



SONGS AS A MOTIVATIONAL ASPECT IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

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Resumo

Este trabalho tem por objetivo refletir sobre as inúmeras vantagens do uso da música na sala de aula, como uma ferramenta motivacional, e mostrar alguns procedimentos sobre como utilizá-la efetivamente para tornar os estudantes interessados e motivados a aprender. Para tanto, conduzimos uma pesquisa bibliográfica, baseada nos estudos de autores como Harmer (1994, 2007), Merrell (2004), Murphey (2008), entre outros, que nos deram suporte para estudar e analisar atividades envoltas nas músicas com as quais escolhemos trabalhar. Para alcançarmos o nosso objetivo, começamos apontando a relevância da língua inglesa atualmente, e como ela se tornou uma língua poderosa e influente. Então, mencionamos razões comuns pelas quais as pessoas aprendem inglês e como nós podemos motivar os estudantes no processo de aprendizagem. Posteriormente, algumas características do processo de ensino-aprendizagem de língua estrangeira foram apresentadas. Após isso, apontamos alguns benefícios do uso da música na sala de aula de língua inglesa, destacando como música e canções podem melhorar o ambiente da sala de aula, engajando os estudantes no que eles irão aprender e desenvolvendo as quatro principais habilidades, usando materiais autênticos. Finalmente, nós também exploramos como as canções podem ser mais bem lidadas, indo além do uso comum, como atividades de preenchimento de lacunas, com a atividade sugerida para trabalhar com a música *Today was a fairytale*, de Taylor Swift, que é parte da trilha sonora do filme de 2010 *Valentine's Day*, no qual a cantora e compositora participa como atriz. Finalmente, apresentamos uma curta lista de músicas e os aspectos da língua com os quais elas podem ser trabalhadas.

Palavras-chave: Música. Canções. Vantagens. Motivação. Sala de aula de língua inglesa.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to reflect upon the numerous advantages of using music in the classroom, as a motivational tool, and to show some procedures of how to use it effectively to make students interested and willing to learn. To make it possible, we conducted some bibliographical research, with theoretical foundations, based on the studies of authors such as Harmer (1994, 2007), Merrell (2004), Murphey (2008), among others, who gave us the support to study and analyze activities around the

songs we chose to work with. To reach our aim, we started by pointing out the relevance of the English language in the current world, and how it became a powerful and influent language. Then, we mention common reasons why people learn English and how we can motivate students in the learning process. Next, some characteristics of the foreign language teaching-learning process were presented. Then, we point out some benefits of using music in the English language classroom, highlighting how music and songs can improve the classroom environment, engaging students in what they are going to learn and developing the four main skills, using authentic materials. Finally, we also explore how songs can be better dealt with, by going beyond the ordinary use, such as activities as gap-filling, with the suggested activity to work with the song *Today was a fairytale*, by Taylor Swift, part of the soundtrack of 2010's film *Valentine's Day*, in which the singer and songwriter stars as an actress. Finally, we present a short list of songs and the language aspect they can be dealt with.

Keywords: Music. Songs. Advantage. Motivation. English language classroom.

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1 Introduction

English is fundamental to the students nowadays and there are various ways to learn it. The aim of this research is to show that English can be learnt using music and songs, as they are one of the most motivating resources to make the students learn.

The aim of this paper is to show the motivational aspect songs can bring into the teaching-learning process by going through some procedures to use them effectively, therefore, making students interested and willing to learn. Thus, we conducted some bibliographical research, with theoretical foundations based on the studies of Harmer (1994, 2007), Merrell (2004), Murphey (2008), among others, who gave us the support to study and analyze activities around the songs we chose to work with.

To start, we point out the importance of the English language in the world, today, and how it became a powerful and influent language. Then, we mention common reasons why people learn English and how we can motivate students in the learning process.

Secondly, we make it visible how music is a powerful learning tool that can be used to acquire and improve various language skills and can keep students motivated to learn a foreign language. If used as background, music is proven scientifically to have a positive effect on the brain, as it generates biochemical changes and produce calming effects on the students.

Finally, we present a sample activity based on the *Today was a fairytale*, by Taylor Swift. We prepared a pre-listening activity which involves speaking to give students a guidance for the next step. Then, during the while-listening activity students did two tasks, a Bingo and an adjective-noun collocation to work with a video excerpt in which this song is the soundtrack. As a post-listening activity students integrated skills by doing a reading exercise. This way, they deal with other skills, instead of working just on listening.

We also suggested some songs and the language aspects they can cover to try to facilitate the teacher's job in the classroom.

