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A strategy based on music activities to promote motivation in a public school

Una estrategia basada en actividades musicales para promover la motivación en una escuela pública

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest challenges educators deal with nowadays is to find creative ways This study used music and songs as a motivational tool in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design. To collect data; a questionnaire was conducted to assess whether the use of musical activities in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom affects students' motivation to acquire vocabulary. The findings of this research are intended to be an open door for those educators who are looking for ways to motivate students through the use of music activities and could provide some practical suggestions for integrating music lesson activities into the EFL teaching area.

Descriptors: Language instruction; motivation; music. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Este estudio utilizó la música y las canciones como instrumento de motivación en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Este estudio utilizó un diseño descriptivo transversal. Para recopilar datos; Se realizó un cuestionario para evaluar si el uso de actividades musicales en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) afecta la motivación de los estudiantes para adquirir vocabulario. Los hallazgos de esta investigación pretenden ser una puerta abierta para aquellos educadores que están buscando formas de motivar a los estudiantes mediante el uso de actividades musicales y podrían brindar algunas sugerencias prácticas para integrar las actividades de lecciones de música en el área de enseñanza de EFL.

Descriptores: Enseñanza de idiomas; motivación; música. (Tesauro UNESCO).

INTRODUCTION

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Motivation is an essential element when someone is studying because it helps to overcome whatever type of difficulty or mishap, thereby, motivation determines the level of energy that someone invests in a given situation (Carrillo et al. 2009), (Krashen, 1982), states that if students are well motivated, have self-confidence, and maintain their anxiety low, they may succeed in second language acquisition. According to (Cassany et al. 2003), there is a very close relationship between motivation and music, in such a way, singing songs in class may awaken in students the taste for reading, writing, and practicing correct pronunciation. In addition, this is a pleasant activity that teachers and students may enjoy.

Music is an important part of our daily lives. We may hear it when we are happy, sad, doing exercise, studying, working, taking a nap, and so forth. According to (Lopez, 2011), music has been present in humans' lives for a long time, and when it is listened to by people, they can identify its rhythm and express their emotions freely. Ritter and Ferguson (2017) say that one important aspect of music is that it contains songs that are fun and may keep the listener excited. Studies such as "The role of music in second language learning" by Somaye (2018), "Using Music to Promote L2 Learning Among Adult Learners" by (Abbott, 2002) have shown that certain types of songs can affect emotions in various ways; for instance, if somebody is sad, songs may change their attitude into a positive outcome, on the contrary, if someone is happy, songs may change them into a negative mood. Džanić and Pejić (2016) bring out an important characteristic of songs that they can be repeated, and as they contain language patterns through them teachers or caregivers may develop listening skills, pronunciation, rhythm, and provide a fun atmosphere of teaching. These authors point out that if teachers play songs many times in the classroom, most of the students may not get bored because songs are beneficial kinds of activities and through their use, many features of any language may be delivered and recycled. According to (Bokiev et al. 2018), one of the biggest challenges English teachers face in their classes every day is to seek out creative practices to maintain

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students' attention and interest in language learning. These authors state that music and songs are from universal knowledge, and they are part of most people's daily lives; moreover, music and songs have the requisites to be an effective teaching tool to enhance motivation and become the appropriate mechanism to learn a new language. The same authors declare that if the right songs are chosen and applied and in a well-lesson plan; they can turn into useful tools for language teaching and learning in such a way that learners may have a fun and memorable experience in the classroom. Even though there are many articles such as "Application of Popular English Songs in EFL Classroom Teaching" by (Baoan, 2008), "Learning English through music in the digital age" by (Lems, 2016), "Modeling of Music Recommendation Methods to Promote the User's Singing Motivation" by (Isogai & Nakanishi, 2013) applying the use of music in the classroom, most of them have been handled with adults from university environments in countries like the USA and Asia. (Aguirre et al. 2016) mention in their article "Influence of Songs in Primary School Students' Motivation for Learning English in Lima, Peru" that there is a lack of studies with early-young learners and there is no guide research for teachers to implement music in their classes to promote motivation, especially in learners who are completely unmotivated to learn English.

