CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCLUSION

“There’s music in the sighing of a reed;
There’s music in the gushing of a rill;
There’s music in all things, if men had ears;
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.”
-Byron

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the summary of the experiment carried out to enhance communicative competence in English through songs and stories at the secondary school level. It is the culmination of the efforts of the researcher to verify the impact of use of music of words and development of imagination through stories to develop competence in English as a second language. The chapter presents the findings of the study undertaken with an aim of developing LSRW skills in ESL among students in class IX Gujarati medium rural schools. The chapter includes necessary recommendations to the authorities concerned with policy – making, syllabus-preparation and materials production, and suggestions for further research. Finally the researcher has attempted to visualise the scope for further studies in related areas.

5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF SIGNIFICANCE OF SONGS AND STORIES IN EDUCATION

Human beings are emotional creatures. At the heart of all thought and meaning and action is emotion. Although we like to be known as ‘logical and intellectual beings’, we are influenced by our emotions. Therefore, it is only logical to look at the affective (emotional) domain for answers to the problems of second language acquisition. Songs with their music and stories with their appeal for fantasy can provide this scope for emotional climate in the ESL classrooms.

Music generally manifests in tune, melody, rhyme, and lyrics. The role of music can be divided into two aspects: participant-oriented and performance-oriented. The former refers to
the joy that music brings to each individual as an active music experiencer. They are actually involved in the performing act such as singing a song, whistling a tune, or playing a musical instrument. The latter focuses on the product such as a performance on stage, a record or cassette of songs normally performed by well-known artists.

Suggestopedia was introduced by Lozanov (1979) which stresses the significance of mental calmness in learning. Suggestopedia is a method of second language teaching that capitalises on relaxed states of mind for maximum retention of material. Music plays a vital part in this teaching method. For example, Baroque music, with its 60 beats per minutes and its specific rhythm creates a kind of "relaxed concentration" for active learning (Ostrand & Schroeder, 1979).

Thus, music is a powerful international communication tool which could be shared, and enjoyed by people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it brings people together. **Music enables learners to relax in a learning atmosphere.** Music helps to create a soothing and enjoyable environment for learning. It reduces pressure and tension in the class. Students do not feel threatened. It bridges the gap between teachers and students.

In the traditional societies, teachers are perceived as superior, occupying the rank even above students' parents. The teacher is the source of wisdom, which cannot be challenged by students. The relationship between teachers and students is hierarchical. However, music helps to bring teachers and students closer together. They share the same interest, which is music. They participate in various academic and social activities together to pursue and promote music. Teachers who can sing and like to sing with students are normally very popular.

### 5.1.1 MUSIC IN EFL CURRICULUM

There is no formal approach to introducing music to the EFL curriculum in private and public English language teaching institutions. It is up to individual teachers to include music in their teaching programs. EFL teaching in India even today is heavily grammar-translation orientated. Assessment, particularly testing, is taken seriously by teachers and students.
5.1.2 MUSIC AS AN EXTRA-CURRICULUM EXPERIENCE

Extra-curriculum musically-based activities are essential in the lives of EFL students in particular and tertiary students in general. These activities include singing in classes, musical performances on campus and off-campus, frequent home-singing gatherings, café music gatherings, personal and group celebrations such as birthday, music video entertainment, and farewell parties.

Participant-oriented process is a strong feature in students' extra-curriculum activities. Almost everyone takes part in music activities. The popular saying normally cited among students is 'hat hay khong bang hay hat' (beautiful voice is not as good as frequent singing voice). The theme 'student and school life' is one of the most popular themes in Vietnamese songs and poems. The English song 'Yesterday' is still on the top chart of students' list of popular foreign songs sung in various student gatherings. In Hue and Hanoi, participant-orientated process is very strong; whereas in Ho Chi Minh City (former Saigon), performance-orientated process is having a great impact on EFL students' lives. It is normally seen in commercially-motivated performances, which are often frequented by EFL students, particularly those from well-to-do families. In a performance-orientated process, the distinction between performers and audience is clearly marked. Performers are normally professional artists who earn their living by performing in public entertainment. EFL students tend to use public entertainment cafes as peer gatherings.

