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The Effects of songs in Foreign Language Classroom on Vocabulary retention and Motivation

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Abstract

This study compares two ways of vocabulary instruction in an English as a Foreign Language class. With this research I want to investigate the effects of the new methodology of songs on students' memory and motivation when learning a foreign language compared with the traditional vocabulary instruction. One class of 1st bachiller divided into two groups of students took part in this research. Group 1, the experimental group, listened to one song, and group two, the control group, followed the traditional vocabulary instruction. Although the vocabulary taught was the same for each group, the methodology and the corresponding activities varied from one group to the other. Subsequently, students of both groups were required to do a post-test in order to assess their retention of vocabulary. Data was collected to answer the following questions:

1. Will students retain more vocabulary with the methodology of the songs than with the traditional method of vocabulary instruction?
2. Will the use of the songs foster the students' interest and motivation to learn the language?

A post test showed higher scores for those students who listened to the song. On the whole, the experimental group retained more vocabulary and they were more motivated during the experiment. Besides, in the post text they expressed very positive opinions about the methodology of using songs in class.

These findings suggest that the use of the songs in a foreign language class may contribute to improve the memory, and specifically the retention of vocabulary. The results evidenced that songs can be a good way to stimulate language retention as well as an easy way of motivating students to like and learn the foreign language.

Introduction

Personal interest

First of all I have to say that my experience with music has always been quite peculiar. Somehow, music has been present during the main stages of my life with different effects.

My knowledge of how to play the piano and the guitar has given me a wider perspective along the years, but my interest in music started a lot of years ago, maybe when I was young. I remember that when I was a child I used to be lied on the sofa listening to music for a lot of hours. It made me feel very relaxed, and even more important, it took me to a parallel world where my mind was able to disconnect from the reality. Maybe at that moment I wasn't very conscious of this positive effect that music had on me, but then I realized that something that started as a punctual fact was turning into a habit. Music was becoming part of my daily routine because little by little I started to listen to music every day, sometimes after coming back from school and other times before going to class. Music has a very important effect in our state of mind, so for this reason we tend to listen to different kinds of music depending on our feelings in different situations. I discovered that when I was sad I needed the music to cheer me up, so I used to choose some melodies with fast and soft rhythms in order to change my mood. As I will explain later on, music enters our brain in a different way than language, and it activates both sides of the brain, the right hemisphere, which is the one related to feelings and emotion and the left hemisphere.

I have also heard that infants start to familiarize with music from the first stages of pregnancy, so for this reason some experts recommend the mother to sing or put music to the child because it has the power to activate some mental skills that later on are developed. From my own experience, I can say that although I can't remember if my mother used to put me some music or not, I have a song stuck in my head that sometimes comes out and that of course I can sing perfectly. When I asked my mother about this song, she told me that it was a lullaby that my grandmother used to sing to her when she was a child and that for this reason she used to sing it to me. This is a quite very common phenomenon, the tendency of singing to somebody

what we have very assimilated in mind. The result is that there are some songs that pass through a lot of generations, and consequently become a traditional ritual in families.

Now, my question is if music, with its power to enhance some emotional competences, has also the power to shape or determine in a way the personality of the child. As we already know, our personality is socially determined. We live surrounded by people and the relationships that we establish with these people are what make us be as we are. Nevertheless, I also think that there are other factors that are very influential in this process of mental construction, and music is one of them. Genetically there are some people who have the musical intelligence more developed; they have a special interest in music and their emotional competence is higher. Sometimes it has nothing to do with genetics, because the musical competence can also be acquired during the years and with an appropriate instruction. Setting apart the exceptions, those people who decide to get involved in the musical world are people with a special sensibility, very empathetic and socially skilled. Their personality therefore, may be slightly influenced or determined by the way they consider music.

Statement of topic area and general issues

It is very well known that music is universal in human culture. Since ancient times, human beings started to communicate orally. Before the written texts appeared, the only way of preserving the knowledge from one generation to the following one was through the oral language. Oral messages became a source of transmission of the history and the customs of a place, because it was the fastest way of communication. These verbally transmitted messages could take the form of popular stories, romances, chants or songs.

As E.Borroff Says, “the first musical utterances in prehistoric times were imitations of bird songs or other natural noises; they were formalized signals of love, battle, or the hunt; they were rhythmic poundings in a hollow log or vocalization more song than speech and possibly preceding both”

Setting aside the prehistoric time, the influence of music on society can be clearly seen from modern history. When I heard the story of Albert Einstein the first time, I was amazed. He was considered as the most important scientific of the 20th Century, but maybe not many people know that when he was young everybody thought that he was stupid. Some teachers told his parents that it would be a better option to take him out of the school and put him doing a manual labor job instead. His mother, who was reluctant to think that her son was stupid, bought him a violin. Einstein started to play it until he became very good at doing it. The violin helped him to solve his problems and equations, and for this reason he became one of the smartest men in history. As Einstein, there are other examples of famous and non famous people, who were positively influenced by music.

Taking into account its internal characteristics, it is widely proved by a lot of researchers and teachers that music has innumerable virtues that deserve our attention. It is one of the few activities that involve using the whole brain. We have said that it is intrinsic to all cultures and it can have surprising benefits not only for learning language, improving memory and focusing attention, but also for physical coordination and development. It also has therapeutic functions.

Music and some definitions

First of all, I consider being of prime importance going back to the very beginning, to the word origin. The word music comes from the Greek mousikê (tekhnê) by way of the Latin musica. It is ultimately derived from mousa, the Greek word for muse. In ancient Greece, the word mousikê was used to mean any of the arts or sciences governed by the Muses. Later, in Rome, ars musica embraced poetry as well as instrument oriented music.¹

Now, how can we define music?

It is quite difficult to establish only one definition for this term, as the concept of “music” is something very subjective and it can vary from one place to another,

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Definition_of_music

from time to time and even from person to person. It is something very difficult to define by words, as it is related to feelings, and, can the feelings be explained?