As teachers, it is known that implementing in-class activities to motivate students is grueling. Nevertheless, music has become an important tool to motivate them (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017). In this sense, this study aimed to analyze:

What are EFL young students' perceptions on the use of English songs to promote motivation in class?

How can the use of songs in English change the taste for learning on EFL students' perceptions?

In addition, it may provide some practical suggestions for integrating music activities into the area of EFL teaching.

Theoretical Framework

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(Gardner 1983) proposed a new definition of intelligence that created a revolution in classrooms around the world. It is called the Theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner theory submits a new understanding of "intelligence." Linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence are well-recognized because these emphasize reading, writing, and math; however, this author included other intelligences such as spatial, musical, physical-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. According to Emst-Slavit (2001), this new way of viewing human intelligence had deep effects on educators who had to identify and nurture the talents that arrive in their classrooms. In addition (Gardner, 2011) stated that one of the most important educational objectives of his idea is that concepts and skills should be learned distinctively thereby the instructor could use as many intelligences as possible to develop a particular one; even though language teachers may not be interested in developing musical intelligence whatsoever, they could take advantage of students' musical intelligence to help them achieve the target language. According to Colwell and Davidson (1996), utilizing music to achieve a goal in the classroom can produce students' motivation, sympathy for others, and self-awareness in such a way students may reduce procrastination, avoid boredom and have more peer interaction.

As motivation might play an important role in the acquisition of the second language the Monitor Model and in particular the Affective Filter Hypothesis focuses special attention on learners' emotional states and maintains several numbers of affective variables, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen,1982). Moreover, this author states that strong motivation, high self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety in learners will lead to success in second language acquisition. On the contrary, if learners suffer lowered self-esteem and feel extremely anxious, their affective filter will rise and the process of language input will be avoided, which will fail in language acquisition (Krashen,1982). According to this theory, one of the most important aspects of the affective filter is that it has to be low to succeed in second language acquisition (Ajibade & Ndubuda, 2008)

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mentioned that singing songs is a good resource for motivation and has a positive impact on students' learning attitudes, and they can take more risks to produce and acquire the target language.

Literature Review

Music and language

Kuśnierek (2016) says that since history exists, language and art have been integrated as one and on many occasions, art has been a tool to transmit a lot of concrete and abstract ideas (Maess & Koelsch, 2001), state that even though music and language have distinct ways of communication, they develop in the same part of the brain. As music energizes many parts of the brain, using songs to teach in English as a Second language (ES)/EFL class could help to build a lively, interactive, and stimulating environment for language learning (Lems, 2016). According to (Gardner, 2011), the first intelligence in being developed is the musical among the others; then, it establishes parallelism with linguistic intelligence. In addition (Ayotte, 2005) claims that there is a close relationship between music and language because they share some intrinsic features, such as volume, pitch, rhythm, tone, stress, and pauses; in that way, both depend on the hearing system and are interlinked, therefore, they are the first intelligences to develop before the production of speech. (Fonseca, 2000) has suggested that language has musicality, and it gives a good scenario for the process of learning sounds by improving fluency through imitation and developing awareness of sounds, rhythms, and intonations. The author says that musicality in speech has a big impact not only on the speaking skills of EFL classrooms but also on the development of the language acquisition process. Therefore, music could be a good tool to promote the acquisition of new vocabulary in an EFL classroom thereby students may get the right pronunciation and learn new structures of speech (Kuśnierek, 2016).

Music and Songs in Motivation

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Even though many studies are focused on the benefits of using songs and music to teach English such as "Teaching English Rhythm by Using Songs" by (Tuan & Viet An, 2010), "The Role of Music in Second Language Learning" by (Samoye, 2018), "Learning English through music in the digital age" by (Lems, 2016) and so forth; only a few studies that focus on motivation were found. Therefore, it would be important to mention that motivation plays an essential role in learning (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, it is imperative to say that not all students want to learn a new language, some of them might not have a positive attitude toward learning it, which means they have a negative predisposition (Sigurðardóttir, 2012). Therefore, it is important to be aware of new ways to motivate English learners. This study evaluates students' perceptions on the use of songs to establish a friendly relationship inside the classroom because music raises students' interest while they are singing (Iantorno & Papa, 1979), (Krashen, 1982), says that motivation is absolutely important in the learning process consequently popular songs might play a decisive way to touch learners' lives and many popular songs are related to learners' interests such as friendship, love, dream, sorrow, and others, which are very common among teens (Kuśnierek, 2016). According to Baoan (2008), if learners are exposed more time to popular music in the English language in the classroom, the learners' motivation could increase in a way that classroom tasks would get better and arise in the acquisition of new vocabulary (Noerhidayat, 2020) mentions that learners with strong motivation may recognize the importance of English in the world in an ESL/EFL class.

