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GRAMMAR ERRORS IN ENGLISH SONGS

Raziskovalno področje: DRUGA PODROČJA

Raziskovalno področje regijskega srečanja: TUJI JEZIKI

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ABSTRACT

English as a foreign language is not only present in classroom as a subject that we are taught at school, but also surrounds us in every step we make. Young people get in contact with English through media, especially through popular songs. A lot of them learn the basics of English through songs. They learn the lyrics spontaneously, even though they also hide grammar errors. We tried to find out, whether pupils, who learn English at school, notice the mistakes that are in the lyrics of popular English songs.

First we explained how songs are involved in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. We presented some examples of song lyrics and marked the mistakes in them. In the empirical part we used a questionnaire and we wanted to find out whether the pupils are aware of the errors that are in the lyrics of popular songs.

We have learned that lyrics of popular songs contain grammar errors and that many pupils do not recognize them. After analyzing a number of popular English songs, we were surprised that the writers use a lot of errors. In our opinion, the errors are put into songs intentionally because of the rhyme and the rhythm. That is why the word mistake is mostly replaced by the word error.

We realized that listening to English songs does not only offer great fun, but can also be the matter of research.

Key words: grammar, learning English through songs, errors, rock songs, pop songs

POVZETEK

Angleščina kot tuji jezik ni prisotna samo v šolskem prostoru kot učni predmet, ampak nas obdaja na vsakem koraku. Zelo pogosto se mladi srečujemo z angleščino preko medijev, še posebej preko popularne glasbe. Veliko se jih osnove jezika uči prav zaradi glasbe. Spontano se naučijo besedila, v katerih se skrivajo tudi slovnične nepravilnosti. Ugotavljala sva ali učenci, ki se učijo angleščine v osnovni šoli, opazijo napake, ki se pojavljajo v angleških besedilih popularnih pesmi.

Najprej sva razložila, kako so pesmi vpletene v samo učenje in poučevanje angleščine kot tujega jezika. Nato sva zapisano podkrepila s primeri besedil pesmi in izpisala napake v njih.

V empiričnem delu naloge sva uporabila anketni vprašalnik s katerim sva želela ugotoviti ali se učenci zavedajo napak v besedilih angleških pesmi.

Analizirala sva številne popularne angleške pesmi in bila sva presenečena, da avtorji angleških besedil mnogokrat uporabljajo nepravilnosti. Meniva, da nepravilnosti uporabijo zavedno, zaradi ustreznosti rime in ritma. Prav zaradi tega sva v nalogi večkrat uporabila besedo nepravilnost, kot napaka.

Tako je poslušanje angleških pesmi za naju postalo ne le zabava, temveč tudi predmet raziskovanja.

1 INTRODUCTION

Music is not only a part of every pupil's life, but also everybody's life. It is the melody as well as the lyrics of the songs that fascinate us. Teenagers listen to different types of music every day and are surrounded mostly with English songs. That is why a lot of them know the lyrics by heart and songs become a way of learning English.

However, are they aware of errors in the lyrics? Do pupils learn incorrect English? Are English songs full of grammar mistakes?

We wanted to find the answers to these questions and therefore we started our research.

1.1 Purpose and aims

The purposes and aims of our research are to make pupils aware of grammar errors in the lyrics of popular English songs. Since they listen to music on a daily basis, we want to know whether pupils are aware of those errors and whether they recognize them.

After reading this research paper, we believe that the readers will look at lyrics from a different point of view and become more critical about lyrics and more aware about grammar mistakes that occur frequently in popular songs. Not everything we hear in popular songs is grammatically correct.

1.2 Hypotheses

1. We assume that pop songs contain mostly errors in the Present Simple Tense.
2. We assume that rock songs mostly contain double negation.
3. We assume that pupils from 8th and 9th class recognize more errors than pupils from 6th and 7th class.
4. We assume that almost all pupils do not recognize mistakes while listening to songs.
5. We assume that most pupils learn English by watching TV.

1.3 Methodology

In order to find to answers to our research questions we decided to use the following methods:

- making a survey
- processing the survey
- writing a report
- analyzing written sources
- analyzing song lyrics

2 LYRICS AND SONGS

2.1 Learning English through songs

According to the research of Pearson English;

Bands like "The Beatles" and "One Direction" are the best for learning English. Common words and phrases are present in all songs but in previous mentioned are by far the most. One of many reasons to learn English from songs and music is because it really works. There is a scientific proof that it does. But that isn't the only reason. Here are some more reasons for learning English that way. (Adapted from www.fluentu.com / 6. 1. 2017)

1. Everyday language and colloquial speech:

Songs almost always contain a lot of useful phrases, expressions. You can expand your vocabulary just through listening to music.

2. Get familiar with the sound of English:

By listening to songs you hear the pronunciation and that is stuck in your head for the rest of your life but it is up to you if you choose to use it.

3. Get English inside your head:

As mentioned in previous reason the words and phrases get stuck in your head.