At the personal level, the researcher as part of her experience with the Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture amongst Youth (SPICMACAY), had watched the famous danseuse cum activist Padmashree Mallika Sarabhai working with children from slums teaching them dance, thereby bring them into the main stream. These children, over a period of time, had learnt to speak English reasonably fluently and were able to participate in cultural events at the international level. This was social empowerment and rehabilitation through art.

Owing to the reasons cited above and essentially because young learners get emotionally involved in story-telling and song-recitation activities very easily, the topic was selected for research purpose.
5.2 TIPS FOR TEACHERS

In order for making story-narration and song-recitation sessions meaningful for ESL sessions, it is necessary for teachers to be conscious about a few points while teaching in the classroom. The following are ideas on how songs and stories should be used to enhance English teaching and learning.

5.2.1 Songs for teaching speaking and listening: Songs sung by native English speakers are of great value to the teaching of speaking and listening. Students should be made to listen to the singing first to have a feeling for the songs. After two or three times of listening to a song, students work in small groups to write down the lyrics. Finally the song is written on the board with the help the teacher and students. With regard to speaking, students sing the song together while the cassette-recorded singing is played. For beginning English classes, singing helps students to 'tune in' with the target language so that initial stage of language and cultural shock can be minimised.

5.2.2 Projects on English music: Several projects on the use of English songs for learning can be thought of. For instance, students should collect songs according to themes such as songs about rivers and mountains, student life, travelling, places, seasons of the year, war etc. For a writing project, students can translate English songs into Gujarati or Hindi and vice versa. This provides students opportunities to discuss different EFL issues such as cultural consideration in translation, linguistic genres in music lyrics, and linguistic errors. In fact, a beginning in this direction can be made by asking students to collect songs and poems on similar themes in different languages. The teacher can help them see the similarities and differences in expressions and contexts. This helps in developing a broader understanding of different cultures among students. Similarly, stories on similar themes in different languages can be collected and discussed.

5.2.3 Linguistic awareness: students can discuss differences between spoken and written language on the basis of lyrics and singing. Attention can be drawn to different varieties of English such as dialects and non-standard forms as well as abbreviated forms. Folk songs from different English speaking countries can be a great resource for teaching linguistic and cultural awareness.
5.2.4 Where to find songs and stories: Our mythology is replete with a large number of stories, even songs. Yet another source for stories and songs is literature for children. In terms of songs for ESL classrooms, teachers might have to depend on rhymes in English. However, they can easily be Indianised. Or, even some songs and poems from literature for young learners available in Indian languages may be translated into English. The internet is another major source to find stories and songs for ESL classrooms. Some of these websites are listed here below.

www.primarygames.com/reading.htm
www.teachingideas.co.uk
http://school.discoveryeducation.com/clipart
www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant
www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish
www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise
www.puzzle-maker.com
www.vocabulary.co.il

5.2.5 Choosing the right songs and stories: Teachers need to consider the level of language and understanding of the class to find the right type of poem or song. If every single word or expression is required to be explained, the charm of the story or song is lost. On the other hand though, most students can understand the poem or song if there are a few difficult words. So, one should not be afraid to choose something that may be considered slightly difficult or unfamiliar.

5.2.6 Activities to do while using songs and stories: There are lots of things teachers can do in a classroom with songs and poems. A few are listed here below.

5.2.7 Introducing a topic

Songs and stories usually follow a specific topic. While introducing a topic to a class for the first time, a poem, a song or a story can be a great way to make the topic more memorable. One could also introduce a season or the weather by using poems that illustrate these topics. For low level or young students, visual aids can also be used to support introduction.
5.2.8 Putting poems and songs into order

When a poem or a song is found that is suitable for the class, it could be printed on a card and the verses may be cut up.

For this activity to work, the poem or the song must have some form of logical order. The teacher can encourage students to read the verses carefully and write down something of interest. Certain points for discussion such as vocabulary, rhyming words etc can also be created and students can be asked to look at the meaning of the song or poem itself.

5.2.9 Challenges in pronunciation

Songs and poems are effective tools to teach pronunciation. Students may be given practice in individual sounds, rhyming words and pairs, connected speech or speech patterns. Students can be asked to carefully read then pronounce the words they are looking at.