According to Wynton Marsalis “music is sound organized in time.”

Michael Linton perceives music as “the organization of sound and silence into forms that carry culturally delivered meaning”

Luciano Berio says that “music is everything one listen to with the intention of listening to music”

The last definition is the one I like the most because essentially what it says is that when you listen to music you only have the intention of having a good time and enjoying the melody, you want to be pleased by the act of listening to it.

Taking into account these definitions, and thinking about my own ideas I would propose a new definition:

“Music is the sound that our brain perceives and that it is only understood by heart”

Music and the brain

It is very important to understand the relationship between music and the brain because there are a lot of theories that state some interesting ideas about the effects that it has in our mind.

Research on psycholinguistics reveals that songs can activate language acquisition and learning in both hemispheres of the human brain (Carroll, 2000; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 2000; Williams and Burden, 1997)

The human brain is divided into two hemispheres. The left hemisphere is responsible for expressing the thoughts in oral or written words. In other words, this hemisphere stores all the concepts that afterwards translates into words. The right hemisphere, on the other hand, is specialized in the non-verbal faculties, such as feelings, emotions and special artistic and musical abilities.

Songs enter the human brain from left ear to right hemisphere in a rather different way from our speech and thus can stimulate language learning in the right hemisphere. Related to this, and as we will see later on, Gardner (1985) in his theory of Multiple Intelligences says that all human beings have musical intelligence and that the use of music is very positive in language learning because it can open an opportunity to learners who have a strong right brain orientation.

Guglielmino (1986) states that “Songs bridge the [brain’s] hemispheres, strengthening retention through a complementary function as the right hemisphere learns the melody, the left, the words”

Anton (1990) found that “when a learning activity combines both left and right hemispheres simultaneously engaged in a particular activity, an ideal learning situation is established and the most productive learning occurs”. Activities which engage both sides of the brain at the same time, such as playing an instrument or singing, causes the brain to be more capable of processing information.

Music methodologies

We have talked about the positive effects of music and songs in our culture, body and mind, but now we have to take into account the importance of its effects in language teaching and learning, according to some theories and hypothesis developed by some authors.

During the years, there have been some methodologies that have considered songs as a very important tool in language learning:

Suggestopedia

It is a methodology introduced in 1978 by the Bulgarian psychotherapist and physician Georgi Lozanov. The purpose of the suggestopedia is to improve the language trying to apply the suggestion. In order to do this, this method uses classical music (believed to be an essential element for learning to take place) to relax the student.

Tim Murphey says that Among this method's many innovations is the use of background music during the reading of dialogues (of which the students have the text and a translation). The dialogue is usually read twice, once slowly and once at normal speed, to the accompaniment of background classical music and at about the same volume. The idea behind using the music is apparently to relax students' defences and to open up their minds to the language. Music may also engage the right hemisphere of their brains more, and make learning a more holistic experience. (mentioned by Verónica Rosová, 2007, p.13)

Lozanov (1978) said that the stimulation of both hemispheres was of prime importance for the acquisition of the language and suggested that the relaxation techniques help learners tap into subconscious resources to aid in acquisition and greater retention of vocabulary and language structures.

Suggestopedia is described as a holistic method that directed learning to both the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Soft lighting, baroque music, cheerful room decorations, comfortable seating, and dramatic techniques aim at totally relaxing students, a state which heightens mental activity and concentration.

Affective Filter Hypothesis

This Theory developed by Krashen (1985) states that one of the most important principles for language acquisition is to feel comfortable and to have a low level of anxiety in order to acquire the input naturally. Learners who are comfortable and have positive attitudes towards the language have their filters set low, allowing access to comprehensible input. In contrast, having feelings of stress raises the affective filter, and consequently, the learners' processing of input is blocked.

There are some evidences from studies that assess that those students who receive a great amount of input through pleasure activities and they feel motivated towards the language, learn more than those who receive traditional instruction. In a study of English-speaking students in a Montreal high school who were studying French, Gardner and Lambert (1959) reported that students who had positive attitudes toward the French Canadian community and were interested in interacting with or becoming part of it tended to be more successful language learners than those students who were learning French only because they were required to do it by the

school environment. In this case, it is the community of French speakers, not the language itself what has created the motivation in those students. But when students do not live in the community where the target language is spoken, like the case of English in Spain, using music may be a way to introduce the culture and motivate students to learn the target language.

The idea that is important to take into account is the way in which we can manage to create a favorable environment where students are able to assimilate the comprehensible input in a classroom. It is something that has to do with motivation, and that later on I will explain. As teachers, we must be capable of creating a favorable environment where every student feel motivated to learn the language. Students, for their part, should also contribute to create this appropriate environment with a good attitude and motivation.

Using English songs in EFL classrooms can successfully bring about affective learning through providing a harmonious classroom atmosphere, reducing students' stress and anxiety, fostering their interests and motivating them to learn the target language. Students will enjoy the class, and they will consider English songs as part of entertainment rather than work.

The contemporary Music Approach

This is the methodology developed by Anton (1990). According to this author, songs are a very important tool in the memorization of information. They are considered as a memory prompter.

Anton believes that "music is one of the most effective memory aids available to us, especially for recalling grammatical structures". Songs provide a lot of repetitive expressions and vocabulary that are easily retained in memory due to the melody.

In CMA, different styles of music and rhythms are correlated with the various grammar lessons, because Anton believes that certain beat reminds students of the song, and the song in turn reminds them of the grammar. This method combines singing and psychology with language learning.

It is another method that uses a step-by-step approach to combine active and nonverbal processes of the right hemisphere of the brain with verbal and logic-based processes governed by the left hemisphere to reduce inhibitions and allow the student to learn and remember certain grammatical features.