4. Songs are emotional:

There is not much to say except that the music is the key to unlock our emotions, influences and our moods. It enhances our physical well-being. If something is emotional it sticks in our head for a longer time that just plain text would.

5. Music is an easy habit:

Many of us enjoy listening to music. Because we enjoy it so much it sticks in your head very easily. For example, every now and then there is a hit released that is just too addictive.

6. Music teaches you English culture:

Music shows how English people think and feel.

Which skills do we improve by learning English through songs?

- Grammar,

- we learn new phrases,

- how English people think and live,

- pronunciation,

- rhythm of the language.

2.2 Errors in lyrics of popular English songs

But you should not always rely on lyrics in songs because there are errors.

That is what this research is all about.

Here are some of the most common grammar errors in lyrics. We have put them into groups according to the grammar mistake, followed by an example.

1. Wrong use of adverb/adjective

Justin Bieber – Boyfriend

Real Lyric – "If I was your boyfriend, I'd treat you good"

Correct Lyric – "If I were your boyfriend, I'd treat you well."

James Brown – I feel good

Real lyric – "I feel good."

Correct Lyric – "I feel well."

2. Wrong pronoun

Lady Gaga – Bad Romance

Real Lyric – "I want your loving, I want your revenge, you and me could write a bad romance."

Correct Lyric – "I want your loving, I want your revenge, you and I could write a bad romance."

3. Wrong form of the verb "to be"

Timbaland – The Way I Are

Real Lyric – "Can you handle me the way I are?"

Correct Lyric – "Can you handle me the way I am?"

4. Wrong use of past simple

Justin Timberlake – What Goes Around Comes Around

Real Lyric – "When you cheated girl, my heart bleeded girl."

Correct Lyric – "When you cheated, girl, my heart bled, girl."

5. Double negation

Pink Floyd – We don't need no education

Real Lyric – "We don't need <u>no</u> education"

Correct Lyric – "We don't need <u>any</u> education"

Rolling Stones – No satisfaction

Real Lyric – "I can't get <u>no</u> satisfaction"

Correct Lyric – "I can't get <u>any</u> satisfaction"

6. Present Simple tense:

John Legend – She don't have to know

Real Lyric – "She <u>don't</u> have to know"

Correct Lyric – "She <u>doesn't</u> have to know"

Justin Bieber – Love Yourself

Real Lyric – "My mama <u>don't</u> like you"

Correct Lyric – "My mama <u>doesn't</u> like you"

3 EMPIRICAL PART

3.1 Methods of our work

In the empirical part of our research paper we have used two charts from the internet site http://www.billboard.com/charts/.

We have chosen the pop songs' chart adapted on the 24th of December 2016 and rock songs' chart adapted on the 7th of January 2017. The first chart included 40 songs, the second one included 30 songs. We have presented the frequency, the number and the type of error in two charts.

We focused on the errors in every single song and wrote down the type of error. We also presented the most typical types of errors.

In the next step we have used a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of seven questions that were given to pupils of sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth class.

For the analyses we used 107 returned questionnaires; 26 pupils from the sixth, 23 pupils from the seventh, 31 from the eighth and 27 from the ninth class.

We checked the answers and presented them in various graphs. In that way we found out how aware pupils are of the errors in lyrics of English songs.

In the following chapters we will present the results of both methods.

3.2 Analyzed errors in songs

Chart 1: Errors in pop songs

Artist	Title	Error(s) - type	The error/errors

Ariana Grande Featuring Nicki Minaj	Side To Side:	Yes
		Non standard use
			Doesn't matter, 'cause you give me temptation...(more mistakes like that one)//
			//tryna//
			// Makin' everybody think that we solo...
			And more...

The Chainsmokers ft. Halsey	Closer	No	/
The Weeknd ft.	Starboy	Yes	Cut that ivory into skinny pieces

Daft Punk		Present simple tense	Then she clean up with her face, man I love my baby
Maroon 5 feat. Kendrick Lamar	Don't Wanna Know	Yes Present simple tense	Do he do you like this, do he woo you like this? Do he lay it down for you, touch your poona like this?
Alessia Cara	Scars To Your Beautiful	Yes Present simple tense	Oh she don't see the light that's shining Deeper than the eyes can find it
DJ Snake ft. Justin Bieber	Let Me Love You	No	/
Bruno Mars	24K Magic	Yes Grammar ellipses	*...A lot...*
Hailee Steinfeld, Grey ft. Zedd	Starving	No	/
Gnash ft. Olivie O'brien	I hate you, I love you	No	/
X Ambassadors	Unsteady	Yes Present simple tense Non standard use	Cause this house don't feel like home
twenty one pilots	Heathens	No	/
Sia	The Greatest	No	/
Machine Gun Kelly & Camila Cabello	Bad Things	Yes Grammar ellipses	Ok, yeah, I'm insane But you the same
Rihanna	Love On The Brain	No	/
Nial Horan	This Town	No	/
Martin Garrix & Bebe Rexha	In The Name Of Love	No	/
Shawn Mendes	Mercy	No	/
Rae Sremmurd ft. Gucci Mane	Black Beatles	Surprisingly not	/
Fifth Harmony	That's My Girl	No	/
Adele	Water Under the Bridge	Yes Non standard use	Our love ain't water under the bridge// // Say it ain't so, say it ain't so
John Legend	Love Me Now	Yes Non standard use	If you ain't mine I'll be torn apart
The Weeknd feat. Daft Punk	I Feel It Coming	No	/

