

APPLYING ENGLISH SONGS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING.

AUTHORS

LIC. IRLANDA JACQUELINE MARIDUEÑA MACANCELA, MAE.

JMARIDUENAM@UNEMI.EDU.EC

LIC. BRIGITA VALERINA LEDESMA ACOSTA, MAE.

BLEDESMAA@UNEMI.EDU.EC

LIC. GRAHAM IAN STAGG

GISTAGG@UNEMI.EDU.EC

A**bstract:** The objective of this paper is to report the findings of a survey carried out with students in the Public University of Milagro to investigate the opinions regarding the use of songs in the English language learning classroom, and to make concrete proposals to help teachers in the use of this resource.

Using songs in English learning produces a series of positive reactions in the cognitive learning process, enabling meaningful learning of vocabulary, phrases, and expressions; improvements in pronunciation and more natural interaction in the classroom. This study was carried out with students in the Second Semester of different courses, for this they responded to a survey with 10 questions about the topic. A simple analysis of the result revealed that students believe that the application of songs aids lay learning by providing opportunities to learn vocabulary in context, notice grammatical structure and improve pronunciation. They also responded that the use of songs was motivating.

Drawing on these results, a number of activities are proposed to develop specific knowledge and skills and provide examples of how to design and apply them with different songs.

KEYWORDS: *songs activities - motivation - language acquisition funny worksheets*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that songs are useful tools in the process of learning English, and teachers should include them in their curriculum planning to encourage the motivation and participation of students in the classroom. When learners use English to complete activities it is more effective than memorizing; in the case of songs, the lyrics have linguistic and cultural notions, which are indispensable in the process of study.

Teachers need to consider new techniques which inspire more interest and confidence in the use of English while also providing learning opportunities. The objective of this paper is to identify ways in which the use of songs could respond to students linguistic and affective needs. In order to do this it was necessary to investigate the opinion of students and use the findings of this and the literature to propose effective strategies.

Most students are able to identify with their favorite singers and songs and that gives teachers an important tool to create opportunities to learn about the culture and customs of different peoples, so that motivation and interest in learning is achieved.

The use of songs in English permits a change in routine classroom activities providing entertainment and creating a dynamic working environment where learning feels relaxing and fun. It also prevents students sitting passively in a classroom, in contrast to this disengaged state, the use of songs can generate strong motivation to participate in classroom activities.

While songs are useful tools in the process of learning English, much depends on the extent to which teachers plan how to use them effectively. To do this they need to understand the different potential benefits such as increasing knowledge of vocabulary and grammar or providing a context to lead into a conversational skills activity. They will also need to know how to design or select and implement activities to take advantage of these possibilities

Communicative teaching offers grammatical and structural features, therefore the categories of functional and communicative meaning are more focused and for this reason the students identify with songs that contain broad language information including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

Before implementing a strategy is very important that the teacher should explain briefly about the particularity of the song, that is, who is the author or singer, which the message of the song, the grammatical structures, the vocabulary or phrases presented in this melody.

After the activity, the teacher should invites to the students to provide students revise their opinions and responses between them; this will provide meaningful

learning, acquiring skills to improve language skills and participation in the classroom.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

A good command of English enables a user to communicate effectively with citizens around the world and this is the reason that English language learning is considered a necessary and obligatory part of an Ecuadorian's education. However, many students struggle to reach this goal due to various linguistic and motivational problems.

This problem has been observed in the Public University of Milagro. Although the right to receive instruction in a foreign language is enshrined in the Law of Higher Education (Art. 124), students have commented that they feel limited by rigid styles of teaching that fail to maintain their interest.

Students of English modules at the Public University of Milagro show little interest in language learning, due to several factors among which are: motivation, vocabulary, and lack of interest in it.

They want to do varied activities that are fun, or interesting and are based on topics which they can relate to. Instead they feel stressed and mentally blocked in the classroom. This can be observed in the high rates of non-attendance and fails during each semester. In spite of different study programs that are at present on the web, students do not know their advantages or are not interested in looking for information to learn more.