Involuntary Mental Rehearsal

Klashen (1983) makes a comparison between language acquisition and language learning, saying that the acquisition involves the things you learn without realizing, while the learning is conscious. "Din in the head" or Involuntary Mental Rehearsal is the term used to describe this subconscious learning of the language. The use of music (especially popular music) has been hypothesized to help in the process of language acquisition by activating mental rehearsal. Other authors like Murphey (1990) elaborated new theories related to this involuntary rehearsal. The "Song-stuck-in-my-head" refers to songs and tunes that perpetuate in our heads and that without realizing are repeatedly rehearsed once and again. It is by this unconscious repetition that we end up memorizing the lyrics of the songs.

Theory of Multiple intelligences

This is the theory proposed and elaborated by Gardner (1993). Gardner defines intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Using biological as well as cultural research, he formulated a list of nine intelligences. This new list of intelligences differs greatly from the traditional view which usually recognizes only two intelligences, verbal and computational:

- verbal/linguistic intelligence
- mathematical/logical intelligence
- visual/spatial intelligence
- body/kinesthetic intelligence
- musical/rhythmic intelligence
- interpersonal intelligence
- intrapersonal intelligence

- naturalist intelligence
- existential intelligence

All of these intelligences are not isolated and irrelevant, but interdependent on and complementary with each other. Therefore, it is inappropriate to explore only one type of intelligence in EFL learning and teaching. Thus, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences implies that educators should recognize and teach to a broader range of talents and skills, including the musical skills. Children, whose musical intelligences are highly developed, for example, may be placed in a special education class where they can deepen in those musical aspects in order to develop this intelligence. Listening to English songs is of great value to tap the learner's linguistic potentials through enchanting melodies.

General goal of the paper

The purpose of this research is to show the positive effects of songs in the process of learning the foreign language and to provide a deeper explanation about this methodology by investigating and adding more information taking into account the data recollected and the previous studies. This research studied the effects of songs in the retention of the vocabulary and in the attitude of the students towards the language. To provide objective results this method was compared with the traditional vocabulary instruction. After reading some studies and theories that had previously proven this musical methodology, my object of concern was the way of applying it in my class. Concerning the memorization of vocabulary, all the studies showed favorable results when using songs, but regarding the motivation of the students, there were not too many studies showing clear results. Motivation is something that is quite subjective, and it depends on the particular person, so it may vary from one group to another.

Research questions

1. Will students retain more vocabulary with the methodology of the songs than with the traditional method of vocabulary instruction?

2. Will the use of songs foster the students' interest and motivation to learn the language?

Method

Participants

My criterion in the selection of the participants was the level and the age. I needed a group with more than a basic level of English because some activities required quite a high knowledge in vocabulary and fluency in speaking. Apart from this, I took into account the variable of "age" because one activity required also reflecting on different ideas related to the topics of the song. I was searching for matured students with a critical mind. The participants were a class of 1st Bachiller of the Secondary school of Eunate. This class was divided into two groups of 10 students. It was a very participative class and some of them spoke very well.

Time spent

Two lessons of 55 minutes carried out in two different days. One week later, I took the 10 minutes of a class in order to make them the post test.

Procedure

I divided the class into two groups of students and I prepared two different lessons, one for each group. As it was necessary to carry out two different methodologies, while I was with one group the rest remained with the teacher in another place. It is important to mention that the vocabulary used in both lessons was the same, what it was different was the methodology applied. Apart from this, the experimental group was supposed to know nothing about what the control group did in the lesson, and the opposite.

Experimental group (day 1)

The methodology applied with this group was the one of the songs. I delivered some time thinking about the possible song to work with. I had clear in mind that it had to be a song with an appropriate and unknown vocabulary to them and with some

interesting topics to discuss. Finally, and with the approval of my tutor, I chose the Pink's song 'Fucking Perfect'. I wanted to shock them and make them think from the very beginning, so for this reason I chose this controversial song. The sequence of the activities was the following:

1. First of all, they listened to the song. They had to fill the gaps of the lyrics, so they listened to it twice.
2. Then, as almost all the words were unfamiliar to them some time was devoted to explain the meaning of the words. They asked me about everything that they didn't understand. It was very important to me that they understood perfectly all the words because later on they were going to demonstrate what they had retained.
3. Following this, I required them to talk about the song and about the topics that appear in it. It is a song that talks about someone who has suffer a lot during his or her life. The different topics the song talks about can be very familiar to them because they are very common nowadays between teenagers: mistreatment, bullying, Self-esteem, and so on.
4. I put the official video of the song in order to give them a final overview of the meaning of the song. During the video they could follow the story of this girl, a very tragic story full of difficulties and suffering. It also appears a scene in which she tries to commit suicide.
5. Finally, they had to write a short composition about the song and the ideas already said in class. I decided to do this final exercise for those people who were shy to talk in public. I think that it is very important to respect the feelings of everybody, so when someone doesn't feel in the mood to talk in front of everybody it is better not to force him or her. We have more options to express the feelings.

Control group (day 2)

With this group, I applied the traditional methodology of vocabulary instruction. I was conscious that this class was going to be more boring than the other so I tried to make it be as dynamic as possible.

1. First of all, I gave them a matching activity to do. I did it with the program Hot Potatoes. They had to match the vocabulary, expressions and phrasal verbs with their meaning. The vocabulary was taken from the song of the previous day.
2. Then, and in order to create a sort of debate in class, I asked them about the possible relation of the words of the paper to some topics. Although they hadn't listened to the song, some interesting topics came out.
3. Then I asked them to write down their own sentences using the vocabulary worked in class.

Data collection

The data collection consisted in a post-test (Appendix IV) where the students had to demonstrate the retention of the vocabulary worked in class. Recall was assessed by counting the number of words correctly retained by each participant in this post-test. Responses were used to compare the two methodologies and to try to give an explanation for the two hypotheses formulated at the beginning.

This post-test was simply a filling the gaps exercise. Students were asked to fill the blanks with the appropriate vocabulary (words, phrasal verbs, and expressions). In order to make the exercise easier I put the definitions of the words at the end of each sentence. At the end of this test I asked them this question: what do you think about what we have done in class? I offered them the possibility of answering it in Basque because I only wanted to know their opinion about the exercise, which was going to be very important later on in the evaluation of the motivation capacity.