5.2.10 Looking for rhyming words

Poems and songs usually follow some sort of rhyming patterns. The teacher can discuss these patterns with the class as poem or song is read out and students may be asked to say aloud when they hear a rhyming pattern. Later, they may be asked to come up with their own rhyming song, verse or poem. So, not only do the students learn vocabulary skills, they will also be able to look at patterns and basic grammar skills.

5.2.11 Turning them into role play

Songs and poems often tell stories. These stories in the songs and poems can be used as a ladder into role play. Teachers can get their students to act out what the story is in the song or the poem. This can be a fun exercise as well as a good learning one; it encourages the students to read and actually understand the song or poem, and it allows them to show their creative side.

Poems and songs are an under used resource in many classrooms today. They are easy to find and easy to implement in any level of learning English.
5.3 SOME GENERAL CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE RESOURCE MATERIAL

While taking learners beyond the classroom to impart lessons a teacher must ensure that

- the inputs are a little above the learner's current level of competence.
- the inputs are meaningful and relevant to the learner's learning objectives.
- the input is natural language and not an artificial one.
- the sources include a combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic materials.
- the inputs are of various kinds and dynamic in nature
- the input leads to further learning- watching a movie, reading a book etc.
- input/resource is need-specific, specially designed according to the requirements of the learner.
- a realistic approach, not an idealistic or highly ambitious approach be adopted for goal setting and material selection.

5.4 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER

Teachers are coordinators of students’ learning activities inside and outside the classroom. Classroom teaching is useful to speed up the slow process of ‘natural learning’ from experience. In the classroom, the teacher makes arrangements so that learning can take place more efficiently, easily and within a stipulated time, thus ensuring faster learning. It is also important, for him/her to take that logical extra step and send the learners to the outside world and put into practice what has been learnt, thus effectively commencing the post-classroom learning. The teacher also has a responsibility in either using or encouraging the learner to use the L1 input to accelerate the process. S/he takes risks in such situations where s/he leaves the safe cocoon of the classroom for an open context of learning.

Using stories and songs when teaching English is a great way to expose students to ‘real English’. It can give students a perfect chance to see creative and free thinking in English.

With both stories and songs, teachers can use visual aids to help learners with their understanding, or teachers could teach certain words before introducing the story or song to the classroom.
To conclude the discussion on usefulness of stories and songs in ESL classes, it can be said that recently there has been a paradigm shift in focus. Language educators are debating the issue of incorporating literature in the English language curriculum. The advantages are: literature constitutes valuable authentic material and contributes to cultural as well as linguistic enrichment. It offers scope for personal involvement. Its universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity are also valuable. However, the close of the first decade of the 21st century marks a paradigm shift in focus from English literature to English language. Teaching and mastering English language is more on the anvil than literature. In recent years, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction has been gaining momentum.

All said and done, at the secondary level of education, the focus has to be on language through interesting situations provided through stories and songs. They not only provide context for meaningful understanding of the language but through elements of interest and emotional involvement, they create a personal meaning for each individual learner through the new linguistic medium. This satisfies curiosity of the students further motivating them to learn the language. Stories and songs, in fact, provide an excellent mix of language through literature. Stories and songs have a setting, characters, a situation and thereby create a huge scope for language use through numerous techniques such as oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role-playing, pantomiming, reenactment, discussion, and group activities.

5.5. SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIMENT

As stated earlier, the title of the present research is Second Language Learning through Songs and Stories. This was an experimental research with a single group pretest – posttest design. Two separate schools were selected for the experiment. The first try out one was a pilot study followed by another one as the main study.

Prior to commencing the study, a few objectives, as enumerated in Chapter One were arrived at to decide the focus. Accordingly, relevant literature on second language pedagogy, use of songs and stories to teach a language, especially English, research methodology in general and linguistic research in particular were studied. This was followed by preparation a programme i.e. teaching – learning materials based on songs and stories for teaching English
to students of class IX in Gujarati medium schools. Having designed the programme, the researcher constructed tests to decide the entry behavior as well as the exit behavior. They were diagnostic and achievement tests.

