

**Criteria for Choice of Resource**

I have felt for some time that in my teaching I have under-exploited the fact that I sing and play guitar. My use of songs in class has not gone beyond the ideas that I had been introduced to in my pre-service training: gap fills and ordering verses.

In my reading, I was impressed by approaches presented by Coffey 2000 because the songs upon which the three activities are based are not initially presented as songs. The reasons for using this technique are firstly, the element of surprise and secondly, it is something different from the norm. Finally, because the students study the text before they become aware that they are learning a song, the song remains intact.

I decided to experiment by adapting one of his ideas for my class. Although I have not yet used songs with this group, I am confident that they will respond well because they are open to fresh approaches. I like the idea that the song is not initially presented as a song.

The element of pleasurable surprise is something which can only enhance the lesson.

I chose this song because it addresses the issue of parent-children relationships which had arisen in a previous class.

### **Constraints**

One of the reasons I have been reluctant to use songs more in class is that I feel that some learners may perceive that there is not a sound pedagogical reason for their use. They might think that the teacher is taking an easy option and just filling in time. The onus is on the teacher to show students that the lesson has a rationale.

In my experience, most students enjoy song-based activities. However, there is a small but significant minority who do not respond well, perhaps because their learning style is not aural or musical.

### **Relationship and Balance between Systems and Skills**

This particular approach gives learners the opportunity to practise all four skills. Initially, they have to read the story then discuss and write out their answers. Then they have to give feedback, listen to the song and sing it. I have decided to emphasise the receptive skills in this particular lesson by giving more time to reading and listening.

While working on their answers, they can look up or ask about unfamiliar vocabulary. While this is the primary systems focus of the lesson, students can also build on grammar which they have recently met e.g. “used to”. In preparation for singing the song, I will draw their attention to aspects of stress and intonation which are a feature of the chorus. I have removed some colloquial speech from the lyrics and replaced them with more formal features in the story. This presents a good opportunity to make a comparison between two different registers.

### **Bibliography**

Caffey, S. 2000, **Turn, Turn, Turn: Alternative Ways of Presenting Songs** MET 9/20

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

*Read the story and then answer the questions with your partner.*



### **“I’m going to be like you”**

I missed the birth of my son because I was too busy working. While I was away on business he learned how to walk. Before I knew it, he was talking. When we spoke on the phone, he used to ask: “When are you coming home, Dad?” “I don’t know”, I used to say, “But when I do, we’ll get together and have a good time” And as he was growing up would say: “Dad, I’m going to be like you”.

For his tenth birthday I gave him a football. He asked me to come out and play with him, but I had too much to do. He didn’t seem to mind. He still used to say: “I’m going to be like you, Dad”.

Eventually, he grew up and went to college. I was so proud of him. One day, he came home and I asked him to sit down for a chat. But he just smiled and said “Sorry Dad, I don’t have time, but what I’d really like is to borrow the car”.

I’ve been retired for some time now and my son has moved away. I phoned him the other day and said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind." He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I could find the time. You see, my new job is stressful, and my kid has the flu. But it's been nice talking to you." And as I put down the phone I realized that he'd grown up just like me. My boy was just like me.

Q1. Why did he miss the birth of his son?

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Q2. Why didn’t the father play football with his son on his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday?

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Q3. What kind of relationship does the father have with his son?

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Q4. In what way did the son grow up to be like the father?

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## **Appendix 2**

### **Cat's in the Cradle**

My child arrived just the other day,  
He came to the world in the usual way.  
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay.  
He learned to walk while I was away.

Andrew Basquille

And he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew,  
He'd say, "I'm gonna be like you, dad.  
You know I'm gonna be like you."

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon, Little boy blue and the man in the moon.  
"When you coming home, dad?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then."

My son turned ten just the other day.  
He said, "Thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play.  
Can you teach me to throw?" I said, "Not today,  
I got a lot to do." He said, "That's ok."  
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed,  
Said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah.  
You know I'm gonna be like him."

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon, Little boy blue and the man in the moon.  
"When you coming home, dad?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then."

Well, he came from college just the other day,  
So much like a man I just had to say,  
"Son, I'm proud of you. Can you sit for a while?"  
He shook his head, and he said with a smile,  
"What I'd really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys.  
See you later. Can I have them please?"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon, Little boy blue and the man in the moon.  
"When you coming home, dad?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then."

I've long since retired and my son's moved away.  
I called him up just the other day.  
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind."  
He said, "I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time.  
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kid's got the flu,  
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad.  
It's been sure nice talking to you."  
And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me,  
He'd grown up just like me, My boy was just like me.

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon, Little boy blue and the man in the moon.  
"When you coming home, dad?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then."