This post-test was the same for both groups and it was done and gathered a week later in order to prove if the passing of days was determinant in this information processing.

Regarding the variable of motivation, I took into account the attitude of the students in both classes, their level of involvement during the activities, and the opinion that they expressed in the post test about the lessons.

In the table below we can see the two groups and the two capacities tested in the research:

Table 1. Groups and capacities

	Vocabulary Retention	Motivation
Experimental Group	Post- test	Attitude and Participation
Control Group	Post- test	Attitude and Participation

Results

The two tables below show the results of the data collection. Two different tables are designed in order to see the differences between both groups.

Table 2. Experimental group (songs)

Experimental Group	Retention of Vocabulary ²	Motivation ³
Student 1	9/14	Highly motivated
Student 2	3/14	Average motivation
Student 3	7/14	Average motivation
Student 4	1/14	Highly motivated
Student 5	2/14	Highly motivated
Student 6	6/14	Highly motivated
Student 7	2/14	Highly motivated
Student 8	10/14	Average motivation
Student 9	6/14	Highly motivated
Student 10	3/14	Highly motivated

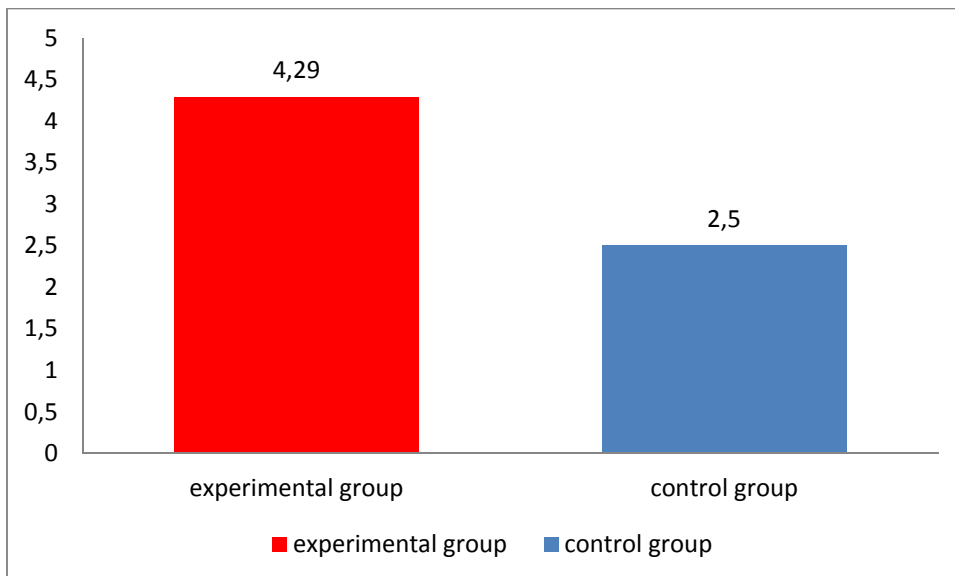
² These figures are based on the number of gaps filled correctly in the post-test by the students. The total number of gaps is 14.

³ These results are based on the attitude and participation of students during the lessons. Their opinion expressed in the post test about the lessons and activities are also taken into account in the data analysis. The results are described in three parameters: highly motivated, average motivation and non- motivated.

Table 3. Control group (traditional instruction)

Control Group	Retention of Vocabulary	Motivation
Student 1	1/14	Non- motivated
Student 2	1/14	Average motivation
Student 3	7/14	Average motivation
Student 4	10/14	Non- motivated
Student 5	3/14	Non- motivated
Student 6	4/14	Non- motivated
Student 7	2/14	Average motivation
Student 8	4/14	Non-motivated
Student 9	2/14	Non- motivated
Student 10	6/14	Non- motivated

Now here we have the percentages of vocabulary retention in both groups



Looking at these tables and the graphic we can see several things:

- Regarding the retention of vocabulary in the experimental group, three students out of ten get to the 50% of the correct words, two of them remained just below the boundary and the rest were below the minimum required.

- Regarding the retention of vocabulary in the control group, only two students out of ten get to the 50% of the correct words, another one remained below the boundary and the rest were below the minimum required.
- As far as motivation is concerned in the experimental group almost all the students seem to be highly motivated while in the control group most of them were not motivated.
- Looking at the graphic we can say that in both groups the vocabulary retention was very low. 4,29% in the Experimental group, and 2,5% in the Control group. However, these results show that the group who dealt with the song obtained better results than the other group.

Discussion and conclusion

As we have previously said, the general goal of this research is to demonstrate the viability of using a new methodology of teaching a foreign language, and the positive effects that it may have on students' retention of vocabulary and motivation. The idea is to compare this new methodology of using song with the traditional foreign language instruction in order to see the positive and the negative points that it can have. Although the music methodology has innumerable virtues and can be favorable to a lot of learning areas, this research is only going to focus on two capacities which are very important when learning a foreign language: the vocabulary retention and the motivation of students.

Summary of the findings

We have previously seen on the tables that in terms of vocabulary retention, the results in the experimental group are slightly higher than in the control group, which means that students from the group who listened to the song obtained better results than the ones from the other group. Although the difference between one group and the other was not very significant, these results revealed that the use of songs when teaching a language is an important and determinant factor in the retention of the vocabulary.

In the case of the motivation capacity, we can say that the results are much more differentiated. In the experimental group students were more motivated during

the whole lesson. After listening to the song they were required to talk about their opinion and about the song itself, and without any inconvenience they participated actively trying to contribute different and new ideas. Apart from this, every student was asked about their opinion about the lesson in the post-test, and those from the experimental group were agreed that the use of songs was a methodology new to them and very different from the traditional language instruction. They said that the use of songs was a very positive and interesting methodology in order to learn vocabulary.