Dua Lipa	**Blow Your Mind (Mwah)**	Yes Non standard use	And tonight I'm alive, ain't a dollar sign
Zayn Malik with Taylor Swift	**I Don't Wanna Live Forever**	Yes Grammar ellipses	Been sitting eyes wide open behind these four walls, hoping you'd call
Hey Violet	**Guys My Age**	No	/
Onerepublic	**Kids**	No	/
Lukas Graham	**You're Not There**	No	/

Pitbull feat. Flo Rida & LunchMoney Lewis	**Greenlight**	Yes
		Grammar ellipses
			Give me everything you got//
			//What you waiting for?//
			// If she ready then I'm ready

Drake	**Fake Love**	Yes	*... A lot ...*
Zara Larsson	**Ain't My Fault**	Yes	*... A lot...*
Frenship & Emily Warren	**Capsize**	No	/
Britney Spears feat. Tinashe	**Slumber Party**	Yes Non standard use	We ain't gonna sleep tonigh-igh-ight
Flume ft. Tove Lo	**Say It**	No	/
Zay Hilfigerrr ft. Zayion McCall	**Juju On Dat Beat**	Yes(...)	*... A lot...*
D.R.A.M. Featuring Lil Yachty	**Broccoli**	Yes(...)	*... A lot...*
Nick Fradiani	**All On You**	No	/
Lady Gaga	**Million Reasons**	No	/
Anne-Marie	**Alarm**	Yes Non standard use	Textin' from his ex, what did you expect?
Bebe Rexha	**I Got You**	Yes Grammar ellipses	I got you

Chart 2: Errors in rock songs

Artist	Title	Error(s) - type	The error/errors
twenty one pilots	Heathens	/	/
twenty one pilots	Ride	/	/
X Ambassadors	Unsteady	Yes Grammar ellipses Present simple tense	Couse this house don't feel like home, if you love me, don't let go
Lil Wayne, Wiz Khalifa & Imagine Dragons With Logic & Ty Dolla $ign Feat. X Ambassadors	Sucker For Pain	Yes Present simple tense Non standard use	It don't matter,..., ain't got no other way
Fitz And The Tantrums	HandClap	/	/
Kaleo	Way Down We Go	/	/
The Lumineers	Ophelia	/	/
The 1975	Somebody Else	/	/
OK Go	The One Moment	/	/
Judah & The Lion	Take It All Back	/	/
Zach Williams	Chain Breaker	/	/
twenty one pilots	Heavydirtysoul	Yes Non standard use	Cause I wasn't the only,
Kings Of Leon	Waste A Moment	/	/
Highly Suspect	My Name Is Human	/	/
John Mayer	Love On The Weekend	/	/
twenty one pilots	Cancer	/	/
Green Day	Still Breathing	/	/

The Lumineers	**Cleopatra**	/	/
Blink-182	**She's Out Of Her Mind**	/	/
Five Finger Death Punch	**I Apologize**	/	/
Queen	**Bohemian Rhapsody**	/	/
The xx	**On Hold**	/	/
Metallica	**Atlas, Rise!**	/	/
Rag'n'Bone Man	**Human**	/	/
Ghost	**Square Hammer**	/	/
The Lumineers	**Sleep On The Floor**	Yes Present simple tense	<u>If the sun don't shine</u>
Bishop Briggs	**Wild Horses**	/	/
Empire Of The Sun	**High And Low**	/	/
The Revivalists	**Wish I Knew You**	/	/
Avenged Sevenfold	**The Stage**	/	/

Chart 1 shows the errors in pop songs and the types of errors. Chart 2 shows the errors in rock songs and the types of errors.

We found out that 19 out of 40 pop songs had an error in the lyrics, and 5 out of 30 rock songs had at least one error.

We found out that only 4 pop songs include mistakes in the present simple. There are 5 examples of grammar ellipses. There are 7 examples of non-standard uses of words that appear in the lyrics (*cause you give me temptation, we ain't gonna sleep*).