Once the pretest was administered, the programme as prepared by the researcher was offered in each group. The programme was based on the textbook prescribed for class IX in Gujarati medium schools. The textbook course was enriched by certain stories and songs compiled, even created, by the teacher. Apart from talking and telling, the researcher made use of video–audio materials, too. During the sessions, oral as well as written feedback was received from the students.

After the programme, a posttest was administered to the students. The scores of the pretest and the posttest were compared to verify the hypothesis. The data were analysed and interpreted in the light of the hypothesis.

5.6 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study have been enumerated here below.

• All the students had the problem of speaking in English at the commencement of the experiment. They were tongue tied. Through interaction during the experiment, everybody without an exception had opened up, though at different levels.

• Most of the students had problems in reading their textbook lessons too. However, there was a considerable degree of improvement towards the end. This could be due to the role plays and group reading of the stories and poems which formed a major part of the experiment.

• Their stock of vocabulary also had increased by the end of the experiment.

• Use of stories and songs can certainly lead to improvement in the proficiency of learners in terms of English, even in terms of statistical evidence.

• Songs and stories not only help learners to develop fluency but also accuracy while using the language. The longer the duration of such exposure, the more effective the learning.

• Apart from generating interest and curiosity, participating in recitation, reading aloud and dramatization of songs and stories can provide a platform to students to generate novel ideas and also to take risks to try them out.
The relaxed climate created through songs and stories can help learners overcome their fear of speaking English in front of the class or in public.

Songs and stories provide an audio-visual image that is easy to learn, remember and use.

Authentic materials (in the form of video clippings, movies etc) used for language learning can create natural climate of language use leading to easy uptake of the language by the learners.

Role plays of stories and songs help learners develop skills of problem-solving, decision-making, leadership and independence. Such task based learning also increases comprehension ability and responsiveness of the students.

Tasks and projects help learners develop their listening and speaking skills to a great extent. They help learners to sing songs, narrate stories, play the roles and deliver dialogues outside the classroom in informal situations, as well.

Constant exposure to tasks provides a rich language climate to students and aid in developing their confidence, work in teams collaboratively. Thus leading to their holistic development.

Friendly climate of the classroom enhances learning uptake. Since the students do not suffer from lathophobia or lathophobic aphasia, they learn to take risks in terms of expressing themselves in the classroom.

The teacher’s own friendly, rather ‘I-am-also-a-participant’ approach can help the even the shy students to open up, thereby boosting their confidence and competence to do things independently.

Task and activity-based classroom interaction helps the learners to develop their imagination and creativity. It can make them independent users of the second language.

From the above discussion so far, it can be concluded that English as a second language can be taught effectively through songs and stories. It is one of the best techniques to teach English in a greatly learner friendly way.

5.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today, the topmost objective of all the ESL teachers is to give the students the much needed communicative skills: LSRW. Many research studies conducted also found that the need for social skills is greater than the need for technical systems and resource management skills. The same notion has been agreed upon that soft skills refer to all those personal qualities and
attitudes that make an individual a compatible and resourceful employee. Since class IX is a pre-broad standard at the school level, it becomes an important stage. Further, the fact that quite many of the students, especially from socio-economically weak sections, may not continue to study and take up some vocational programmes, instead makes it even more necessary to help them become reasonably proficient in English at this stage itself.

Moreover, soft skills that complete core competencies are in great demand. Recognition, promotion and opportunity—all these cannot be gained solely by technical skills. Soft skills play a vital role for professional success as it helps to excel in one's field of work and their importance cannot be denied with. These skills need to be developed during the initial stages of education which would help the learners do better even in their further studies later.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current research study was confined to class IX level in rural settings. The hypothesis has been verified with certain type of students. However, numerous other research seem to emerge out of the current one. They have been listed here below.

- The same research needs to be replicated in different contexts and levels in secondary schools. This would help further verify the effect of stories and songs in ESL classes.
- Certain techniques are teacher specific for their effective implementation. Their impact depends on the personality of the teacher. Use of stories and songs for ESL classes may be tested against teacher personalities.
- Not many songs and rhymes of Indian origin are found in English. Studies may be carried out to prepare a set of songs in Indian settings with an objective to try them out.
- Research may be carried out to teach the entire course in elementary classes through songs and stories accompanied by activities and tasks.
- Impact of story sessions on the emotions of young learners
- Impact of songs on the emotions of young learners
- A comparative study of emotional state of ESL teachers who teach through stories and songs with those who teach through the textbook lessons
- Use of story narration to develop fluency skills
- Use of songs and stories to enhance confidence among ‘slow learners’
5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising out of the present study are numerous ideas that may be useful to different sections of the academia.