Interpretation of the findings

The belief that the music methodology has more negative effects in the foreign language learning than positive ones was one of the obstacles I had to face up to in this research. The teaching, as well as other fields, sometimes has to deal with some issues that cannot be explained by merely educational reasons. As an example of this we have the methodology of songs and the role that it can assume in language teaching. The idea is that if there is a widespread reluctant opinion about the use of songs in foreign language classrooms, this methodology will not become prestigious and consequently, will not be applied by the teachers. Nevertheless, there are studies that support the positive effects of this methodology of teaching, but, as I have just explained in this paragraph, its application still doesn't convince the whole teaching staff, so it has not become very popular for the moment.

The response to the research question 1, "Will students retain more vocabulary with the methodology of the songs than with the traditional method of vocabulary instruction?" was positive. Even though there is not a very huge difference from one group to the other, results showed that using songs to aid recall was effective. Students had better overall recall when the song was employed to present information. With the experimental group I observed that at the beginning of the class they were not very motivated to do all the activities maybe because it was something new and unknown to them. Then I put them the song. As they hadn't listened to it before, they enjoyed it the first time they heard it, and then, in the second time, they filled the gaps. I realized that most of the words were very complicated for them to get right, but after understanding them they retained them effectively. If we assume that

the melody helps is the process of memorization, we have to bear in mind that this melody has to be pleasant and appealing. In this case, I chose the song without knowing the effect that it would have on students, but now I think that it would be better to offer them the possibility of choosing the song they like always from the range of options offered by me. In this manner, they will feel more motivated, as they are dealing with something they like, and consequently they will retain more. With the control group, on the other hand, I noticed more difficulties in the memorization of the words, particularly because there was not a context for the words. They were required to do some vocabulary activities but not dealing with a song or another context, it was more boring and difficult for them to retain the information. As we are going to see now, the context plays a very important role in the retention of information.

Several researchers and teachers have talked about the benefits of music as a memory aid. Music is considered to be a very appropriate tool in order to memorize several aspects of the language because its nature is very repetitive and provides a lot of opportunities for learners to focus on grammatical, morphological and phonetic aspects of the language. Depending on what you want to focus on or work in you have a variety of songs that can serve your particular aim. Probably all of us, when we were children, we used to listen to songs in our English classes. Can we think about the reasons for this? First of all, we can say that children need enjoying activities in order to retain the information; otherwise they get bored and don't pay attention to the teacher or to the subject. Listening to songs is a very enjoying activity and it is happily accepted by little children because they love singing. It is clear that the age here is what makes the difference. When we are young we are required to do different and funny activities, we learn by playing games in which the teacher and classmates are involved. When we grow up, these games disappear and the instruction becomes more strict and serious. We are supposed to be adults, so the things we have to deal with imply materials like reading comprehension texts, grammar books and theory. It is evident that we can't do the same things we did before, but is it a change in the methodology the best alternative or can we think about an adaptation of it taking into account factors like age or level? Following the idea of the children's teaching methodology of songs, and considering the positive effects that it has in the retention

of vocabulary and expressions, it would be a very wise idea to elaborate an adapted one for adult learners, like the one I have proved in this research. If we select the appropriate songs taking into account the students' level and tastes and the content, we can elaborate a very effective teaching methodology. We can combine the songs with some previous or post vocabulary or grammar activities, and we can also use different and complementary materials like films, picture, posters, videotapes in order to make the lesson more complete. The Contemporary Music Approach combines singing with language learning, so students will learn the language not only by doing grammatical exercises, but also by doing activities that imply using the voice. I consider this methodology to be very effective for the retention of vocabulary. How many times have we tried to memorize something by singing it? Of course, this action may not have the same effect in everybody, as the memory can work in a very different ways depending on the person, but I think that singing songs would be a very interesting activity to introduce in the lessons.

According to Wallace (1994) and Serafine (1986), there is a link between the musical characteristics and the text itself, and this connection has an effect in our brain. We have to remember that the activity of listening to a song combines both left and right hemispheres: the right hemisphere learns the melody and the left the words, and for this reason it is a very effective learning. Wallace (1994) says that the melody is a determining factor in the retention of information, so when there is a combination of melody and words both things are easily retained into the brain. Considering this, we can say that when words are involved in a musical context, they are better retained. In fact, a very similar connection happens when we are studying something; we retain more if we have already understood the related context, and especially if the context is motivating and interesting. As we have proved in this research with the control group, isolated words are more difficult to retain, firstly because of this lack of a context that it is supposed to provide meaning to the words, and secondly, because it is more difficult and boring for students to pay attention to the language itself when there is a lack of context. As a way to support the importance of the context, I will say that my experience with songs in another language different than English is quite surprising. Normally I listen to music in English, Basque and also in German. My

knowledge of German is very little, not even to maintain a conversation, but in terms of vocabulary I understand some words specially those which are similar to English. After some time listening to some German songs I realized that it was not the melody the only thing retained in my mind, but also the lyrics of the songs. I was able to retain things in another language without understanding the meaning of them. This phenomenon explains also something about the type of context. Previously I have said that the context plays a very important role because it provides meaning to the words, assuming in this way that it must be understandable. Now, considering my experience, I can add that this context, the musical context, independently of being understandable or not, it is enough for the memorization. In other words, we don't need to understand the meaning of the words in order to retain them if they are involved in a musical context, because our brain is programmed to assimilate them. In fact, this can also be supported by my experience with the experimental group. Although the context of the song and the meaning of the words were explained to them after they listened to the song, I noticed that some students didn't pay too much attention to my explanations because they were talking with their partners. For this reason, I was expecting to obtain bad results from their part, but in the post- test I realized that there was not any difference between the students who paid attention and those who didn't paid. Those students who didn't paid attention to my explanations filled some gaps correctly.

