

Why use music for language teaching?

There are many similarities between language and music, and neural imaging has demonstrated that similar parts of the brain are activated by music and language. A growing body of research evidence indicates clear positive effects of musical activities in developing both our first language and additional languages, in both spoken and written forms.

Explicit training in perceiving rhythm helps to develop auditory timing (which supports rapid retrieval of verbal information) and phonological segmentation skills (which have a positive effect on developing reading skills). Singing has been demonstrated to be an effective method for teaching language, leading to greater retention of new phrases than just speaking, or even rhythmic speaking. The evidence suggests that there are particular benefits for neurodiverse learners (i.e. those with dyslexia and other specific learning differences).

Perhaps most importantly: music is a powerful tool for motivating and engaging learners, as well as developing the self-esteem of less confident learners. Music can lift the mood of the learner/s, change the focus of a lesson, and can also be used to build greater group cohesion. This enables us to develop a collaborative learning environment that is supportive and inclusive.

The Language Learning and Musical Activities (LLAMA) materials offers teachers an easy and effective way to bring all of this into their classrooms – **no musical talented required!**

Further reading:

Overy, K. (2003) 'Dyslexia and Music: from timing deficits to musical intervention'. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 999: 497- 505.

Slater, J., Strait, D.L., Skoe, E., O'Connell, S., Thompson, E., et al. (2014) 'Longitudinal Effects of Group Music Instruction on Literacy Skills in Low-Income Children'. *PLoS ONE* 9(11): e113383. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0113383]