2 English as a global language

As we know, English is one of the most spoken languages in the world and it is often called the "universal language". It is called the universal language because 1/4 of the world's population speak English and around 80 to 90% percent of the scientific knowledge produced in the world is written in English (RAJAGOPALAN *apud* SCHMITZ, 2005, p. 10).

Quite interesting are Rajagoplan's remarks about the appearance of "World English" in all parts of the world--- "in busy international airports, at sports events, and at international academic meetings, etc." The spread of English has contributed to the language being nativized with norms developing from within and not from outside (SCHMITZ, 2005, p. 11)¹.

As it was stated, English is spoken by millions of people worldwide. It is one of the most used ways of communication and in some cases, it is the only way to communicate with people. Crystal (2010, p. 10) implies that "[...] a language becomes a global language because of the power of the people who speak it". This statement can lead us back to the expansion of the British Empire, which was well known for its political and military powers. Therefore, it becomes clear the reason why it is extremely important to master the English language, since it opens various new possibilities to everyone.

When confronted with the viewpoint that English is now a global language with more non-native speakers than native speakers, Crystal (*apud* SCHOLLES, 2010, p. 10) replies that "[...] language has no existence apart from the people who speak it. It exists to express their world and their vision of it".

The linguist Crystal (2010, p. 10) also complements that "[...] any language which comes to be used globally has to adapt to allow that to happen, in the form of new words, idioms, patterns of discourse [...] and so on". It is even added to the speech that the 'new Englishes' is the inevitable result of the language being used globally, and that this is what some people are now calling English as a lingua franca (CRYSTAL, 2010).

According to Harmer (1994, p. 13), "English began to be known as a Lingua Franca by the end of the twentieth century. A Lingua Franca is a language used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first or second language". The English language is around us all the time, and whether it is here to stay or only for a fleeting moment, there is no doubt that there will always be some English influence on our society.

People from all over the world will suffer influence of this global language. It may be on the internet, on billboards, on the shop windows or even been used in communication, for instance in Brazil, as Bagno (2001) states we frequently use loanwords words such as *mouse*, *email*, *shopping*, *sales* and others are all over

¹ The translation throughout the paper was done by the authors.

us. Therefore, the language is part of our everyday life being one of the reasons why we, in Brazil, learn it. However, this is not the only reason why.

Harmer (1994) mentions some of the reasons why people learn English nowadays: target language community, English for specific purposes, advancement, miscellaneous and school curriculum. According to Harmer (1994), getting to know English due to the target language community is related to the fact that students want to learn the language of the community where they will be part permanently or temporarily.

English for specific purposes (ESP) is another reason why people learn the language. It refers to a situation in which people want to learn the language for specific reasons, for instance, a hotel receptionist needs English to understand the guest; executives need English for international trading; some people need to learn the language to understand articles or to give lectures in seminars (HARMER, 1994).

People also study English because of the impact it has on their professional lives. The fact is that if you speak a global language, you have better professional opportunities. This is related to advancement (HARMER, 1994).

Miscellaneous is also pointed out by Harmer (1994), which is when a person is learning a language just for their own entertainment, for tourism or because of friends' influence.

Enjoying it or not, English is part of the school curriculum in most countries, therefore, it might be the biggest reason why people learn English nowadays (HARMER, 1994).

Thus, independently of the reason why people learn a language, it has to be learned in a meaningful and enjoyable way. The characteristics of this process is what the next topic covers.

3 Characteristics of the teaching-learning process

Creating the best learning environment for students can become a difficult task, however, there are certain characteristics that can help. The first step is to acknowledge that students need exposure, motivation and opportunities for language use. Harmer (2007) says that different students may respond more or less well to different stimuli, suggesting that most teaching sequences need to have certain characteristics.

It has become well-known in the linguistic community that almost all children acquire a language, with almost no effort. Nowadays it is very common to have children from different parts of the world growing up speaking more than two languages, which is one of the consequences of globalization. When students grow up learning two languages, they are actually acquiring it, which is a much longer lasting process.

The contrast between acquisition and learning is a characteristic teachers should understand to help students better in the teaching-learning process. Krashen (*apud* HARMER, 2007) has suggested that we can make a clear distinction between acquisition and learning. Whereas the former is a subconscious and anxiety free process, learning is a conscious one in which separate items from the language are studied and practised in turn.

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Krashen, among others, suggested that teachers should concentrate on acquisition rather than learning and that the role of the language teacher should be to provide the right kind of language exposure, namely comprehensible input - that is, language that the students understand more or less, even if it is a bit above their own level of production (HARMER, 2007, p. 47).