This effect that songs have in memory goes even further in some cases. There is a study done by Pricket and Moore (1991) that tested ten patients with Alzheimer's disease. They were assessed for recall of sung and spoken materials familiar to them. They were also assessed in the same way when they were presented new information. Results showed that while there was not too much difference between the reciting familiar words, the recalling new song and the reciting a new poem, the percentages were higher for the words of familiar songs. Patients recalled the words to song better than they recalled spoken words. This study shows the positive effects of songs in the recovery of the information stored in mind. In the case of these patients, a lot of information is lost due to the progress of the mental disease, but there is still some information that is retained in the long term memory, and that it only requires a little

aid to come out. The use of songs is proved to be a therapy for these people and to have an effect in their memory.

My conclusion about the hypothesis of the vocabulary retention is that the context, in this case the song, and the repetitive nature of the songs are the two main factors that can make students memorize the vocabulary.

The response to the research question 2, “will the use of songs foster the students’ interest and motivation to learn the language?” was clearly positive. The findings showed higher levels of motivation in those students who listened to the song. Although I think that the factor of motivation depends on the kind of students, and especially on the language level they have, I have noticed that the fact of listening to a song arouses a particular curiosity in students that other activities don’t do. Nambiar (1993) recommends recent pop songs to increase motivation in the younger generation: “Songs deal with the whole realm of human emotions and students are often willing to sing a song in a foreign language even if they do not fully understand the meaning of the words”. In this manner, it is important to select the appropriate and appealing songs for them, because only if they like the song the curiosity of knowing what it says will come up, and this curiosity will lead them to try to understand it. As a result they will feel motivated to understand and learn the target language. Is there another vocabulary or grammar activity that has this power on students? Another thing that I noticed was that those students of the experimental group were very motivated to talk about the topics of the song. They participated a lot and they were able to create little debates among themselves where they expressed their personal opinion. Besides, in the post-test, they expressed very positive opinions about the class they received and about the song. With the control group I perceived another attitude from the very beginning. They were not motivated to do the activities I was proposing for several reasons. As I have explained in the hypothesis of the retention of vocabulary, the fact of not being a context for the words made the activities more boring and difficult to make. In the communicative activity, for instance, they were also less motivated to talk. As an explanation for this I would say that the lack of context makes more difficult the connection of ideas in mind. Although students can elaborate very interesting opinions about different topics, the context,

especially in order to express ideas in a language that is not the mother tongue, is very helpful and sometimes decisive.

Motivation is something very important in life. Everything we do is motivated by something. Sometimes the motivation is intrinsic; it is our feeling, our wish or our own interest that leads us to do a particular action. Other times, the motivation is extrinsic because it is determined by an external reward, which means that we do something in order to obtain a reward that is not internal. In the case of the process of teaching and learning a language, motivation it is also a very important factor. Related to this, we can talk about two different roles inside a classroom: the role of the teacher and the role of the students.

One of the most important tasks for teachers is to motivate students, and precisely taking into account this factor they should be very wise in the assumption of the required educational role just from the very beginning. It is not only the methodology used what can provoke interest in the subject, but also the topics, activities, linguistic content and particularly the teacher's personal characteristics what can make a change in the attitude of the students. Not so long ago, we attended a talk in our class of pedagogy about the relationship between teachers and students. It was given by a very pleasant teacher called Pilar Tormo. She is a very experienced teacher who has worked especially with students with behavioral problems. She said that there is always an explanation for every bad behavior that students have, and that the duty of every teacher is to investigate or try to give a reason for it. From her point of view, the teacher has the obligation to reach every student, try to know how he or she feels because it is the only way of creating a close relationship where the learning can take place. It is a reciprocal relationship where both parts, the teacher and students, make a great effort in order to get unified in this process of learning, a process that never ends.

There are a lot of different methodologies that can help to achieve this response from the part of the student, like the one proved in this research. The use of songs definitively contributes a lot to the motivation of students, first of all because they are very pleasurable to listen. Students feel very relaxed and happy when they

listen to music. It is an activity that doesn't require any mental effort so most of the stress disappears. Many theories have talked about the use songs in order to relax students. The Affective filter Hypothesis, for instance, says that the use of songs can create a positive and relaxing environment necessary in order to learn the language.

Secondly, music strengthens the bones between people. Listening to music is an action that unifies people all around the world, because you don't need to speak the language of the song in order to feel what the song wants to transmit. Through the music you can connect with other people. There are a lot of songs that are very popular among young people because they employ themes that are very appealing to them, like love, friendship, celebration, etc. Sometimes it is not the song itself, but the singer or the group of the song that represent the model to follow for all these adolescences. They want to be like their idols so they sing and memorize all their songs in order to feel near them in a sense. According to some, this fan phenomenon is what makes the connection between people, and it is commonly seen every day in the news or television when a lot of people queue up for the concerts of their idols. If we translate this into the classroom, we can say that the use of songs can also create a very good relationship between students. Through music and songs they can get to know more about their personality and tastes, and they can create a closer relationship between themselves. At the end, this close connection will make them feel motivated to work as a team and learn more about the language. I could not be able to notice this effect of songs on the students of my research, because I only had one week to carry out the experiment, but, from my point of view, the use of songs during a long period of time would create this close relationship.

Music also motivates students to talk in the foreign language. Murphey (1987) stated that in the case of song activities, "students are doing something with language: they are participating actively in the game called communication". We have to remember that it is very important to learn a language in a communicative way because only when you communicate in a language you can say that you speak that language. If the effect of using songs and music in class creates this close connection among people it will be easier for the teacher to put into practice different and interesting activities to motivate students to learn and apply the language in a

communicative way. Songs provide to students a very wide cultural and social context that can motivate them to reflect and talk about several issues. As I have explained before, the students of the experimental group were very motivated and participative during the lesson. Nevertheless, there were some students who didn't open the mouth. I understand the communicative skills of the people are sometimes related to their personality. Some students are shyer or less confident than others to talk in front of people. In this case, the teacher should have some strategies in a classroom. One option would be to create little groups of debates where every student can talk without too much pressure. Another option would be to require them to write a short composition, because in this manner they will probably feel more comfortable to express themselves. I used the writing strategy with the experimental group, and I realized that those students who didn't say anything in class were also motivated with the activity, as they expressed very interesting ideas about the topics of the song.