Checking the files of the first semester 2014 it was observed that a population of students reprovved modules, which has generated some concert about it, since some conversation workshops were opened to motivate students in their academic preparation.

This research is adapted to support the inclusion of songs in the educational process of English language to improve the students' language skills.

3. BRIEF THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND STATE OF THE ART

Applying songs in English language learning is not a new idea; writers have long been arguing for use of song lyrics in a context for both their value as exponents of linguistic features and for the motivational interest they produce in language students (Bartle: 1962, Richards: 1969, Jolly: 1975).

According to Richards & Rodgers (2008) songs can be used for a number of purposes such as: to increase motivation and interest, to aid acquisition of language in context, to improve listening skills and even pronunciation through singing. In other words, songs can be considered a valuable pedagogical tool.

Song lyrics have linguistic and cultural notions, and it can be helpful to draw students' attention to both of these aspects. From a linguistic perspective, songs are useful tools in the learning of vocabulary, sentence structures, and sentence patterns (Murphy:1992).

Songs can be incorporated easily into a communicative teaching framework in which the goals tend to include the development of real world language skills while increasing awareness of linguistic features. Song lyrics are authentic and can function as both spoken and written texts. They can be analyzed for functional and communicative meaning from the basic gist to specific metaphorical features.

It may sometimes be useful to select lyrics that are easy to understand or make them comprehensible for the group. However it is not always necessary to focus heavily on the linguistic features. Activities that use songs can help students acquire language naturally while gaining confidence and motivation (Rios M, Wilgo: 1987).

Most students are able to identify with their favorite singers and songs and that gives teachers an important tool to create opportunities to learn about the culture and customs of different peoples, so that motivation and interest in learning is achieved.

The use of songs in English permits a change in classroom routine providing entertainment and creating a dynamic working environment where learning feels relaxing and fun. It also prevents students sitting passively and, rather than feeling disengaged, songs can engender strong feelings and motivation to participate in discussions or to sing along.

A common critique of traditional methods such as grammar-translation or audio-lingualism is that when students do not develop their language skills much through rote and repetitive learning. Nowadays many teachers do not follow a single method; that they do not want to take someone else's theories into class and apply them wholesale.

Over the years they may develop their own personal methodology, drawing from different theories and personal experience.

The specific teaching techniques a teacher uses use may vary according to her skill set and learner needs. She may decide to try to improve listening and speaking skills or in other cases explore intercultural understanding based on elements of the songs.

Later in the paper a framework is proposed for teachers to use songs effectively. This should draw on the views of students; in the next section the survey carried out in this teaching context is reported.

4. TEACHING METHODS

A method is a way of teaching which each teacher chooses it according to the necessities of the students. Some of the most commonly used methods in foreign language teaching are:

- The grammar translation-method.
- The Audio Lingual Method.
- Communicative Language Teaching.

Nowadays many teachers do not follow a single method; it means that they do not want to take someone else's theories into class and apply them wholesale. Over the years they may develop their own personal methodology, drawing from different theories and personal experience.

Since the challenge of new educational approaches cannot be absent from these requirements, it is important to incorporate new tools of information, technologies and communication in the learning platform that is presented to students and try to use it as much as possible to get better results in this educational process.

5. STRATEGIES WITH SONGS AND MUSIC

The use of songs in the English teaching classroom allows the development of skills such as listening and understanding, acquisition of new vocabulary, focus on aspects of pronunciation or the culture of English speaking countries.

The implementation of specific activities should be designed on pedagogical or andragogical grounds and fit clearly into the curriculum as this will help the student to motivate. In addition, it must be remembered that the use of songs is not dependent on age as it is applicable to all levels of study.

The incorporation of strategies and teaching techniques with songs can transform English language education in a fun way. This new type of approach is more efficient than the traditional methods where students could hardly develop their language skills and were expected to develop their competence through rote and repetitive learning.