5.9.1 POLICY MAKERS

- The significance of stories and songs in school curricula, especially to teach a second language needs to be further accepted and strengthened through certain policies. These could be inclusion of this component in pre-service teacher education programmes, a compulsory component of in-service programmes, obligatory inclusion of these elements in textbooks as a sizeable portion, especially in the elementary and middle schools.
- Special workshops need to be organized to prepare materials and human resources for development of the skills to use stories and songs in classroom teaching in general and ESL classrooms in particular.

5.9.2 SYLLABUS DESIGNERS, TEXTBOOK WRITERS AND MATERIALS PRODUCERS

- There is a need to include a large number of stories and songs in ESL courses at the school level.
- Preparation and standardization of ESL courses/programmes through stories and songs need to be arrived at. These could be in numerous forms: print, audio, video etc.
- Rich ready-to-use materials for teachers of English need to be made available on-line for school teachers in Gujarat
- Teachers need to be trained in accessing and making use of on-line materials for their ESL classes.
- At the elementary level, numerous stories from vernacular languages need to be placed as picture sequences accompanied by the text for the teacher to read aloud. Owing to the familiarity of the story, the learners would find it easy and relate to the narration yet the new medium would provide sufficient challenge to keep their interest high. The text provided to the teachers would help even a novice teacher to do sufficiently well in the classroom.
‘Education should aim at an all-round development of individuals by focusing on development of three Hs: Head, Hand and Heart’ said Mahatma Gandhi. Teaching through stories and songs wherein enactment is the major mode of presentation, at least two Hs (Head and Heart) are taken care of. Even physical grace too enhances during these presentations, thus taking care of the third H, i.e. hand, to some extent.

In this study we have seen that music can have a great impact on learning and discussion on it can be helpful for learning second language. Interest can be developed in learners by using popular culture themes, theaters, artistic performances and adaptation in English of our popular culture themes can make learning interesting and inviting. Stories that are full of fun and frolic are gems in our lives. Along with bringing fresh breeze of ideas and images, they teach language, morals, manners, etiquette, discipline, character-building, and traits such as patriotism, courage, bravery, truth and use of common sense, critical thinking, problem solving. For generations children have listened to stories from their parents and grandparents. As we know that stories begin in an interesting manner and build the tempo gradually culminating into an interesting climax. Thus, listeners always remain anxious to know the ultimate end of the story. Listening to such stories of excitement unknowingly sows seeds of curiosity into the children’s minds.

Stories and songs are an effort to match with the psychological preference of the child’s mental level. It really keeps up the interest and removes the boredom of the child. In olden days, the lovely style of grand-parents was capable of making stories more understandable to the children. Story-telling by grandma kept children busy and attentive without feeling boredom. Unfortunately, the tradition of cradle-songs and stories by grand-parents has almost disappeared. Teachers need to take this place especially in lower classes. Moreover, in this age of competition, restlessness, strife, broken homes, single-parent families and similar stress-causing features prevalent among the society, teachers interacting with their students with the help of stories and songs are sure to bring freshness not only to their students but also help themselves through a sense of fulfillment. Effective and efficient teachers who can help students feel motivated are the need of the day. The teacher’s role is to model, guide and provide a positive attitude towards learning in a classroom where students are not all at the
same level of proficiency. Therefore, teachers need to develop a wide range of skills and techniques for classroom use.

Even today despite other attractions, a large number of teachers join the profession with a great deal of enthusiasm. However, the inert and inefficient system at times makes many such good teachers feel de-motivated and dejected. There are numerous cases of burn out, too. Keeping oneself fresh by experimenting with new teaching-learning techniques and materials is one way of retaining one’s energy and interest in the profession. Teaching, in its true sense, is give and take of energy to and from one’s learners. When this flow is positive and continuous, there is nothing but growth both for the learners as well as teachers. May such happy tribes of students and teachers thrive!


“I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume, you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”

- Walt Whitman