Considering these three positive effects of songs on students' motivation to learn the language, it could be said that this music methodology have a lot of favorable points, but if we don't combine it with other factors when carrying out the process of teaching, the learning may be not very effective. With other factors I mean the personal characteristics that the teacher should have, for instance. It is widely thought that teachers should be serious when teaching the subject, otherwise students can consider the class only as a way of entertainment and they tend not to pay attention very much. In fact, this is what happens in every school with those students who don't want to study. Although sometimes this is related to the way the teacher is and makes the class, other times it is only related to the particular situation of the student. The best teacher is not the one who is the strictest and the most serious, but the one who can manage to control the class not being very authoritative. Following the previous idea of Pilar Tormo, in order to reach students, teachers should take the control of the class but from the same position in which students are, because the only way of learning is by creating an environment where everybody is in the same place and where there are no different positions. In opposition this concept of being serious in class I would say that the most effective and appropriate way of teaching something is with humor, and we don't have to mistake humor with the idea of not being

responsible or professional in your job. Seeing the positive things in life is as important as breathing and having humor in your daily routine will be very significant in the result of every action you make, so, why not using this positive attitude in front of the students? These both concepts, positive attitude in life and humor from the part of the teacher, will transmit students a very powerful energy and will motivate them to learn the target language.

Another characteristic the teacher should have in order to carry out his role is the empathy. The role of the teacher must be that of a psychologist somehow. As a teacher, you have to spend a lot of hours with your students, and sometimes without realizing you share a lot of experiences with them that make you get to know them in a wide sense. For this reason, when a student has a problem you have two options, try to avoid it and do as if it is not happening, or get involved with it with all the consequences. I am one of those who think that the teacher must be more than just the person who gives the class. You have to listen to students, no matter if the issue has nothing to do with the educational environment. Probably, most of these problems don't occur as a result of difficulties in the process of learning, but as a result of familiar or social problem, so a good and effective action of the teacher will be a deciding factor in this identification of that problem that will lead the student to solve it, if there is a possibility.

Having talk about the role of the teacher, we have to mention now the characteristics or the role of the 'best' student. As we have previously said, the process of learning must be reciprocal, both parts must benefit from themselves in order to learn, so there is no point in trying to assign the whole responsibility to the teacher if students don't have even the intention of collaborating. They have to be active students, willing to learn more about everything. They have to apply the noticing strategies they have in order to promote the language awareness. "Language awareness is a mental attribute which develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work" (mentioned by Chunxuan Shen, 2009). But, how can we promote the language awareness in students? The use of the songs can make students ask about the song, the meaning of the words and the topics that appear in it. The song

will prompt students' interest about some issues related to the song like the culture, social themes, feelings, but it will also increase their attention to the way the language works, the different vocabulary that appears and the pronunciation of the words. These noticing strategies will also enable students to make comparisons between the target language and the mother tongue in order to understand the target grammatical and morphological structures.

This second hypothesis agrees with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which says that every teacher we must be capable of creating a favorable environment where every student feel motivated to learn the language. The use of songs can make students feel comfortable, allowing the access to comprehensible input. The teacher must assume the role of someone who teaches the language but at the same time takes care of the students, trying to create the most appropriate environment where the process of learning can improve progressively. As I have explained, there are different methodologies, materials and teacher's characteristics that can be applied in order to make students feel motivated, but there are also a lot of factors that can make this aim difficult to achieve, like the number of students in the class, the academic level, and the age, among others.

It is evident that in a class of thirty students you can't dedicate a great deal of time to every particular student, basically because you have to follow the academic program, which means to give a exact number of classes, to correct activities and exams, and to dedicate some time to other activities related to the school in general or to the department in particular. Being a teacher is sometimes very difficult, because you can get involved very easily, but sometimes you don't have enough time to dedicate to every student.

Another factor is the academic level. In the case of the foreign languages taught in secondary schools, teachers have to deal with the different levels that students in a classroom can have. Some students are brilliant, others are just good, but there can also be students with a very poor level of the language and consequently with a lot of difficulties to follow the class. In the case of a classroom where the variety of levels is

huge, how can you create an appropriate environment for all of them if their needs are different?

The third factor is the age. There are some authors that agree with the idea of learning the language as soon as possible, because when you are a child your capacity to assimilate everything is better. Other authors, on the other hand, say that the age is not the most important factor. From my point of view, age is very important but in other aspect. Age seems to be a deciding factor in the level of motivation the students can achieve when learning the foreign language. In other words, students will feel more or less motivated to learn the language depending on their age. As we all know, there is a stage in life called adolescence that takes place between the 12 and 19 years of a person, and that it is full of difficulties and changes. The child is suffering some physical and hormonal changes that make him or her feel different. In this manner, things that were not motivating for them before become important now, and the other way round. If we translate this into the classroom environment, we can say that the attitude of students in the learning process sometimes changes, especially if the stage of the adolescence is very evident. It is going to be more difficult to reach them, and consequently, motivate them to learn the language because their concerns are others. According to my criterion, I chose 16-17 years old students for my research, being conscious of the difficulties I might deal with. I thought that maybe they would be the appropriate ones for what I was searching. Setting apart some exceptional cases, normally students of that age seem to have a more developed critical mind, what happens is that as they are in a very difficult period, sometimes they can't accept things easily. I already knew them a little bit before putting my work into practice, but I didn't know how their reaction to my methodology was going to be like. Contrary to this relationship between age and motivation, with this experiment I discovered that adolescences can also be considered to be appropriate learners. Their response was very positive.

When I put into practice my research in the class I tried to apply all of these characteristics previously described. I tried to make the two lessons as enjoyable as possible (although with the class of the traditional language instruction I didn't have too many options), because I wanted them to feel excited and motivated with the new

activities. I also tried to express my most positive energy with my smile, which is very important if you are in front of people. The response was more than what I was expecting. In general terms, they were happy with the activities done in class, especially those students of the experimental group. In the post-test they said that they were willing to attend more classes like that. The motivation was fully expressed from my part and from their part.