Songs can be used in many of the same ways that teachers might use an ordinary speech recording. Modern and interesting lyrics help to make a song an appropriate classroom resource to encourage learning. As a precursor to successful learning teachers should seek to arouse learner interest through:

Motivation.- Interest in the topic or message of the lyrics or the background and life of the artist can be exploited by teachers. Often this will depend on selecting appropriate songs according to the age of the learners.

Culture.- Many students show interest in learning about other cultures and customs and that makes learning new things and practice the language more accurately.

Learning.- The teacher should be aware of the importance of different learning styles, these will be based on contrastive analysis, e-learning, vocabulary or phrases that are immersed in global fields.

There are several related to the teaching of English, such as:

- a. The audio-lingual method (ALM), based on principles of behavioral psychology.
- b. The behavioral approach that focuses on behavior.

6. METHODOLOGY

a. Delimitation of the Study Area

The total number of students studying in the English program this semester is 1345, so for this research process a survey was conducted with a total of 336 students in module two in order to obtain a sample of 25% of the population, using a descriptive, explanatory, qualitative and quantitative to show the students' opinion through a survey, it was seen as crucial for the development of this investigation. This work was done with the following formula:

$$n = \frac{(N \times p \times q)}{(N - 1) \times E^2 + p \times q}$$

$$n = \frac{(1345 \times 0,5 \times 0,5)}{(1345 - 1) \times 0,003 + 0,5 \times 0,5}$$

$$n = \frac{2,266}{336,25}$$

$$n = \frac{1344 \times 0,003 + 0,5 \times 0,5}{2,266}$$

$$n = \frac{336,25}{148,38}$$

$$n = 336$$

This work has a descriptive, qualitative and quantitative research modality and the results let the verification of the data collected through the survey, so it was possible to obtain valid conclusions of this research.

b. Sampling Design

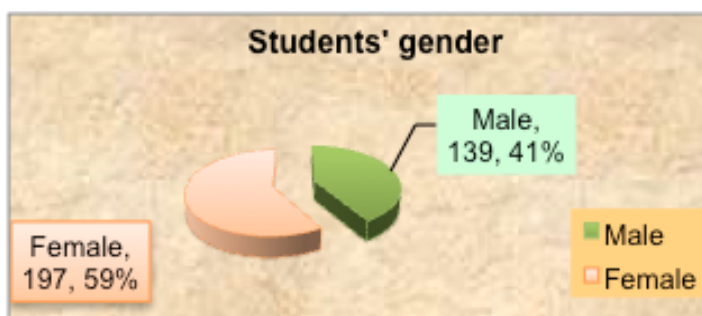
This research study generated data based on the points of view of students registered in the second module who responded to questions regarding the importance of the inclusion of lyrics as a source of meaningful language and a tool for learning. Simple random sampling was applied to select 25% of the total population.

7. RESULTS

Survey directed to students

For this work 336 students were surveyed; there were 139 men and 197 women.

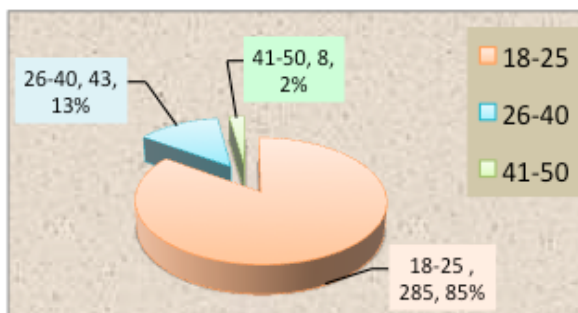
Gender	
Male	139
Female	197
	336



Source: Students of Second Modules

There was a range of ages amongst the group: 285 students were aged 18-25 43 students were aged 26-40, 8 students were aged 41-50.