Harmer (2007, p. 46) also states that “[...] language acquisition seems to be almost guaranteed for children up to about the age of six. They seem to be able to learn languages with incredible facility”. Nonetheless, it seems that the more children grow up, the harder it becomes for them to acquire languages with such facility. Therefore, whenever teaching, teachers should bring learning as close as possible to acquisition. One way of doing it is by following the elements Harmer (2007) suggests: engage, study and activate (ESA).

To help students become interested in what they are learning, they need to be engaged, otherwise they will not concentrate enough during the process. Some of the ways to engage students are activities such as games, music, pictures and others. These types of activities will guide the learner to be more motivated to participate in class.

After you have got the students’ interest, you move to the study phase, which is when they are asked to focus on accuracy independently of the aspect of the language. According to Harmer (2007, p. 52), “[...] study activities can also range from the focus on and practice of a single sound to an investigation of how a writer achieves a particular effect in a long text”.

Activate is the part when you ask students to put into practice what they have learnt. Here teachers are mostly not concerned with accuracy, but fluency. The aim is to make the student use the language as explicitly and communicatively as they can:

We will not be asking them to focus on the use of a particular structure, or to try to use words from a list we give them. That would make what they are doing more like a study activity, where they are expected to focus on the accuracy of specific bits of language, rather than on the message they are trying to convey or the task that needs to be performed. The objective in an activate activity is for them to use all and any language which may be appropriate for a given situation or topic. In this way, students get a chance to try out real language use with little or no restriction - a kind of rehearsal for the real world (HARMER, 2007, p. 53).

As it was stated, language that has been learnt, does not usually come as naturally as the acquired language. Students tend to think much more consciously about what they want to say, worrying about sentences structures or which correct words they have to use.

On the other hand, when exposed to a motivating and an anxiety-free environment, learners will acquire the language just as children do when they are learning their mother tongue.

Motivated students are usually more committed to their own learning process, and the more committed they are, the better they learn.

3.1 How to motivate students

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It is known that motivation is a key element in the teaching-learning process, and it is, usually, generated by teachers. It makes learners pursue their objectives and gives them direction to follow along the learning process.

Motivation is some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action. If we perceive a goal (that is, something we wish to achieve) and if that goal is sufficiently attractive, we will be strongly motivated to do whatever is necessary to reach that goal (HARMER, 1994, p. 3).

Ur (1996) corroborates this idea by saying that motivated learners make teaching and learning much easier and more pleasant, as well as more productive. Even being a tough word to define, Ur (1996, p. 274) suggests “[...] it is easier and more useful to think of motivation as a motivated learner: one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress”.

There are two major types of motivation: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Both of them have an important role to play in the classroom, as both are, at least, partially susceptible to teachers’ influence.

Ur (1996) points out that extrinsic motivation is the one that is derived from external incentives. Harmer (1994) agrees by saying it is also the result of any number of outside factors. Some factors that could contribute to extrinsic motivation is the will to please parents, maybe pass an exam, future prospects as a promotion in work or a foreign voyage. It is an incentive that comes from outside of the classroom.

According to Ur (1996), there are other sources of extrinsic motivation which are certainly affected by teachers’ role, such as the success of the learner and its rewards, that may be the most important feature in raising extrinsic motivation: if the learner has succeeded in past tasks, they will be more willing to engage with the next one, generating confidence and increasing their chances of succeeding.

On the other hand, we have intrinsic motivation which “is the urge to engage in the learning activity for its own sake” (UR, 1996, p. 276). According to Harmer (1994) it is the stimulus that comes from the inside. It comes from within the individual, their internal drive to succeed. Thus, the person’s motivation come from their own will for learning the language themselves “[...] or by the desire to make themselves feel better” (HARMER, 1994, p. 98). However, Harmer (1994, p. 5) contemplates “we can consider factors affecting intrinsic motivation under the headings of *physical conditions, method, the teacher and success*”.

Thus, it becomes clear the importance of the teacher’s role in raising students’ motivation. Learners will only be motivated if they are interested in what they are learning. As a result, it is part of the teacher’s job to make their students motivated by making the classroom environment appealing as Harmer (1994, p. 5) affirms:

[...] there can be no doubt that intrinsic motivation plays a vital part in most students’ success or failure as language learners. Many students bring no extrinsic motivation to the classroom. They may even have negative feelings about language learning. For them what happens in the classroom will be of vital importance in determining their attitude to the language, and in supplying motivation, which we have suggested is a vital component in successful language learning (HARMER, 1994, p. 5).

