
Aerobic ESL: Variations on a Total Physical Response Theme

By Marci Mitchell

Song awakens the soul to a glowing longing for what the song contains; song soothes the lusts of the flesh; it acts like dew to the soul, making it fertile for accomplishing good acts; it makes the pious warrior noble and strong in suffering terrible pain; it is a healing ointment for the wounds suffered in the battle of life . . .

—Anon, A.D. 370

Since ancient times, music has been praised and used as a balm for the soul. The music of a young David soothed the passions of a mad King Saul. Plato, in *The Republic*, (Book 3, Chapt. 12), wrote, "Education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else, rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul."

Music in the ESL classroom can no longer be viewed as a gimmick to use merely to pass the time of day. Students can relate to contemporary popular American music because of its international acceptance. The universal language of music can both motivate the students and improve their language performance.

Students can also relate to physical fitness, another popular international movement. Jane Fonda's *Workout Book* was recently the number one bestseller in America. Jacki Sorenson's aerobic dancing is practiced in school gyms, church halls, and anywhere people want to shape up in a fun way. What can music together with aerobic dancing do for the ESL classroom?

How many ESL teachers who teach all day in public schools or universities feel tired and drained at the end of the day? How do students feel after going to school all day, five days a week? Both teachers and students can benefit from an aerobic ESL class.

BENEFITS OF AEROBIC ESL

Much research has been done concerning the cognitive and affective domains of second language acquisition. Another domain to consider is the physical. What are minds and emotions without bodies? James Asher's Total Physical Response (1969) includes the physical domain to help students learn by physically performing commands. Aerobic ESL takes Total Physical Response beyond the command to aerobics and the universal language of music.

To ensure maximum learning in the ESL classroom, teachers must consider their students' physical and mental well-being. Physical fitness may have a positive effect on personality attitudes, self-image, mental alertness, learning capacity, and sensory and perceptual awareness. By integrating

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physical exercise with the ESL curriculum, teachers can provide opportunities for students to release tensions and improve their mental efficiency. A regular exercise program benefits student-teacher relationships and encourages social interaction, energetic motivation, and all-round fun.

Jacki Sorenson's definition of aerobic dancing is as follows:

Aerobic dancing is a physical fitness program that offers complete and effective conditioning. It conditions

your muscles by trimming, firming and shaping. It conditions your heart, lungs and blood vessels by demanding that this internal, life-supporting system be strengthened through healthy use. This fitness program is fun and challenging. It is a combination of dancing for the fun of it, and dancing for more energy every day. (1978:2)

Doctors have noted that aerobics have a physiological effect that elevates people's moods and banishes depression. The sense of accomplishment that aerobic exercise provides gives people new confidence in their ability to succeed. Aerobic dancing allows students freedom to "spring free" mentally and emotionally and to "get out of themselves" through exercise. It is also a healthy switch from the daily grind of the classroom.

By implementing an aerobic ESL program, the teacher can expect some of the following results:

- *increased energy
- *increased stamina
- *enthusiasm
- *relaxation
- *better health
- *a positive effect on self-image
- *vitality
- *motivation
- *improved language performance
- *healthy teacher-student relationships

IMPLEMENTATION

Intensive English students at the American Languages Institute, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas attend classes five hours per day, five days a week. The Aerobic ESL experiment has produced positive results with both the class and the instructor. The themes of the songs on the tape were deliberately chosen as "motivational" songs, to make the students feel good about themselves, their relationships, and their efforts to learn English. The dance steps were choreographed by the instructor, tapping a resource of steps and movements used in different aerobic dance classes attended. The songs used are as follows:

Warm-Up

1. "Hooked on Classics" (The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, RCA)

2. "Let's Get Physical" (Olivia Newton-John, MCA Records)
3. "I Write the Songs" (Barry Manilow, Peter Pan Records)
4. "Love Me With All Of Your Heart" (Englebert Humperdinck, TeeVee Records)

Aerobic

5. "Long Tall Texan" (Murry Kellum, K-Tel)
6. "Sir Duke" (Bob McGrath, Sesame Street Records)
7. "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" (John Denver, RCA)
8. "High Hopes" (Bob McGrath, Sesame Street Records)

Cool Down

9. "New York, New York" (Birchwood Pops Orchestra, Pickwick)
10. "I Love" (Tom T. Hall, K-Tel)
11. "Annie's Song" (John Denver, RCA)
12. "American Trilogy" (The London Symphony Orchestra, RSO Records)

Exercise classes naturally lend themselves to Total Physical Response command forms and body vocabulary. Some examples are the following:

Aerobic ESL Vocabulary

Apart	Bend over
Bow	Change sides
Clap your hands	Count
Cross (leg, arm, etc.)	
Dance	Exhale
Face (center, right, left)	
Fall back	Flex
Glide	Hoe-down
Inhale	Jog
Jump	Kick
Lasso	Left
Lie down	Lift (leg, knee, etc.)
Lunge	Point
Push backward	Push forward
Reach	Relax
Relaxation exercise (toes, feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, back, stomach, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, face)	
Right	Rock
Roll (shoulders)	Run
Side bend	Sit down
Sit up	Skip
Squat	Stand up
Step	Stretch
Sweep the floor	Swing your partner

Turn	Together
Touch (toes, knees, calves, etc.)	
Walk backward	Walk forward

Ideally the lyrics of the songs should be presented before the aerobic dancing begins. Teachers are limited only by their own imaginations as to how to present the vocabulary and structure of the songs. Some ideas as to how to implement the songs in the ESL classroom are presented below.

