**Maximising English language acquisition through music: Composing Songs for Second Language (SL) Learners** (practice-as-research portfolio)

Undertaken between 2017 and 2021, this collaborative practice-as-research project centred on the writing, arranging and production of seventy-nine songs and accompanying music videos for international learners of English, aged between 7 and 18. Songs have been published as part of:

* Creative Listening (2023) *Open Up* (58 songs, Oxford University Press) Forthcoming 2023
* *Learn English Kids: Robot Songs* (12 songs, 2020, British Council) Available at: <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/category/topics/robot-songs>
* *We Are One* (1 song, 2019, National Geographic). Restricted
* *One Stop English: The Magic Cat.* (8 songs, 2018, Palgrave MacMillan). Available at: <https://www.onestopenglish.com/songs-and-games/the-magic-cat/556537.article>

Each song features lexis and grammar aligned with a unit of school curriculum and is accompanied by learner activities and teacher resources. Published songs (British Council, 2020; Macmillan, 2018) have been engaged with several million times by learners and teachers worldwide, both through Youtube and publishers’ websites.

We are professional educators with pedagogical, linguistic, and musical training. We are also songwriters and musicians with a professional background in composing for mixed media and general audiences. Tasked with writing and producing music specifically for the language classroom, we first wanted to explore, understand, and maximise the potential of songs to enhance young learners’ experiences of learning English. Although there is general consensus within the fields of English language teaching (ELT) and applied linguistics surrounding the value and utility of songs, the rationales underpinning such claims vary significantly, ranging from linguistic to mnemonic, to affective, to sociocultural, highlighting a range of diverse and potentially competing priorities in song composition for the second language classroom.

The project involved ‘professionally multilingual’ (Edwards, 2011) collaboration between expert practitioners including teachers, syllabus authors, curriculum designers, project managers, publishers, songwriters, record producers, animators, choreographers, and filmmakers. Each practitioner represented a different domain of expertise and cultural field, and each held different values, standards and expectations surrounding issues of workflow, professionalism, and output quality. This required multidisciplinary professional collaborators (MPCs) to develop common knowledge at and relational expertise at professional boundary spaces (Edwards, 2011). As songwriters, this required us to consciously deconstruct creative processes that are typically spontaneous, intuitive and embodied, and to justify our decision-making to collaborators in rational terms. The reflective awareness this engendered was illuminating, and often felt valorising, but could also lead us to question our intuitive judgement. This risked ‘sterilising’ the creative process and, perhaps, jeopardising the ineffable quality of outputs.

This ongoing portfolio comprises songwriting notes, demo recordings, audio recordings of songwriting sessions, and reflective correspondences captured between 2018 and 2020. A programme of workshops, presentations and scholarly articles is scheduled for 2022.