

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Teaching Grammar Through Song

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

To teach specific points, essential rules, and building blocks of grammar, the instructor uses songs and lyrics. Songs can be used to both introduce and review specific grammar points. For instance, if the topic is past progressive tense, then the instructor finds a song that uses this verb tense and provides students with a copy of the lyrics. Students are instructed to read through the lyrics first, noting any instances of unfamiliar vocabulary. After the instructor explains the unfamiliar vocabulary, students are provided with a fill-in-the-blank style worksheet where each instance of past progressive tense has been replaced with a blank. As students listen to the song (just the song or a music video for the song), they fill in each blank when they hear an example of the verb tense in the song. They cannot look at the original lyrics sheet the instructor provided at the beginning of class. After students complete their worksheets, they pair up with a classmate to compare answers and discuss any blanks they were unable to fill in. The instructor plays the song two or three times until students confirm they are confident in their answers. Lastly, the instructor projects the worksheet on the board, and the entire class reviews the answers together.

Notes from the Instructor About This Innovative Teaching Practice:

“It is important to be aware of who your students are to ensure that they are able to engage in this activity fully. If it is a lower-level ESL class, then the songs may need to be played at a slower pace. If there are any hearing impaired students in the class, this may not be an appropriate activity unless full accommodations are available. It is also important to double check the songs and videos using a culturally sensitive lens to ensure that the music or the video is not offensive.”