We found out that only 4 rock songs have grammar errors. 3 of them have Present simple errors and 3 of them have non-standard uses of words (*It don't matter, ain't got no other way).*
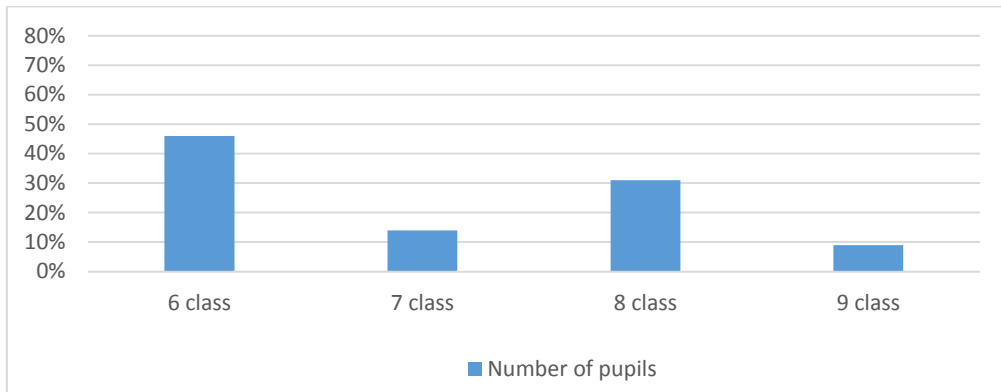
3.3 Results of the questionnaire

How do you learn English?
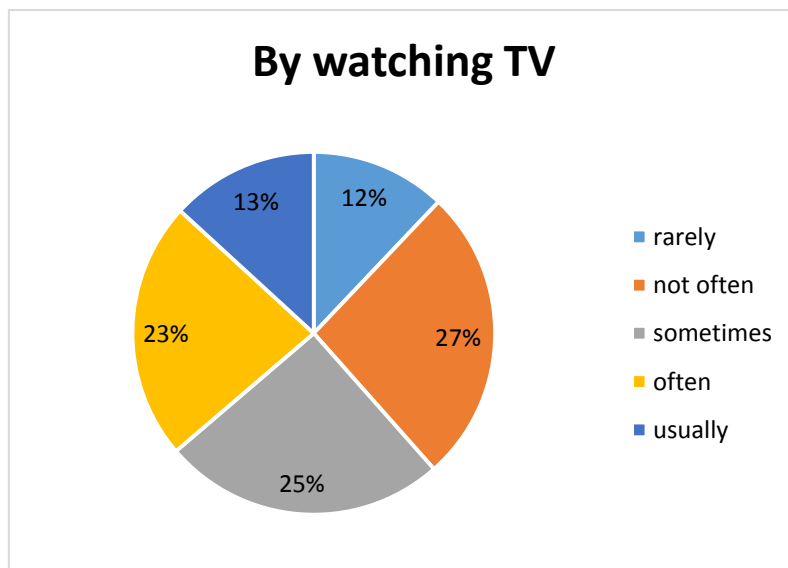
Graph 1: The frequency of learning English at school
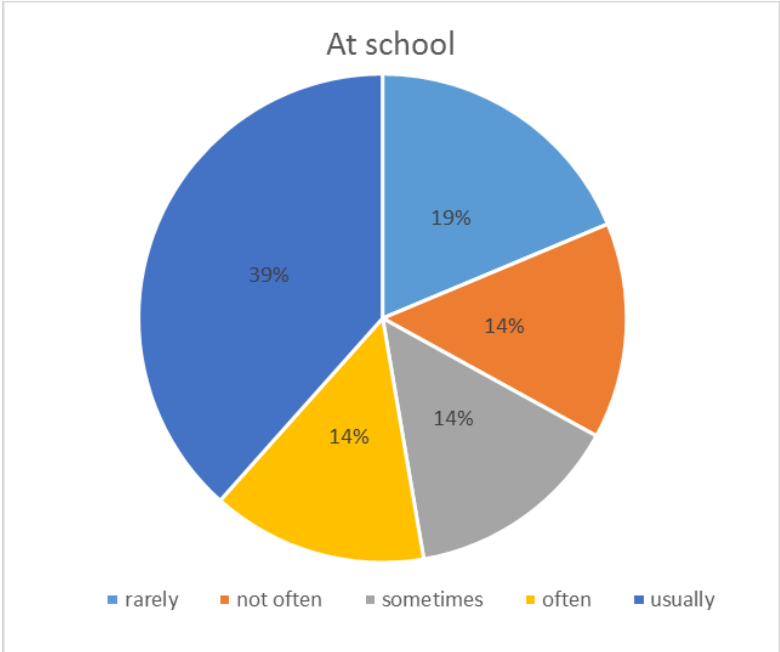
From the 107 returned questionnares 91 were valid. The first garph shows that 39% of all respondents usually learn English at school.

Graph 2: Pupils who usually learn English at school

As seen in the second graph, almost half of pupils (46%) who usually learn English at school are from the sixth class.

