



## CAROLYN GRAHAM'S JAZZ CHANTS

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to write a descriptive analysis of Carolyn Graham's jazz chants and to provide supporting evidence from music therapy studies that used the strategies and techniques of jazz chants to teach English as-a-Second Language (ESL). I interviewed Ms. Graham via email communication, reviewed several of her jazz chants books and accompanying CDs, and summarized evidence from experimental and qualitative music therapy studies that used strategies and techniques created by Graham to teach ESL. She originally created jazz chants as a language acquisition tool, which emphasized the rhythmic and intonation patterns of Standard American English as it occurs in situational contexts. Jazz chanting also immerses ESL students in expressing feelings in situational contexts by emphasizing the stress and intonation of the language while simultaneously building vocabulary that is used in everyday conversations. Most of the jazz chants are presented in two-part dialogue form as the teacher engages the class in call and response activities. Several studies in the music therapy literature provide evidence that the strategies and techniques used in jazz chants language are effective when used in music therapy interventions as supplemental ESL teaching techniques. The results of these studies indicated that the pairing of second language information with music listening, group chanting, singing, playing simple percussion instruments, and movement to music activities were effective music therapy interventions used as supplemental teaching techniques in ESL classes. In addition, pairing language information with singing and sign language activities were effective strategies in assisting Kindergarten ESL students to acquire vocabulary words as well. Overall, the results of implementing music therapy interventions as supplementary and/or primary teaching techniques were effective for teaching ESL skills to Kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students. Furthermore, alternative second language instruction that is interesting and engaging is needed for public school students that have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Students with LEP have difficulty in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language and these

deficits severely impede their progress in learning academic subject matter in schools where English is the only language of instruction. In addition, many students with LEP are stymied in ineffective ESL classes. In fact, experts in the ESL research literature recommend the use of comic books, audiotapes, videotapes, and other “extra-linguistic” materials as supplemental teaching strategies that may enhance ESL students’ acquisition of a second language. There is corroborating evidence in the music therapy literature that supports the idea of using music therapy interventions in combination with extra-linguistic information such as sing language and movement to music interventions, which may engage ESL students in engaging and interesting alternative ESL instruction. In fact, music therapy studies that offer alternative, supplemental, primary ESL instruction employ the basic philosophy, strategies, and techniques of Carolyn Graham’s jazz chants which include rhythmic repetition, chunking of language information paired with melodies and chants, and modifying the affect of second language learners as useful strategies in ESL instruction. [The author can be reached at [rkennedy@uga.edu](mailto:rkennedy@uga.edu)]