English popular songs may shift the routine of EFL classroom activities by providing a positive atmosphere and creating fun for learners (Murphey, 1992). According to (Domoney & Harris, 1993), singing English songs provides an entertaining and relaxing environment thereby learning English using songs might give an unthreatening atmosphere for learners, in that way, those who usually feel nervous or shy in speaking English classroom settings, English songs may add strong motivation to participate in the

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classroom activities (Hock, 2001) states that English songs deliver authentic and real-life materials which help learners understand the real language. In addition (Yano & Shūhei, 2008), uttered that English songs activities provide a meaningful context, background, and through them, learners feel encouraged to use their knowledge to express their own opinions; consequently, teachers will be able to enrich their class by adding more content and building a good relationship with his/her students as well.

The Role of Music in Second Language Learning

Music activities have a good influence on the acquisition of the English language and as reported by teachers around the world, the majority of learners love to sing; in this sense, songs can be used to teach concepts and language in a fun way (Džanić & Pejić, 2016) (Huy Le, 2007), revealed that songs and music have a huge importance in the ESL classroom because learners appreciate English songs and teachers can use them to improve speaking, listening, reading, and writing. There are many reports from teachers of South Africa (Puhl, 1989), Mexico (Domoney & Harris, 1993) Taiwan (Katchen, 1988), Japan (Moriya, 1988), United States (Baez, 1993), Canada (Magahay-Johnson, 1984) and others that support the use of music and its importance in the area of teaching. Indeed, from all studies mentioned above, ESL/EFL teachers take into account that music helps to motivate learners, enlivens the classroom, fosters enthusiasm, gives fun experiences, and classroom anecdotes. There might be many reasons for using songs in classrooms, particularly those that have smooth and paused rhythms. According to (Murphey, 1990) analysis, popular songs use a common language that is associated with the comprehension of a 9-year-old learner native English speaker; thus, the vocabulary managed in the English songs is suitable for beginners' English learners. This author also states that the lyrics of the songs are shown in a repetitive structure and the vocabulary usually has common words with straightforward phrases.

How to Teach a Song

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(Kuśnierek, 2016) said that every teacher may have their own interest and purpose in using songs in the lessons (Abbott, 2002) mentioned that the key to successfully using songs is their implementation in the L2 classrooms which means that the presentation and activities have to fit young learners' interests and the proficiency of the language. According to Džanić and Pejić (2016), when teachers are using songs in the classroom, it is important not to teach grammar structures instead to let learners discover the language structures on their own. These researchers point out that language should be presented in a way that the learners' prior knowledge may attach to the future ones.

While doing this a "Questioning Cycle "occurs which explains how learners process the new language vocabulary in a song (Paul, 1996). According to the same author, learners first recognize new vocabulary in a song, as it is needed for the activity; they memorize and understand the words by finding out their meanings, then, learners use this new vocabulary and connect it to the prior one to foster a willingness to learn and positive attitude towards the target language. Džanić and Pejić (2016) point out some stages that should be followed to achieve the learning goal as well as to attain the intellectual and personal necessities for each learner. The same authors explain that teachers must prepare a well-designed lesson plan to avoid boredom from learners for the listening activity. They describe that the pre-listening stage, which is the first one, creates a purpose for listening to motivate learners to participate actively in it. In this phase, teachers present the vocabulary needed and get the attention of learners' imaginations. The second stage called while-listening comprises activities to process the information learned in the pre-listening part. Finally, in the post-listening stage learners use the learned information to focus on developing skills such as speaking or writing and to review their understanding after the completion of the lesson.