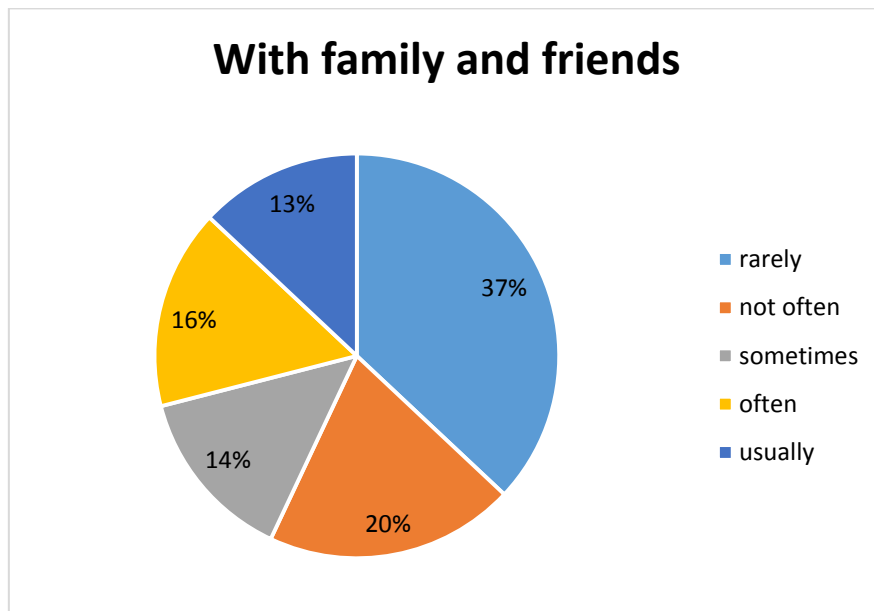Graph 3: The frequency of learning English by watching TV

The graph above shows that gaining knowledge by watching TV is neither the most frequent nor the least frequent way.

Graph 4: The frequency of learning English by listening to music

By listening to music

12% rarely
30% not often
25% sometimes
25% often
8% usually
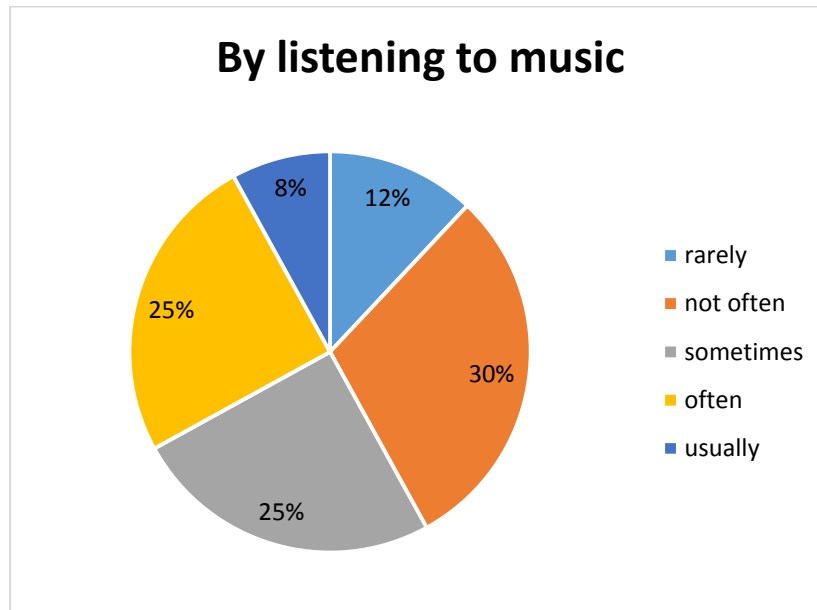
Graph 4 shows that listening to music is not a very frequent way of learning English. 30 % of all pupils answered that this is a way of learning they do not use often. Only 8 % claimed that it is a usual activity.

Graph 5: The frequency of learning English with family and friends

With family and friends

37% rarely
20% not often
14% sometimes
16% often
13% usually

From the fifth graph we can see that pupils rarely learn English with family and friends, only 13% claim that it is the most frequent way.
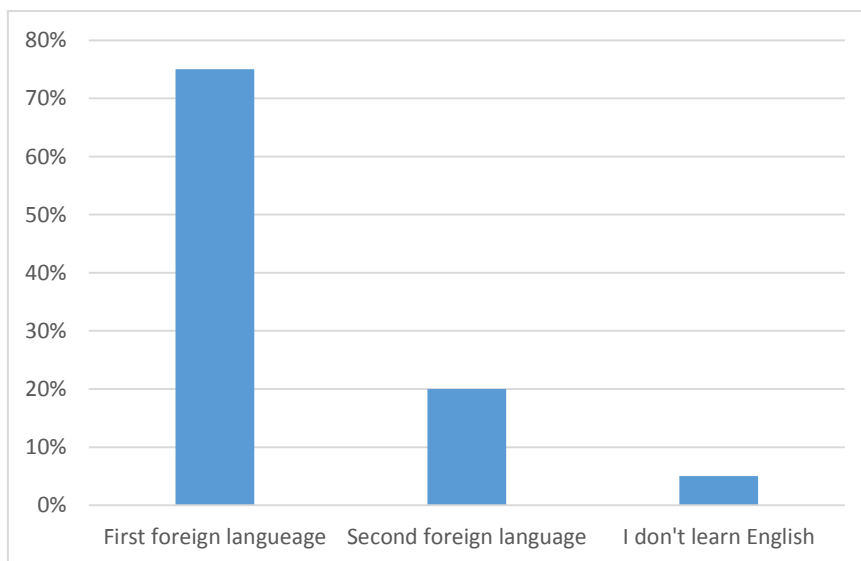
Graph 6: The frequency of learning English with the use of internet