As in any exercise program, the participants should consult a physician before beginning strenuous physical exercise. After obtaining the green light, go forth and aerobicize in the ESL classroom! Let the rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of your students' souls.

SAMPLE SONGS AND ESL EXERCISES

I WRITE THE SONGS

(Barry Manilow, Peter Pan Records)

I've been alive forever
 And I wrote the very first song
 I put the words and the melodies together
 I am music and I write the songs
 (refrain)
 I write the songs that make the whole world sing
 I write the songs of love and special things
 I write the songs that make the young girls cry
 I write the songs, I write the songs
 My home lies deep within you
 And I've got my own place in your soul
 Now when I look out through your eyes
 I am young again, even though I'm very old
 (refrain)
 Oh, my music makes you dance
 And gets your spirit to take a chance
 And I wrote some rock-and-roll so you can move
 Music fills your heart
 Oh, that's a real fine place to start
 It's from me—It's for you
 It's from you—It's for me
 It's a world-wide symphony
 (refrain)
 I am music, and I write the songs

Structure to Review

Verbs: Simple present

put	look
dance	be
make	write
cry	lie
get	fill
move	start
sing	

Prepositions:

of	within
in	through

Vocabulary (Meaning in context)

alive	home
again	forever
deep	very old
song	real fine
place	music
melodies	soul
spirit	words
how	eyes
chance	whole world
heart	rock-and-roll
world-wide symphony	young girls
love and special things	

Listening and Speaking Exercises

- I. Play the song three times. Next, play each verse a line at a time and ask students to repeat each line.
- II. Present the theme of the song for students to discuss:
 - a. What is your definition of music?
 - b. How long has music existed?
 - c. Who is the speaker in this song?
 - d. When do you listen to music?
 - e. Where does music come from?

Reading and Writing Exercises

- I. Present the song as a dictation. Play the song and ask students to write the words as they listen.
- II. Have the students write ten sentences utilizing the structural features of the song.
- III. Have the students read the entertainment section of the newspaper and bring articles about music to class. Read the "Top Ten" record lists for the week.

IV. Test the students with the lyrics of the song using the cloze method. Omit approximately one word per line and instruct the students to fill in the empty blanks for a test.

V. Have students add the punctuation marks on each line and write complete sentences.

LONG, TALL TEXAN
(Murry Kellum, K-Tel)

Giddy-up, Giddy-up

Well, I'm a long, tall Texan

I ride a big white horse

He rides from Texas on a big white horse

Yes, I'm a long, tall Texan

I ride a big white horse

He rides from Texas on a big white horse

Well, people look at me and say,

"Oh Roy, Oh Roy, is that your horse?"

He rides from Texas on a big white horse

Well, I'm a long, tall Texan

I wear a ten-gallon hat

He rides from Texas with a ten-gallon hat

Yes, I'm a long, tall Texan

I wear a ten-gallon hat

He rides from Texas with a ten-gallon hat

Well, people look at me and say,

"Oh Roy, Oh Roy, is that your hat?"

He rides from Texas with a ten-gallon hat

Well, I was walking down the street

With my shining badge

My spurs jingling at my feet

I seen a man coming

And coming with a gun

I just can't be beat

Well, I'm a long, tall Texan

I enforce justice for the law

He rides from Texas to enforce the law

Well, I'm a long, tall Texan

I enforce justice for the law

He rides from Texas to enforce the law

Well, people look at me and say,

"Oh Roy, Oh Roy, are you the law?"

He rides from Texas to enforce the law

Structure to Review

Adjectives:

long

tall

big

white

ten-gallon

shining

Contractions:

I'm

can't

Verbs: Simple present

be

ride

look

say

wear

enforce

Present Continuous

walking

shining

jingling

Questions (verb before subject)

Oh Roy, oh Roy, is that your horse?

Oh Roy, oh Roy, is that your hat?

Oh Roy, oh Roy, are you the law?

Vocabulary (Meaning in context)

Texas

Texan

horse

people

hat

street

badge

spurs

gun

justice

law

Listening and Speaking Exercises

I. Play the song three times. Next, play each verse a line at a time and have students repeat each line.

II. Present the theme of the song for students to discuss:

a. What is a long, tall Texan?

b. Where is Texas?

c. How big is Texas?

d. When does Roy wear his ten-gallon hat?

e. Who is Roy?

III. Have students discuss the cowboy myth.

Reading and Writing Exercises

I. Present the song as a dictation. Play the song and ask students to write the words as they listen.

II. Have the students write ten sentences utilizing the structural features of the song.

III. Read some magazine articles concerning Texas and cowboys.

IV. Test the students with the lyrics of the song using the cloze method. Omit approximately one word per line and instruct the students to fill in the empty blanks for a test.

V. Have students add the punctuation marks on each line and write complete sentences.

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