Age	
18-25	285
26-40	43
41-50	8
	336



Source: Students of Second Modules

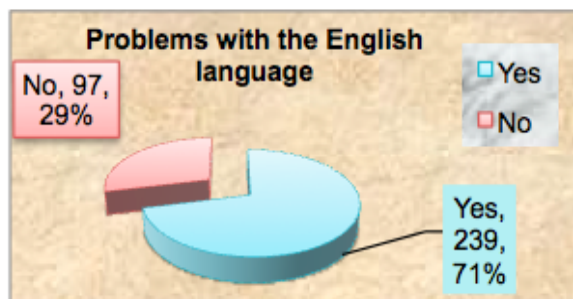
To obtain information a survey was applied to students of different modules which consisted of 10 questions related to the objectives of this research. Following each question, the results are here presented and analyzed:

Question # 1: Do you have any problems with the English language?

Table 1

Problems with the English language	
Yes	239
No	97
	336

Graph 1



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

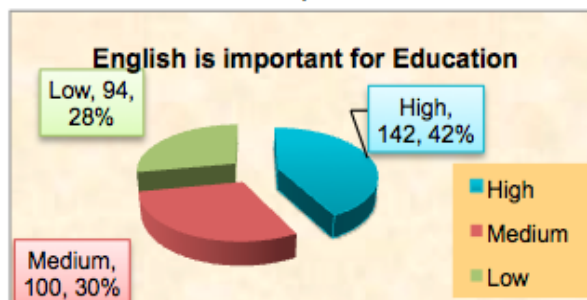
In question 1, 71% of students said they have many problems with English language learning, because 239 of them answered YES.

Question # 2: ¿How important do you believe the English language is for your education?

Table 2

English is important for Education	
High	142
Medium	100
Low	94
	336

Graph 2



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

In this question, 42% of those surveyed recognized that English has high importance, 30% of them indicated that this language has medium level of importance and 28% of them said that English has a low level of importance. This result allows us to verify that students are actually aware of the significance of this language.

Question # 3: Do you like English songs?

Table 3

Like English songs	
Yes	286
No	50
	336

Graph 3



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

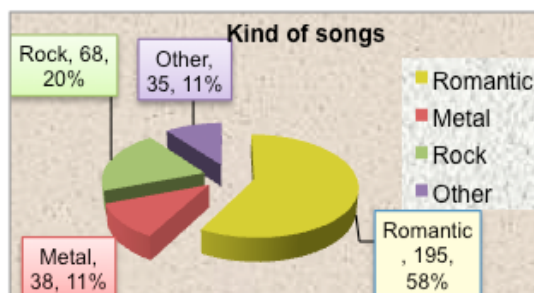
88% of students indicated their attraction for songs in English because 286 of them answered YES. For this reason it is important the application of songs on teaching English to students to improve their vocabulary.

Question # 4: What kind of songs would you like to learn in English?

Table 4

Kind of songs	
Romantic	195
Metal	38
Rock	68
Other	35
	336

Graph 4



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

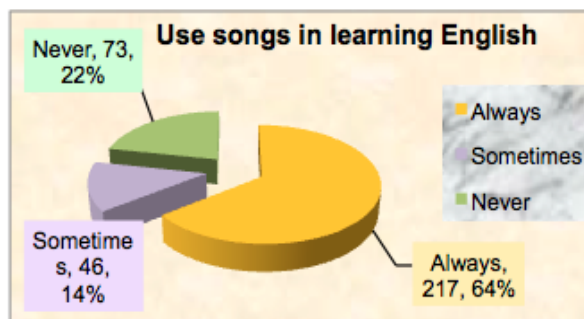
In this question, 58% of students mentioned that they would like to learn romantic songs in English, while 20% said they like rock music and only 11% said they would like another type of music. This result allows the application of songs in the learning process of the students.

Question # 5: How often do you think the teacher should use songs in the English language?