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By doing so, teachers can sparkle students' interest and generate their intrinsic motivation, as once they engage with the English language, the teacher will not have to put so much effort in getting their interest, because it will become natural.

There are innumerable activities that can be used inside the classroom to maintain or to motivate students during the teaching-learning process. For instance, activities that provide competition, game-like activities, movies and songs. The last one was chosen to be discussed on the next topic and used as a task to make lessons more interesting.

4 The use of music in the classroom

Music is considered a cultural manifestation that was created by humanity in the Stone Age. Humans began to develop sounds based on nature phenomena. Ferreira (2010) assumes that music is the verbal-oral-singing transmission of knowledge, a process that has been observed in primitive tribes.

Music was also considered fundamental for the formation of future citizens, besides math and philosophy. It serves several basic purposes like the formation of habits, behavior and attitudes as the memorization of numbers, letters and more when it is translated into songs.

Pitágoras, filósofo grego da antiguidade, ensinava como determinados acordes musicais e certas melodias criavam reações definidas no organismo humano. As sensações de bem estar com a aplicação da música, já eram consideradas naquela época. Pitágoras demonstrou que a sequência correta de sons, se tocada musicalmente num instrumento, pode mudar padrões de comportamento e acelerar o processo de cura (BRÉSCIA, 2003, p. 31).

According to Parolo (2011), there are three basic elements that composes music: rhythm, harmony and melody. Rhythm is the most primitive of the elements and is a repetition of a pattern of strong and weak movements. Harmony is the element that combines notes in an organized way. Melody is a succession of notes inside a rhythmic and harmonic context, it is the theme of the composition.

Miragaya (1992) states that rhythm and melodies of songs are responsible for the retention of different types of information on the memory, especially vocabulary. Rock songs, as Miragaya (1992) affirms, can also be the inspiration sources for compositions, poems and dialogues. Moreover, it may be themes for discussions about culture and literature and can even allow the listening comprehension outside the classroom.

Music and songs affect us on different levels and also at different ways, like impacting depression, illness and productivity. Therefore, it is an essential motivational aspect in the learning process. It is an opportunity to create an attractive environment that calls the students' attention and an effective strategy to make the learner interested while learning a language.

The evidence that music impacts the body and learning suggests that music should be included in classrooms. Music can be included in any classroom, regardless of grade, level or subject matter. The power that music can have on learners is extensive; it can benefit students and lead them to higher achievement and development (MERRELL, 2004, p. 3).

Consequently, music creates a different environment in class as most students, especially teenagers, have the habit of listening to songs. Learning a language with the help of songs can stimulate students' cognitive function, making the English class more enjoyable and interesting as music enhances students' receptivity (GOBBI, 2001).

[...] com ela podemos desenvolver várias possibilidades de trabalhos e observamos que o aluno se mostra mais receptivo, dedicado e envolvido do que em qualquer outra tarefa que se exija dele. O aluno estuda e aprende com simplicidade, sem dar-se conta que está estudando. E o faz com prazer e atenção (GOBBI, 2001, p. 39).

Hence, teaching through music is an amazing technique to develop the language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing in a fun and simple way.

Music has the ability to calm down restless students, to awaken the calm ones and to assist the shy learners making all of them participate actively in the teaching-learning process since songs can help change the rhythm and pace of the lessons, apart from motivating them.

Music tends to reduce anxiety and inhibition in second language learners. Learning a new concept through a song or listening to music is less threatening than a lecture or worksheet. Music breaks down barriers and creates an environment that is friendly (MERRELL, 2004, p. 8).

Weigel and Barreto (apud CHIARELLI, 2005) states that learning another language with the help of songs can contribute to students' improvement in cognitive, linguistic, psychomotor and socio-affective self-development.

Musical activities increase the development of the students' sense, as a result their cognitive/linguistic sense. Working with sounds – musical rhythm-improves hearing perceptiveness, as well as learners' attention, discovering their talent and capacity. In short, this development is based on the stimulation the student has on a daily basis. The greater the stimulation, the better the intellectual development will be.

Psychomotor development: first of all, rhythm is the regular and periodic movement in the course of any process; activities like singing while doing gestures, dancing, clapping, are important experiences for the young learners, because it allows the rhythmical sense development and the motor coordination, also important factors to the process of language acquisition.