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METHODOLOGY

Study Design

As this study is a descriptive one, it used a Descriptive Cross-sectional Design (Creswell et al. 2003). Furthermore, this study collected data from many different learners at a single point in time, and learners answered different kinds of questions. According to the authors, this descriptive cross-sectional design helps to analyze the common points between variables at one time, it is easy to conduct, it permits to find multiple outcomes and it is suitable for descriptive analysis.

Participants

The participants of this study were students from a public school in Cuenca Ecuador from third, fourth, and seventh grade. The sample consisted of 173 participants. Half percent of them were from downtown while the other half percent were from the outskirts of the city. The average age was from 7 to 12 years old. 67,2 % were male while 32,8% were female. The criterion to be part of this study was to be enrolled in the third, fourth, and seventh grade of school in this particular Cuenca school. Regarding ethical concerns, firstly, the researcher asked the principal of the institution for consent. Secondly, a consent form was sent to the students' parents to be signed and finally, students were asked to participate voluntarily. Students were informed of the results of the investigation and were granted anonymity.

Instrument

To evaluate students' perceptions of the use of English songs to promote motivation in the EFL classroom, this study used a questionnaire. It was adapted from the Semantic Differential Scale (SDS) whose creator was Charles Egerton Osgood (Zakharenko, 2020), and taken from a study called Influence of Songs in Primary School Students' Motivation for Learning English in Lima, Peru by (Aguirre et al. 2016). It was adapted in order to

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measure emotional attitudes and allowed the researcher to know how students feel about certain scenarios related to music activities in the class.

Procedure

This study started with some sample classes at the beginning of the module. The classes consisted to follow the sequence of a listening activity with a pre-listening activity, a while-listening activity, and a post-listening activity. Students had the opportunity to guess what the song would be about in the pre-listening section. After that, the teacher presented the topic of the day and gave some new vocabulary words. Then, a song related to the topic was presented in the while-listening section and students had to practice parts of the song. Finally, students had to sing part of the song on the post-listening section while they were practicing pronunciation, grammar structure, vocabulary, and listening comprehension.

As a second part of the study, a questionnaire was adapted from (Aguirre et al. 2016) questionnaire and carried out with the third, fourth, and seventh grade students. Regarding the data analysis, it was collected on google forms,173 students answered the questionnaire. Subsequently, it was put on an excel document to upload on the SPSS 21 (Statistics Editor) Finally, the data analysis was presented.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by SPSS 21 (descriptive statistics) In the first part, descriptive statistics were used for mean, frequency, and standard deviation. The study group was the independent variable while the results obtained were the dependent variable.

Table 1 presents the students' perception about English language learning after receiving some sample classes, as a result of the question "Do you like English?" 72.8% of the students answered, "a lot" while 23,1% answered "more or less," 3,5% answered a little and 0,6% answered nothing. This result might be because as mentioned by (Baoan,

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2008), (Colwell & Davidson, 2015), (Emst-Slavit, 2001), (Iantorno & Papa, 1979), (Lems, 2016) if learners are exposed to popular music in the English language in the classroom, the learners' motivation could increase in a way that classroom tasks would get better and arise in the acquisition of new vocabulary.

Table 1.
Do you like English?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
	Nothing	1	,6	,6	,6
	A Little	6	3,5	3,5	4,0
Validity	More or less	40	23,1	23,1	27,2
	A Lot	126	72,8	72,8	100,0
	Total	173	100,0	100,0	

English songs may be an important factor to increase the passion for the English language. Table 2 reveals the frequency and percentage of the question "Do you think it is important to learn English?" the percentage of students who answered "Yes, it is very important" is 54,3% being the highest while 45,1% answered "Yes" and only 0,6% answered "No" This result shows that more than 99,4% answered positively. It might be because most of the learners after receiving listening sample classes enjoy and recognize the importance of English in a globalized world (Noerhidayat, 2020).

