



Tune Your Mood™ for teens and learning English in Malaysia.

By: Sherrene Teh & Carmen Cheong-Clinch

Introduction.

This paper will report on Tune Your Mood™, a program specifically designed to work with young people in a school in Kuala Lumpur. Using their preferred music to engage with them, the program aimed to promote help-seeking and engagement, and to increase English language learning and proficiency.

Music and being a young person.

“Music is second nature to me”. *Cavan, 16 years old.*

Music listening and young people go hand in hand. In Australia, it is a common sight to see young people listening to music on their headphones when they are on the bus alone, or sharing music with their friends hanging out in the mall. Research tells us that they use music and modern technology such as the mp-3 player, iPod and playlist creation as a way to promote health and daily well-being (Bull, 2006; DeNora, 2000; Laiho, 2004). Music listening has also been described as a natural coping strategy for young people (Frydenberg, 2008). Various studies (Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Standley & Hughes, 1997; Bygrave, 1995) support the relationship between music activities and the development of learning processes such as reading, listening and language skills. The use of music activities, such as sharing preferred music, as an approach to instruction can encourage students to explore language learning interactively and playfully (Corke, 2002).

What is Tune Your Mood™?

Tune Your Mood™ is based on Dr Carmen Cheong-Clinch’s work and research about music and young people ranging from early learning to adolescent mental health. It uses young people’s preferred music as a way of directly engaging with them (McFerran, 2010). Tune Your Mood™ can be designed to enhance and support early to primary learning, and English language learning. It is also adapted to help children and teenagers who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Carmen’s recently completed doctoral study which examined the preferred music listening of young people with mental health struggles, found that they listened to music to identify and manage their emotions on a daily basis. Those who participated in the study reported that this engagement gave them the opportunity to be involved in their ongoing health and wellbeing.

Carmen’s previous research in music and early learning demonstrated the relationships in the learning processes of music and literacy acquisition (Cheong-Clinch, 1999). Based on children’s and young people’s affinity with music, language proficiency may be gained through their active engagement with their preferred music.



Taking Tune Your Mood™ to Malaysia.

Having grown up in the Malaysian education system, Sherrene Teh recognized that the use of music to engage with the students has not been explored. Learning about Tune Your Mood™ she immediately envisioned the feasibility of such a program conducted in the secondary public schools in Malaysia.

However, there were a number of challenges in adapting an Australian-based program in Malaysia. In Australia, Project Tune Your Mood™ is an online health resource and is conducted as a youth health promotion project. It is adapted in a music therapy service in an adolescent psychiatric unit in a public hospital, with English as the main language. The proposed program in Malaysia was to be conducted with young people, who did not have a mental illness, but were identified as at-risk in a school setting. For most people living in Malaysia, a multi-cultural and language country, English is a second language. The main similarity between the programs in both countries was the focus on young people and their preferred music.

Sherrene, having trained at The University of Melbourne, was familiar with the Australian flavour of Tune Your Mood™. Armed with this experience, she bridged and collaborated with the principal and the teachers to identify the specific aims of the school. Together with Carmen, Tune Your Mood™ was designed: to promote help-seeking and engagement, foster awareness and management of emotions, and increase English language proficiency.

Tune Your Mood™ teens and learning English was conducted as an 8-week program with 2 groups of students attending a weekly 90-minute session. Throughout the program, the students shared their songs in different languages – English, Tamil, Hindi, Japanese, Korea, Chinese. These songs provided the basis for meaningful expression and discussion about topics such as friendships, school, bullies, and relationships with family. Students were encouraged to converse in English, and discussed the appropriate use of words taken from the English songs in their everyday lives. They also used the dictionary to find the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words. The students explored the content of Project Tune Your Mood™ - a health promotion webpage, including the youth health portal Tune In Not Out (TINO) www.tuneinnotout.com/music. It was another way of practicing and increasing their command of the English language.

Adapting Tune Your Mood™.

Tune Your Mood™ began as a youth health promotion project and an online resource in the youth health portal Tune In Not Out (www.tuneinnotout.com). It has since been adapted to a clinical program in a hospital setting and outpatient facility, including - early intervention, support and psychoeducation, learning and language support in schools.



Finally the young people said:

Preferred music is used intentionally to engage with these young people. So it seems appropriate to present their voices here:

“Miss, Karesh said hi to me in school...I forgot he’s here in the same group as I am for this program!” *Yanty, 17 years old*

“So thanks to Miss Sherrrene....I’m happy, and also feel more confident!” *Naz, 16 years old*

“I feel more confident to speak in English now.” *Len, 16 years old*

“ Can you come again to do Tune Your Mood?” *Hermann, 15 years old*

“I miss our group” *Ramesh, 16 years old*

These echo the voices of young people who have participated in Carmen’s doctoral study, as well as ongoing work with young people. Using preferred music provided a meaningful and motivated engagement with the young people in this school. As a result, attendance in the Project gave them positive experiences of relating with others, an improved self-esteem and opportunities to increase their English language proficiency.

References:

- Bull, M. (2006). *Personal stereos and the management of everyday life*. Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd.
- Bygrave, P.L. (1995). Development of receptive vocabulary skills through exposure to music. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 127, 28-34.
- Cheong-Clinch, C. (2009). Music for engaging young people in education. *Youth Studies Australia*. 28(2), 50-57.
- Cheong-Clinch, C. (1999). Relationships between textual literacy and music literacy in young children. *Queensland Journal of Music Education*, 6(1), 57-63.
- DeNora, T. (2000). *Music and everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frydenberg, E. (2008). *Adolescent coping: Advances in theory, research and practice*. Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Laiho, S. (2004). The psychological functions of music in adolescence. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 13(1), 47-63.
- McFerran, K. (2010a). *Adolescents, music and music therapy: Methods and techniques for clinicians, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Standley, J. & Hughes, J. (1997). Evaluation of an early intervention music curriculum for enhancing prereading/writing skills. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 15(2), 79-85.

For citing purposes:

Teh, S. & Cheong-Clinch, C. (2014). *Tune Your Mood™ for teens and learning English in Malaysia*. [http: www.tuneyourmood.com/useful-stuff](http://www.tuneyourmood.com/useful-stuff)