Socio-affective development: the skill evolution of forming an identity is very important to the students. During the socio-affective development learners comprehend the perceptiveness of collectivity. Thus, teaching music in the classroom, with the sense of collectivity favors the development of socialization by stimulating understanding, participation and cooperation and then the listener will grasp the concept of a group.

There are many ways to use music in the classroom and the next topic will bring a discussion about the advantages of using music in the classroom and why it is so important.

4.1 The advantages of using music in the English classroom

Learning a foreign language through music brings many benefits and advantages to the students and the teachers such as put students in a more relaxed mood, deal with the reading skill, improve the cognitive function, thus, it facilitates language learning in a more natural and pleasant way. Teachers can use music to teach pronunciation, contractions, formal and informal language, vocabulary, grammar and other aspects of the language. "Music has potential to change the atmosphere in a classroom. It seems to give energy where there was none, and to spark off images when students complain of having nothing to write about" (MURPHEY, 2008, p. 37).

Murphey (2008) states that Suggestopaedia, a teaching methodology developed by Dr. Lozanov, in Bulgaria, claims that, among the method's many innovations, is the use of background music during the reading of dialogues, whose text and translation is available for the students. The dialogue is usually read twice, once slowly and once at normal speed, accompanied by some background classical music, at about the same volume. Lozanov's idea behind using the music is apparently to relax students' defenses and to open up their minds to the language acquisition. Murphey (2008) says that music may also engage the right hemisphere of learners' brain and make learning a more pleasant experience.

Merrell (2004) implies that there is a connection between music and the brain and that studies show that certain combinations of sounds stimulate determined parts of the brain, which generates biochemical changes and produce calming effects on the students.

Music has the power to keep students engaged and reduce discipline problems within the classroom. The inclusion of music in lessons tends to enrich the material and provide more meaning to the lesson. When the learners are more engaged and interested in the lesson, they will stay focused for longer and retain more information. The students will not have as many discipline problems when they are engaged. The learners will be focused on the lesson and disruptions will simply subside (MERRELL, 2004, p. 5).

Music is essential to the teacher's role in the teaching process as well. It is not only excellent to reduce the stress of teaching, but also a great source of authentic material and, by using music in the classroom, teachers can also establish a good rapport with students.

The term *materials* can apply to virtually anything that a teacher uses to help the teaching process in the classroom. Common teaching materials include items such as worksheets, newspapers, pictures, textbooks and video recordings.

These teaching materials are often classified as either authentic or non-authentic, depending on their origin and how they are used. 'Authentic material' refers to items that have not been designed or adapted for use in an English language classroom, such as magazines, newspapers, video clips and song lyrics.

In contrast, 'non-authentic material' refers to anything that has been designed specifically to aid the teaching process, such as worksheets, textbooks and instructional CD's or DVD'S.

4.2 Procedures for using songs in the classroom

To be able to work with songs in the classroom, teachers should be creative to go beyond the common gap-filling activity. They must consider the age of the students, their interests, level and the song that is going to be used.

[...] procedure of any listening activity can be done by activating prior knowledge, in a way that can help students to organize their learning by thinking about their purposes for listening, and if speaking is also a goal of the classroom, using well-structured speaking tasks informed by research. The author explains that there are three steps to focus on a listening practice: activating prior-knowledge, while-listening and post-listening (BROWN apud REINA ARÉVALO, 2010, p. 125).

Prior knowledge, or pre-listening, is the information, in a learning context, a learner already has before they learn a new one. Prior knowledge refers to the information, no matter how limited, a learner has at the start of learning a new topic. This knowledge will likely have been gathered over time in a variety of ways. If the prior knowledge is correct and consistent with the new information being taught, the effect on learning is positive. However, if prior knowledge conflicts with new information, the effect on new learning can be negative.

Heredia (2017) informs that “while-listening” is a stage, or a group of stages, that are frequently found in a lesson that aims at helping students develop their receptive skills, such as listening or reading. The author also says that the while-listening is divided in two parts: a gist stage in which students read/listen for general information and a specific information or detail stage, in which learners try to process smaller pieces of information.

A post-listening activity represents a follow-up to the while-listening activity and its main goal is to use the knowledge gained from listening to develop other skills such as writing and speaking. If the student has listened to a song presenting a certain point of view regarding social problems, for example, teachers can ask them to do some research and identify some opposing views to present them in class.

5 Going beyond the ordinary

As it was previously stated, English is a global language, which means it is around us wherever we are. It is not only part of jobs but also part of entertainment. It is the most common language in movies and songs due to the USA power over the world. Therefore, teachers should take benefit of them while teaching English as it is suggested by Merrell (2004) who affirms that music impacts the body and learning suggests that music should be included in any classroom, regardless of grade, level or subject matter.