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Table 2.
Do you think it is important to learn English?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validity	Yes, it is very important	94	54,3	54,3	54,3
	Yes	78	45,1	45,1	99,4
	A Little	1	,6	,6	100,0
	Total	173	100,0	100,0	

Table 3 presents the frequency and the percentage of the question "Do you like your English class?" after receiving some sample classes. 82,7% said they liked "a lot" while 12,7% said they liked "more or less," 3,5% said they liked, "a little" and only 1,2% said they did not like. The researcher asked "Why do you think this about your English class? Among the positive answers students stated that "It is fun," "I like singing while I learn English," "I like learning English", all these positive answers might be because music provides motivation, in this regard, Džanić and Pejić (2016) said that motivation needs to be built gradually and music is a perfect instrument to accomplish this task. however, there were some negative answers like "I do not understand some words," "It is difficult to learn English."

Table 3.
Do you like your English class?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validity	No	2	1,2	1,2	1,2
	A Little	6	3,5	3,5	4,6
	More or less	22	12,7	12,7	17,3
	A Lot	143	82,7	82,7	100,0
	Total	173	100,0	100,0	

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Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage of the question "Do you like musical activities in your English classes?" 48,0% of respondents answered, "a lot" while 47,7 answered, "Yes" 1,2 % answered, "a little and 3,5 % answered, "No" This result of acceptance might be compared to Domoney and Harris (1993), Džanić and Pejić (2016), Hock (2001), (Huy Le, 2007) and (Murphey, 1992) who mentioned that singing English songs provides an entertaining and relaxing environment thereby learning English by using them gives an unthreatening atmosphere for learners.

Table 4.
Do you like musical activities in your English classes?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validity	No	6	3,5	3,5	3,5
	A Little	2	1,2	1,2	4,6
	Yes	82	47,4	47,4	52,0
	A Lot	83	48,0	48,0	100,0
	Total	173	100,0	100,0	

Table 5 shows the frequency and the percentage of the question "Do you like to participate in your English class? The highest percentage 54,9 % answered "Yes" while 30,6 % answered "Yes a lot" 12,7 % of respondents answered, "a Little" and the lowest percentage was 1,2 % answered "No." It is important to mention that in this table existed 0,6 % of standard deviation which means one student did not answer the question. As the results show, musical activities promote participation in the classroom this is in line with the findings of (Yano & Shūhei, 2008) who stated that English songs activities provide a meaningful context and background in a way that through them, learners feel encouraged to use their knowledge to express their own opinions.

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Table 5.
Do you like to participate in your English class?.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validity	No	2	1,2	1,2	1,2
	A Little	22	12,7	12,8	14,0
	Yes	95	54,9	55,2	69,2
	Yes, a Lot	53	30,6	30,8	100,0
	Total	172	99,4	100,0	
Lost in the system		1	,6		
Total		173	100,0		

Finally, Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of the question "How do you like to learn English?" the highest percentage is 64,7 answered "Listening and singing songs" while 23,7 % answered "Doing exercises and tasks." 5,8 % answered "listening to audios of conversations, people speaking on the radio, etc." 2,9 % stated "speaking with others" and 2,9 % answered "Reading books and tales"

The researcher asked the respondents to write why they had chosen this option and to highlight some answers they said, "Because I like to sing", "Because I like English music", "Because It is fun, and I learn", "Because I improve my pronunciation" and so forth. It was important to obtain these results because they indicate that there were a significant number of positive answers which replied "Listening and singing songs" similarly the studies of Baoan (2008); (Colwell & Davidson, 1996); Emst-Slavit (2001), (Iantorno & Papa, 1979) and Lems (2016) remark that utilizing music to achieve a goal in the classroom can enhance students' motivation, sympathy for others, and self-awareness. In that way, students may reduce procrastination, avoid boredom and have more peer interaction.