With the use of internet
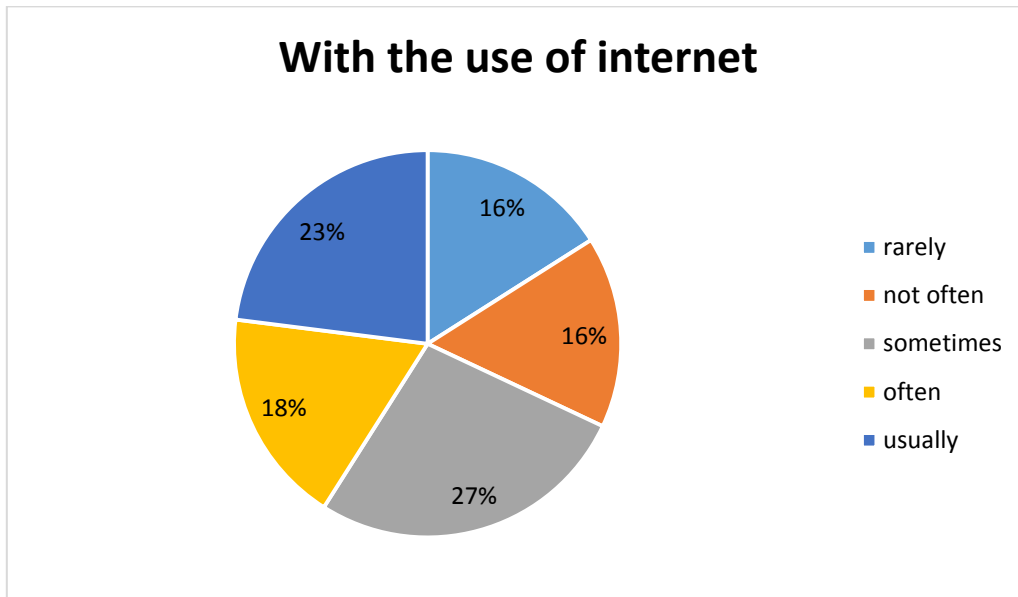
As seen from graph 6, that almost a third of all respondents sometimes use the internet for learning English.

Do you learn English as the first foreign language, as the second foreign language or you don't learn English?

Graph 7: English as first and second foreign language

The majority of pupils learn English as a first foreign language. 75% of pupils take English at school as the first foreign language. That is why; this question is not valid for the comparison

of pupils who learn English as the first foreign language to those who learn English as the second foreign language.

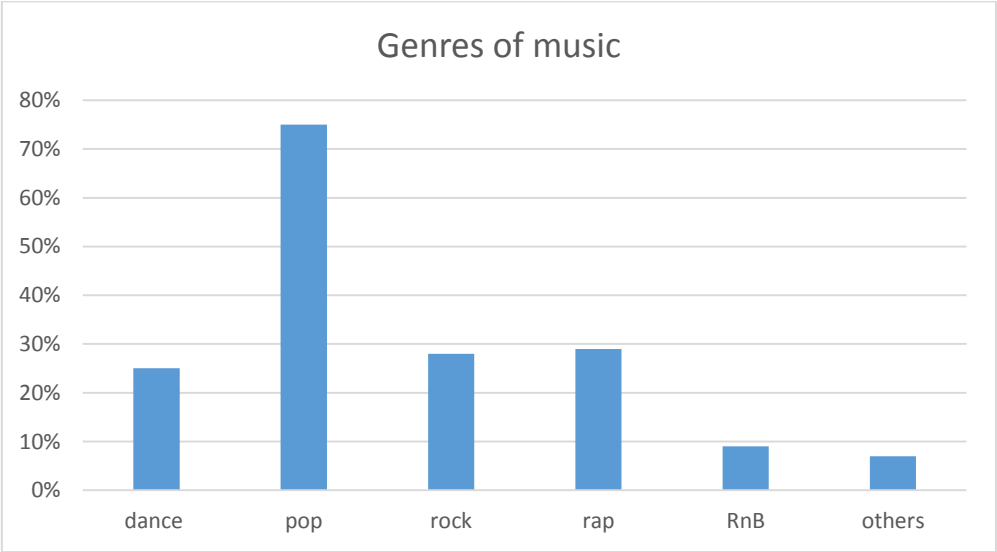**Do you listen to songs of English interpreters?**