Movies and songs are part of people’s lives, so, we decided to use a popular musical singer, known as Taylor Swift, and prepare an activity to teach adjective-noun collocations. Besides it, we will also leave a list of songs and the language aspect that can be approached with them. Murphey (2008) claims that teachers can use music to teach pronunciation, contractions, formal and informal language, vocabulary, grammar and other aspects of the language. The choice of the

singer was due to the fact that she is popular with the new generation and is also involved in social projects, which leaves her on the spotlight more often.

It is common for teachers use songs by working with gap-filling exercises, however, we decided to bring activities that go beyond the ordinary. It means exploring the song to the full.

We will also make use of visual resources available for the music to make students benefit more from the song. Consequently, Taylor Swift's song video clip will be used as a pre-listening activity.

They cannot only spark off images but also have real images show by video clips of the songs.

5.1 Sample activity and a suggested song list

As a pre-listening activity, students will do a speaking activity by answering some questions (**see** APPENDIX A) that introduce the content of the song as well as the movie from which it is also the soundtrack. The questions approach *Valentine's Day* – the name of the film – and some information about Taylor Swift, the singer of *Today was a fairytale* – the soundtrack. As Reina Arévalo (2010) says, speaking is a goal in the classroom and it can help students understand their purposes for listening, besides activating prior Knowledge.

After having done that, the teacher presents to the students a game-like activity which is a *BINGO* exercise (**see** APPENDIX B- task 1) in which students have to choose some nouns, that may be part of a song they will listen to, to complete a bingo board. The aim of this activity is to engage learners, making them involved and motivated to the topic. Harmer (2007) says that the Engage element is responsible for making learners feel motivated in doing what comes next in the classroom.

After having checked this exercise, the teacher will show an excerpt of the film – *Valentine's Day* – that shows the main actor and actress in a scene in which the soundtrack is played. Through the scene, students will have the chance to work with the concept of adjective-noun collocations based on some of nouns that were part of the Bingo activity. They will do a multiple-choice exercise based on the film excerpt (**see** APPENDIX B – task 2). Murphy (2008) emphasizes the importance of a well elaborated activity by saying that it is the teachers' job to encourage students to interact with the video and to engage them in a way that learners can predict, comment and share their thoughts and opinions about it.

The last activity (**see** Appendix D) is a post-listening activity. Learners will read a text to know about the life of Taylor Swift, who is a singer but has also acted in films. Heredia (2017) points out that a post-listening activity is an opportunity to develop other skills.

When learning through songs, Gobbi (2001) says that the student learns in a simple and unconscious way. Consequently, as it was seen, it is possible to develop different ways of working with songs in the classroom to make the learning more interesting and enjoyable.

As we said before we will also suggest a list of songs with the aspect of the English language they cover (**see** APPENDIX E). The song used in the presented activity, *Today was a Fairytale*, by Taylor Swift, is part of a 2010's film, which students may even be familiar with. With this song, as it was proposed, you can work with adjective-noun collocations.

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The song *Friday I'm in Love*, by The Cure, is a great one to work with days of the week and colors, as exemplified in the lyrics: “*I don't care if Monday's blue / Tuesday's gray and Wednesday too / Thursday, I don't care about you / It's Friday, I'm in love*”.

The song *Memories*, by Maroon 5, is a good way to work with vocabulary and expressions such as “here's to”, “cheers to” and “toast to”, as Miragaya (1992) states that rhythm and melodies of songs are responsible for the retention of different types of information on the memory, especially vocabulary shown by the lyrics in this song: “*Here's to the ones that we got / Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not / 'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories / Of everything we've been through / Toast to the ones here today / Toast to the ones that we lost on the way / 'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories*”.

Murphey (2008) claims that music is also a good way to learn the structural part of the language, as contractions, for instance. One example of songs to learn contractions is *Hello*, by Adele. It is possible to see some contractions in the following sentences of the song: “*Hello, can you hear me? / I'm in California dreaming about who we used to be / When we were younger and free / I've forgotten how it felt before the world fell at our feet / There's such a difference between us*”.

Another song that deals with contractions is *Blinding Lights*, by The Weeknd: “*I said, I'm blinded by the lights / No, I can't sleep until I feel your touch / I said, I'm drowning in the night / When I'm like this, you're the one I trust*”. Contractions or “short forms” as they are commonly called are a common characteristic in everyday speech and informal writing, therefore, it is quite relevant to learn.