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Table 6.
How do you like to learn English?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validity	Reading books and tales	5	2,9	2,9	2,9
	Listening and singing songs	112	64,7	64,7	67,6
	Speaking with others	5	2,9	2,9	70,5
	Doing exercises and tasks	41	23,7	23,7	94,2
	Listening to audios of conversations, people speaking on the radio, etc.	10	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	173	100,0	100,0	

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There were some limitations and implications. First, the time for the application of this study was very short; in that way, it is suggested for a future study to be carried out in a longer time. Second, the sample of participants was taken from a single institution; therefore, for future analyzes, the sample should be from different institutions. Third, this study was carried out entirely online, so it is suggested that for future studies it would be carried out during face-to-face classes. Finally, it is essential to indicate that the results found in this study are non-generalizable to all contexts because the number of students was 173, and this study considers just early-young learners to be the sample group from a public school; therefore, further studies should focus on young learners or teenagers considering that they are not only from public institutions but also from private ones. Regarding strengths, this study had 173 participants as consequence it permitted us to know a little more truthfully the information provided.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This experimental study investigated young learners' perceptions on the influence of music activities to promote motivation on acquiring vocabulary in a public school from Cuenca – Ecuador. In other words, this study sought to explain how motivated students feel in EFL classes when a strategy based on music is used.

The study findings revealed that after having some sample classes, most learners arose the taste for learning English, recognizing its importance in a globalized world (Noerhidayat, 2020.) Furthermore, this study showed that music has a positive impact on English early-young learners' perceptions because most learners answered positively. After having this result, it is undeniable to say that music can be an excellent tool to arise motivation for ESL/EFL early-young learners because when the researcher asked how they preferred learning English, many learners replied, "listening and singing songs" which was the highest preferred activity. Besides, according to the findings, there was more willingness on students to participate actively in class when the researcher used songs that could be because according to Baoan (2008), Colwell and Davidson (2015), Emst-Slavit (2001), (Iantorno & Papa, 1979) and Lems (2016) music promotes the participation on students actively.

Consequently, English teaching could be more effective if it is based on the use of English songs (Aguirre et al. 2016, p.183) findings have also affirmed "in classes with English music, students were more engaged and interested in the class topic. In addition, they were paying more attention, they participated more frequently, and they were carrying out all their tasks with more energy and enthusiasm" this affirmation along with our findings permits us to say that the use of music should occupy a more important role in the design of the second or foreign language curriculum. This task could be acquired by increasing the regularity of the use of songs in the curriculum planning.

The findings of this study can be an open door for teachers who want to modify their instruction procedures to enrich the value and effectiveness of ESL/EFL students'

CIENCIAMATRIA
Revista Interdisciplinaria de Humanidades, Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología
Año VIII. Vol. VIII. Nro 1. Edición Especial. 2022
Hecho el depósito de ley: pp201602FA4721
ISSN-L: 2542-3029; ISSN: 2610-802X
Universidad Nacional Experimental Francisco de Miranda (UNEFM). Santa Ana de Coro. Venezuela

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learning; process incorporating English songs in EFL classes has become an important tool to motivate students (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017). For further studies would be interesting to know what happens with English songs to promote motivation contrasting children and adults.

Additionally, it would be important to know what kind of exercises and tasks children would like because it was the second activity preferred by learners in the questionnaire carried out in this study.

PROPOSAL

This study aimed to know what were the students' perceptions on the use of English songs to promote motivation and how the use of songs in English would change the taste for learning on EFL students. The findings showed that songs might increase learners' motivation and arise the love for language learning; moreover, songs can help practice listening skills, vocalize words, and practice pronunciation while learners sing them. Besides, songs can have a great impact on learners because of their multiple characteristics and connect with the language learners' interests in many different ways. Based on this, it seems reasonable to suggest the use of English songs to promote motivation on EFL young learners. Teachers can implement this strategy based on music activities to have a positive attitude in their learners, create an enjoyable environment in the class, animate learners to be more committed to the task activities, and make a connection between amusement and learning. Finally, we suggest for a successful implementation of the strategy based on music activities teachers can select proper music and songs related to the lesson objectives and carefully plan or modify classroom activities.
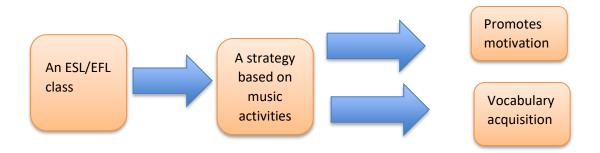
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An ESL/EFL class → A strategy based on music activities → Promotes motivation / Vocabulary acquisition

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