Table 5

Use songs in learning English	
Always	217
Sometimes	46
Never	73
	336

Graph 5



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

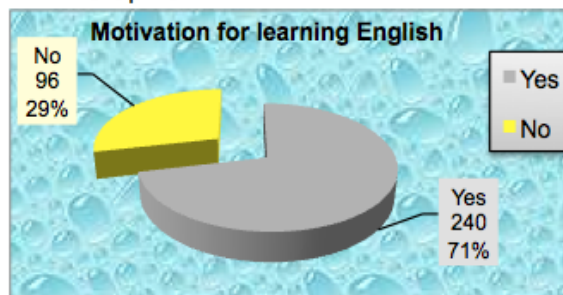
In question 5, 64% of students affirmed that teachers should always use songs in the classroom to improve vocabulary, pronunciation, which will help them to lose the fear to interact in class, while 14% said that teachers often have to use them.

Question # 6: Would you like to have any motivation for learning English?

Table 6

Motivation for learning English	
Yes	240
No	96
	336

Graph 6



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

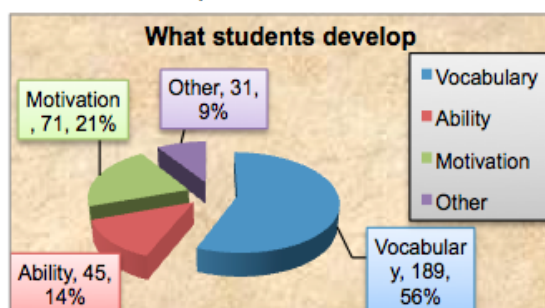
Mostly students mentioned that they would like to be motivated to develop different language skills and highlighted the importance of the teacher is motivated to teach their classes thus creating an atmosphere of confidence providing quality and warmth in the classroom.

Question # 7: What will you develop if your teacher applies songs in the learning process of the module?

Table 7

What students develop	
Vocabulary	189
Ability	45
Motivation	71
Other	31
	336

Graph 7



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

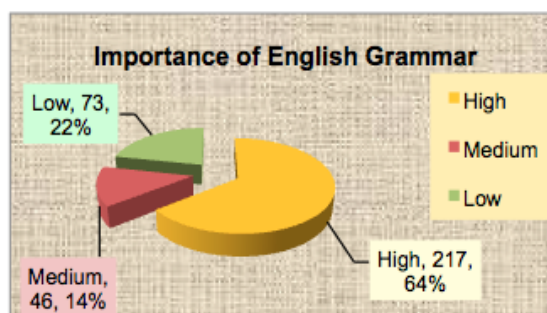
56% of respondents indicated that they would improve vocabulary, 21% said they will acquire motivation, and 14% ability to develop activities, which determines the need to include the use of songs as part of teaching English in order to students improve their learning.

Question # 8 What level of importance do you think the English grammar has to be able to communicate effectively?

Table 8

Importance of English Grammar	
High	217
Medium	46
Low	73
	336

Graph 8



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

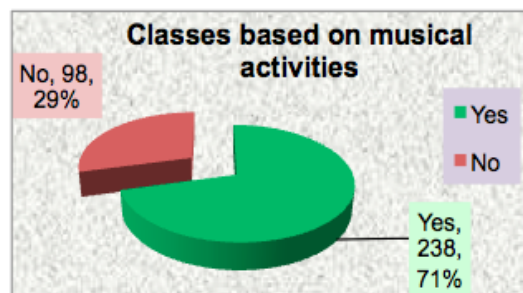
In Question 8, 64% of students showed that grammar is essential part of learning English language and therefore teachers should incorporate songs and other activities to encourage students to getting motivated and feel interested in learning this language.

Question # 9: Would you like classes based on musical activities to be more active and dynamic than typical classes?

Table 9

Classes based on musical activities	
Yes	238
No	98
	336

Graph 9



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

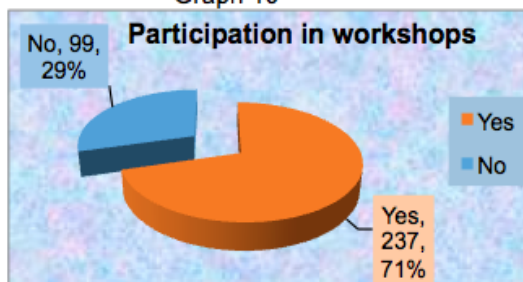
71% of students said they are interested in learning to be active, dynamic, and participative to help improve understanding of the English language. Moreover, they think that with technological advances teachers should be prepared to give a high-level education in line with current requirements.