All of Me, by John Legend, to teach phrasal verbs: “*Drawing me in, and you kicking me out / [...] I can't pin you down*”. With the song *Red*, by Taylor Swift, it is possible to teach –ing forms used like nouns as seen in: “*Losing him was blue, like I'd never known / Missing him was dark gray, all alone / Forgetting him was like trying to know somebody you've never met / But loving him was red / Loving him was red*”. You can easily learn adjectives with the song *22*, by the same songwriter: “*Yeah, we're happy, free, confused and lonely at the same time / It's miserable and magical*”.

Taylor Swift's *I knew you were trouble* song is also a great tool to work with past-tense verbs, as in: “*I was in your sights, you got me alone / You found me, you found me, you found me / I guess you didn't care and I guess I liked that / And when I fell hard, you took a step back*”. The song *Shallow*, by Lady Gaga, presented in the 2018's film *A Star Is Born*, is also a great way to learn expressions such as: “*I'm off the deep end, watch as I dive in / I'll never meet the ground / Crash through the surface / Where they can't hurt us / We're far from the shallow now*”.

If your aim is to teach the future-tense *will*, the song *Strangelove*, by Depeche Mode, is very effective: “*Strangelove, will you give it to me? / Will you take the pain I'll give to you again and again? / Will you return it?*”, as Merrell (2004) implies that there is a connection between music and the brain that shows that certain combinations of sounds stimulate determined parts of the brain, making it easier for the students to absorb the structures of the English language.

The song *Love Yourself*, by Justin Bieber, can be used to work with Present Simple and Past Simple in the negative form: “*And I didn't wanna write a song 'cause I didn't want anyone thinking I still care / I don't but, you still hit my phone up / I don't wanna hold back, maybe you should know that / My mama don't like you*”.

and she likes everyone / And I never like to admit that I was wrong / And I've been so caught up in my job, didn't see what's going on".

Students are exposed to songs in their everyday life therefore, the intention of this paper is to show, briefly, how teachers can benefit from this authentic material in the teaching-learning process.

6 Conclusion

English is considered, in the present days, a “universal language”, spoken by millions worldwide. The language is so important, that in this globalized world it is considered a lingua franca, which is the language of communication between speakers of other languages.

The aim of this paper is to show the motivational aspect songs can bring into the teaching-learning process by going through some procedures to use them effectively, therefore, making students interested and willing to learn.

We can conclude that music impacts students' mind and learning positively, so it should be included in any classroom, independently of the level or language aspect that will be studied. Learners are exposed to songs in their everyday lives as they are authentic material produced for entertainment. Teachers should benefit from this characteristic and make songs part of the learning process. By preparing activities according to the three listening stages: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening, students take advantage of the audio, video and images that can be connected to the songs and engage them into the learning process.

We could see that music can provide students and teachers with motivation, besides offering opportunities to create a good environment and relationship among them by breaking barriers between them and by reducing learners' anxiety and inhibition during the teaching-learning process.

Therefore, we can conclude that songs in the classroom are a major tool that brings impressive results to the teaching-learning process.

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Appendix A – Pre-listening activity

Task 1:

- What do you know about Valentine's Day?
- How is it celebrated in Brazil and in other countries?
- Do you know any film that deals with this topic?

Task 2:

- Have you ever heard of Taylor Swift?
- Did you know she is a several-time Grammy winner?
- Are you fond of her?
- If so, why? And if not, why not?
- Do you like any of her songs?
- Did you know she has also acted in a movie?

Appendix B – While-listening activity

Task 1:

The song is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLiXLzd2O18>.

It is time to play BINGO with the song she wrote for the movie *Valentine's Day* (2010).

I) It is BINGO time! Choose ten nouns, from the box below, you think may appear in Taylor Swift's song. As you listen to the song, cross out the ones you hear.

prince	cake	dress	suit	t-shirt
princess	magic	love	fairytale	
smile	kiss	heart	chest	damsel

BINGO! – *TODAY WAS A FAIRYTALE* (Taylor Swift)

*(Teacher checks the answers after playing the song twice).

Task 2:

The video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYGfRxWin4w&t=1s>.