Graph 8: Listening to English songs
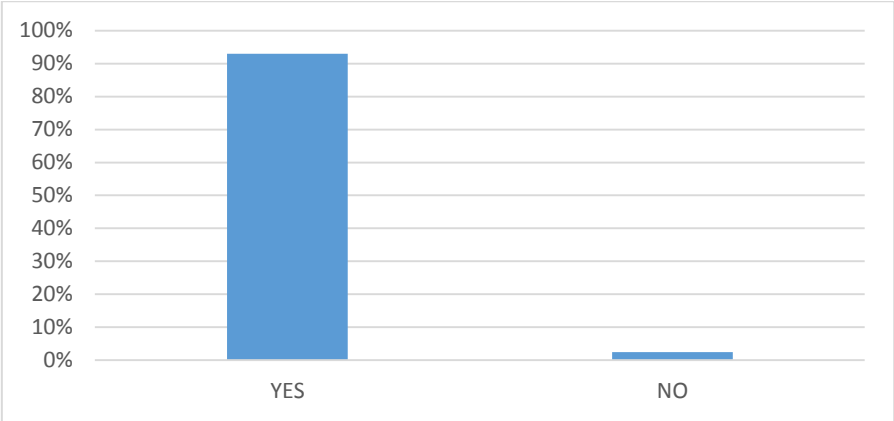
Graph 8 shows that the majority of pupils (93%) listen to songs of English interpreters.

What genres of music do you listen to?

Graph 9: Popularity of genres among pupils

Others: hip-hop (2) classic (1) all kinds (1) metal (3) electro (1)

The graph above shows that 75% of pupils listen to pop music. The popularity of rap, rock and dance is equally distributed (29%, 28%, 25%). Among other genres, eight pupils listed hip-hop, metal, classic, electro music.

Do you hear errors when you listen to songs?

Graph 10: Recognizing errors when listening to songs
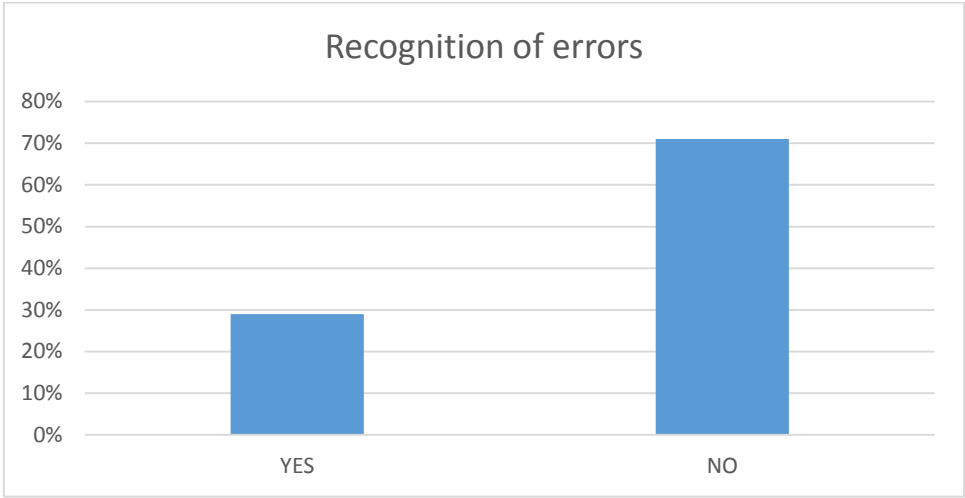
Graph 10 shows that only 29% pupils claim that they recognize errors while listening to songs. 71% pupils believe that they do not recognize errors while listening to songs.

Find the grammar mistakes in the following lines of popular English songs.

Graph 11: Number of recognized mistakes in the examples of English lyrics.

Graph 11 shows the comparison of finding mistakes of pupils from 6th and 7th class and pupils from 8th and 9th class.

We can see that not even one of the pupils from 6th and 7th class found all ten mistakes. Only one pupil recognized eight mistakes. More than half of the pupils (51%) did not recognize any mistakes.

25% of pupils from 8th and 9th class did not recognize a single mistake and not even one pupil recognized all the mistakes. 10% of pupils recognized nine from ten mistakes.

We can see that pupils from higher classes recognize more mistakes than pupils from lower classes.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of charts

These are the findings according to the results.

First hypothesis: *We assume that pop songs contain mostly errors in the Present Simple Tense.*

This hypothesis cannot be confirmed because we have found only 4 out of 19 pop songs that had an error referring to the present simple tense.

Second hypothesis: *We assume that rock songs mostly contain double negation.*

This hypothesis cannot be confirmed because we have not found many songs with errors and none of the errors was a double negation. Maybe the number of songs we used was too small and the number would be higher if we had more examples of song lyrics.