Question # 10: How often would you like to participate in workshops where songs are given to reinforce vocabulary and pronunciation?

Table 10

Participation in workshops	
Yes	237
No	99
	336

Graph 10



Source: Students of Second Modules

Analysis

In question 10, 71% of students showed that are interested in workshops where different activities to be conducted to improve the learning of English language.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research show the need to make changes in the educational model incorporating a variety of songs that will help to increase the vocabulary and pronunciation of the students.

English language learners need to learn vocabulary and the correct pronunciation to interact inside and outside the classroom; this requires that the teacher has to use resources that develop this knowledge while also improving the interest and motivation of students. In some cases, students demonstrate insecurity to interact in class due to a lack of vocabulary and pronunciation, which produces dissatisfaction because they cannot find a way to exchange ideas and improve their academic performance. There fore, it is necessary for teachers to seek solutions to this problem by incorporating fun activities such as songs, stories, videos that capture the attention of students and interest of English.

This proposal is to provide ideas to the teachers to develop musical activities with their students to improve motivation and interest in them:

- a) Present of the author of the song.- The teacher will briefly say something about the author of the song.
- b) Matching Pictures.- Students will identify pictures with the vocabulary found in the worksheet activity.
- c) Filled text.- Students will complete the blanks with the song.
- d) Crossword.- This activity is essential for learning vocabulary about the lyrics of the song. The students will complete it with the most common vocabulary used in the song.
- e) Mix song.- Students will analyze the order of the lyrics of the song according to the audio and then they can enjoy it during the class.
- f) Listening comprehension.- With this activity, students will listen to the song and then they will recognize the main idea of it.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential that students learn vocabulary in English through different activities and song lyrics can play an important role.

It is fundamental that students have a rich range of teaching resources that enable them to improve their English; it is extremely useful for teachers to develop these materials as they know the needs and interests of their learners better than any coursebook.

Similarly, continuous self-reflection and professional development is recommended to teachers as means to considering how to best articulate and achieve the objectives of each module.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Baoan, W. (2008). Application of Popular English Songs in EFL Classroom Teaching. Wang Baoan, China: ISSN.
2. Council, B. (2009). www.britishcouncil.org.br/download/labci/The-teaching-of-English-in-Mexico.doc, Recuperado el 20/07/2013
3. De Oliveira Pin, E. C. (12/02/2008). http://www.academia.edu/6936308/TEACHING_ENGLISH_WITH_SONGS_A_POWERFUL_PEDAGOGICAL_RESOURCE. Recuperado el 10 de 06 de 2014, de http://www.academia.edu/6936308/TEACHING_ENGLISH_WITH_SONGS_A_POWERFUL_PEDAGOGICAL_RESOURCE.
4. Ejército, U. E. (16 de 5 de 2008). <http://www.ces.gob.ec/descargas/reglamento-general-de-la-ley-organica-de-educacion-superior>. Recuperado el 10 de 11 de 2013, de biblioteca.espe.edu.ec/upload/2008.pdf: biblioteca.espe.edu.ec/upload/2008.pdf
5. Hammer, J. (2008). How to teach english. London: Pearson Education Limited.
6. Jim, S. (2009). Learning Teaching. UK: Macmillan education.
7. María, S. D. (2008). 700 Classroom activities. Thailand: Macmillan education.
8. Universitaire, A. (17 de 09 de 2009). <http://www.memoireonline.com/09/10/3914/The-impact-of-songs-and-games-in-english-language-teaching.html>. Recuperado el 15 de 10 de 2014, de <http://www.memoireonline.com/09/10/3914/The-impact-of-songs-and-games-in-english-language-teaching.html>.
9. Horn, C. A. (2007). Using Music to Enhance the Listening Abilities of Grade One. SOUTH AFRICA: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

ANNEX 1 PROPOSAL