I) Now, watch an excerpt from *Valentine's Day* (2010), in which Taylor Swift plays the main character, and choose the best alternative for the adjective-noun collocations below:

- 1) The first couple shows _____ love.
 - a) old
 - b) young
 - c) sad
 - d) friendly
 - e) brotherly

- 2) Felicia is wearing a(n) _____ dress.
 - a) elegant
 - b) long
 - c) tacky
 - d) silk
 - e) velvet

- 3) Felicia and William give a _____ kiss.
 - a) brief
 - b) quick
 - c) fast
 - d) tender
 - e) sloppy

- 4) When the elevator door closes, Felicia gives a(n) _____ smile.
 - a) sad
 - b) ugly
 - c) bright
 - d) weak
 - e) faint

- 5) The last guy is wearing a _____ red t-shirt.
- wrinkled
 - sleeveless
 - long-sleeved
 - dirty
 - short-sleeved

Appendix C – Post-listening activity

Task 1: Read the text below to answer the questions:

Valentine's Day is a 2010 romantic comedy film. Taylor Swift starred in it as the character Felicia Miller. She wrote the song "Today Was a Fairytale" for the soundtrack of the film. The movie was filmed when she met Taylor Lautner, whom she dated briefly and later wrote songs about, such as "Back to December". He is the actor best known for portraying the werewolf Jacob Black in the *Twilight*. After breaking up with him, Swift apologized to him in her smash single "Back to December". The couple was named Taylor Squared, and they are still friends nowadays.

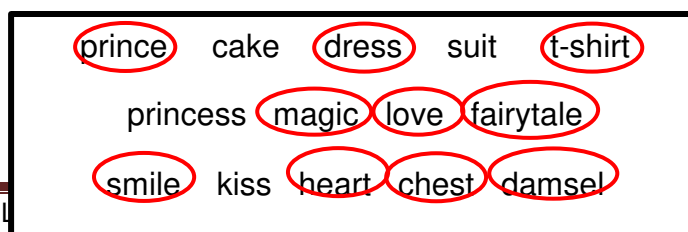
Available at: taylorswift.fandom.com. Accessed on: Oct. 13th, 2020.

I. Answer True (T) of False (F) according to the text:

- Taylor Swift has never written a song for Taylor Lautner. ____
- The couple met at the shooting of *Valentine's Day* (2010). ____
- Taylor Swift wrote *Today was a Fairytale* for the 2010 movie. ____
- Taylor Lautner is best known for the role of vampire in the *Twilight* films. ____
- The couple's relationship lasted for years. ____
- Lautner and Swift ended in amicable terms. ____
- The couple was known as Taylor Squared. ____
- In the song "Back to December", Swift says she is sorry for the breakup. ____
- Jacob Black is the character of *Valentine's Day*. ____
- Taylor Swift's character in *Valentine's Day* was called Alicia Miller. ____

Appendix D – Activities' key

I) It is BINGO time! Choose ten nouns, from the box below, you think may appear in Taylor Swift's. As you listen to the song, cross out the ones you hear.



I) Now, watch an excerpt from *Valentine's Day* (2010) in which Taylor Swift appears, and choose the best alternative for the adjective-noun collocations below:

- 1) The first couple is considered _____ love.
b) young
- 2) Felicia is wearing a(n) _____ dress.
a) elegant
- 3) Felicia and William give a _____ kiss.
d) tender
- 4) When the elevator door closes, Felicia gives a(n) _____ smile.
c) bright
- 5) The last guy is wearing a _____ red t-shirt.
e) short-sleeved

I. Answer True (T) of False (F) according to the text:

1. Taylor Swift has never written a song for Taylor Lautner. **F**
2. The couple met at the shooting of *Valentine's Day* (2010). **T**
3. Taylor Swift wrote *Today was a Fairytale* for the 2010 movie. **T**
4. Taylor Lautner is best known for the role of vampire in the *Twilight* films. **F**
5. The couple's relationship lasted for years. **F**
6. Lautner and Swift ended in amicable terms. **T**
7. The couple was known as Taylor Squared. **T**
8. In the song "Back to December", Swift says she is sorry for the breakup. **T**
9. Jacob Black is the character of *Valentine's Day*. **F**
10. Taylor Swift's character in *Valentine's Day* was called Alicia Miller. **F**

Appendix E – List of songs

List of songs and their language aspect they can cover

- *22* – by Taylor Swift: adjectives;
- *All of Me* – by John Legend: phrasal verbs;
- *Blinding Lights* – by The Weeknd: contractions;
- *Friday I'm In Love* – by The Cure: days of the week;
- *Hello* – by Adele: contractions;
- *I Knew You Were Trouble* – by Taylor Swift: past-tense verbs;
- *Love Yourself* – by Justin Bieber: verbs in the negative form;
- *Red* – by Taylor Swift: -ing forms used like nouns;
- *Shallow* – by Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper: expressions;
- *Strangelove* – by Depeche Mode: future – *will*.