4.2 Interpretation of questionnaire results

Third hypothesis: *Pupils from 8th and 9th class recognize more errors than pupils from 6th and 7th class.*

We can confirm this hypothesis because more than half of the pupils from lower classes did not find a single mistake. This is a logical result since pupils from lower classes start learning about grammar towards the end of the 6th class. The focus is more on vocabulary and the meaning of words than on the correctness of grammar. Nevertheless, we were surprised that only 1 pupil recognized 8 errors, which leads us to the conclusion that pupils do not notice the errors even when they read the song lyrics.

Fourth hypothesis: *We assume that most pupils do not recognize mistakes while listening to songs.*

This hypothesis can be confirmed since 71% of pupils stated that they do not hear the mistake when they listen to it. It did not surprise us since we know that pupils do not focus so much on the grammar as they do on the content and the melody of the song.

Fifth hypothesis: *We assume that most pupils learn English by watching TV.*

This hypothesis cannot be confirmed because pupils claim that they learn English mostly in school and not by watching TV. This is a surprise since we have always thought that people in general learn foreign languages from the television. A possible reason for this is that there are a lot of Slovene programs and movies that are originally in English and have subtitles.

6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research paper was to found out whether pupils in primary school recognize errors in popular songs, mainly in pop and rock songs. In the theoretical part we presented some examples of most common mistakes found in English lyrics.

In the next step we put the errors into categories and listed the most common examples found by other authors.

In the empirical part we analysed one pop and one rock chart. We found out that rock songs do not contain a lot of errors, while almost half of the pop songs have different errors. We could not confirm two hypotheses that refer to this analysis.

We are aware that the result would be different if we used a bigger number of songs.

The main part of the empirical part was a questionnaire, which was carried out among pupils from 6th to 9th class (107 pupils). The findings helped us to confirm two hypotheses and reject one.

We conclude that most of pupils learn English at school, right after that the second most common way that pupils learn English is learning by using the internet.

We were surprised that listening to music is not a very common way to learn English, since almost a quarter of pupils claimed that they do not often learn from songs. Most pupils listen to English songs, mostly pop songs but the popularity of dance, rock and rap is equally distributed. RnB is less popular. Only about 30% of pupils claim they recognize mistakes in lyrics.

The majority of pupils choose English as the first foreign language and very few choose not to learn English in school in a formal way.

A lot of pupils did not recognize any mistakes in the given lyrics which leads us to the conclusion that they are not aware of the mistakes in lyrics. We have also learned that many songs would sound unusual if the authors used correct grammar and that lyrics cannot be separated from the rhyme, rhythm and melody.

In our opinion we have achieved the main aim of our research paper because now we are sure that pupils are really not aware of mistakes while they listen to songs and this kind of medium has a primary function – to entertain.

7 PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT
DRUŽBENA ODGOVORNOST

Izjavljava, da sva pri nastajanju najine raziskovalne naloge upoštevala in delovala v skladu z družbeno odgovornostjo. Upoštevala sva načela družbene odgovornosti. Predvsem sva upoštevala načelo individualne odgovornosti in zanesljivosti pri svojem delu, ter resen pristop. Svoje ugotovitve sva predstavila sošolcem pri pouku angleščine in s tem želela doseči, da še naprej poslušajo angleške pesmi, vendar z zavedanjem da se lahko v besedilih pojavljajo tudi kakšne slovnične nepravilnosti.

8 APPENDIX

Appendix A: ANKETA

Pozdravljeni,

zanima naju, ali učenci prepoznajo napake v besedilih angleških pesmi. Prosiva vas, da odgovorite na naslednja vprašanja.

1. Kateri razred obiskuješ? Obkroži.

   6.   7.   8.   9.

2. Kako se učiš angleščino? Označi s števili od 1 do 5. Najpogosteje označi s 5, najmanj pogost način pa z 1.

__ v šoli

__ s pomočjo TV

__ s pomočjo glasbe

__ v družini, s prijatelji

__ s pomočjo interneta

3. Obkroži. Angleščino se učim kot:

a) prvi tuji jezik

b) drugi tuji jezik

c) angleščine se ne učim

4. Ali poslušaš glasbo angleških izvajalcev? Obkroži.

  DA   NE

Če si na 4. vprašanje odgovoril z DA, potem prosiva, da odgovoriš na nadaljnja vprašanja.

5. Kakšno zvrst glasbe poslušaš? Obkrožiš lahko več odgovorov.

a)   Dance

b)   Pop

c)   Rock

d)   Rap

e)   RnB

f)   Drugo: _____

6. Ali prepoznaš napake v angleških pesmih, ko jih samo poslušaš?

     DA   NE

7. V naslednjih delih besedil obkroži slovnične nepravilnosti.

a)   Ok, yeah, I'm insane. But you the same

b)   Cause this house don't feel like home

c)   Our love ain't water under the bridge

d)   Give me everything you got

e)   Do he do you like this, do he woo you like this?

f)   What you waiting for?

g)   Ain't no Sunshine when she's gone

h)   We don't need no education

i)   What's Love Got To Do With It?

Hvala za tvoje sodelovanje

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