My conclusion about the hypothesis of motivation is that there are two main factors that can motivate students to learn the language. The methodology of using songs in class can very decisive in the attitude of students toward the language, but the characteristics of the teacher is also deciding factor in order to achieve this motivation.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

The first limitation I encounter in this research was the time. As I had to prepare two different lessons for the two methodologies, I didn't have time to apply everything in more than one class. For this reason, I select only the class of 1st Bachiller considering the two variables of language level and age. The results were favorable, but for future research I would recommend to select more than one class and with students of different ages in order to make a deeper investigation and to compare better the results. Another thing related to time is that I could only be able to see the results in the short-term, because the data collection took place after a week.

Another limitation is that I didn't know the students' tastes. As I have previously explained, it is very important to know the students' musical tastes in order to select the appropriate song for them. Selecting the songs they like will motivate them to have a positive attitude and motivation to learn the language. I would have needed more time in order to have more knowledge about this.

One thing that I would add for future research is the context in the lesson of the control group. In the experimental group the context was the song itself, but in the control group, students were required to do some activities without any context. I think that to make a good comparison between both methodologies it is necessary to use context in both cases.

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Appendix I (song- Experimental group)

"Fuckin' Perfect"

Made a wrong turn once or twice
Dug my way out, blood and fire
Bad decisions, that's alright
Welcome to my silly life

Mistreated, misplaced, misunderstood

Miss 'No way, it's all good'
It didn't **slow** me **down**.

Mistaken, always second **guessing**

Underestimated, look I'm still around

Pretty, pretty please, don't you ever, ever feel

Like you're less than fucking perfect

Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel

Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me

You're so **mean** (so mean) when you talk (when you talk)

About yourself. You were wrong.

Change the voices (change the voices) in your head (in your head)

Make them like you **instead**.

So **complicated**,

Look how we all make it.

Filled with so much **hatred**

Such a tired game

It's enough, I've done all I could think of

Chased down all my demons

I've seen you do the same

(Oh oh)

Pretty, pretty please, don't you ever, ever feel

Like you're less than fucking perfect

Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel

Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me

The whole world's scared, so I **swallow** the fear
The only thing I should be drinking is an ice cold beer
So **cool in lying** and we try, try, try but we try too hard
And it's a **waste of my time**.

Done looking for the critics, cause they're everywhere
They don't like my jeans, they don't get my hair
Exchange ourselves and we do it all the time
Why do we do that, why do I do that (why do I do that)?

(Yeah! Oh!)

I'm pretty, pretty, pretty

Pretty, pretty please, don't you ever, ever feel
Like you're less than fucking perfect
Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me
(You're perfect, you're perfect)
Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me.

Apendix II (song with gaps- Experimental group)

Fucking Perfect (Pink)

..... once or twice

....., blood and fire
Bad decisions, that's alright
Welcome to my silly life

.....,,

Miss 'No way, it's all good'
It didn't me
....., always second
....., look I'm still around

....., don't you ever, ever feel
Like you're less than fucking perfect

....., if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me

You're so(so mean) when you talk (when you talk)
About yourself. You were wrong.
Change the voices (change the voices) in your head (in your head)
Make them like you.....

So.....,
Look how we all make it.
Filled with so much
Such a tired game
It's enough, I've done all I could think of
..... all my demons
I've seen you do the same
(Oh oh)

....., don't you ever, ever feel
Like you're less than fucking perfect
....., if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me

The whole world's scared, so Ithe fear
The only thing I should be drinking is an ice cold beer
Soand we try, try, try but we try too hard
And it's amy.....
Done looking for the critics, cause they're everywhere
They don't like my jeans, they don't get my hair
Exchange ourselves and we do it all the time
Why do we do that, why do I do that (why do I do that)?

(Yeah! Oh!)
I'm pretty, pretty, pretty

....., don't you ever, ever feel
Like you're less than fucking perfect
....., if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me
(You're perfect, you're perfect)

....., if you ever, ever feel
Like you're nothing, you're fucking perfect to me.

Appendix III (vocabulary matching activity- control group)

Vocabulary Matching exercise

Match the items on the right to the items on the left.

Check

Make a wrong turn
Dig my way out
Mistreat
Misplace
Misunderstood
Slow down
Guessing
Mistaken
Mean
Hatred
Underestimate
Waste of time
Swallow

Lose velocity; move more slowly.
Put in the wrong place or position
To try hard to catch someone or to get something that you need.
(Ironic expression). A way of saying that lies are pleasant.
When someone takes the wrong way or makes the wrong decision.
Intense animosity or hostility.
To cause (food or drink, for example) to pass through the mouth and throat into the stomach.
Not appreciated or given sympathetic understanding
Wrong or incorrect in opinion, understanding, or perception.
To treat roughly or wrongly.
To make an estimate lower than that which would be correct.
The devotion of time to a useless activity
To make or form by removing earth or other material

Cool in lying
Chase down

Selfish in a petty way; unkind.
To predict (a result or an event) without sufficient information.

Appendix IV (Post-test)

Fill the gaps with the correct Word

1. If we _____ in life sometimes it is very difficult to get back to the beginning.
(expression, make a wrong decision)
2. Sorry, I _____ your words. I thought that you were angry with me. (get the wrong idea)
3. The environment must no longer be damaged and animals must no longer be _____. (to treat somebody in a bad way)
4. I don't know where the keys are. I may have _____ them (to lose something, or a feeling of being in an uncomfortable way)
5. I tried to _____ my way _____, but there was a lot of snow on the ground.
(phrasal verb- to make or form by removing earth or other material).
6. She has suffered a lot in life but this won't _____ her _____ because she is a very strong person. (phrasal verb- , move more slowly or stop)
7. - I don't know the meaning of this word
- It is very easy, try to _____ it (predict something)
8. Why are you so _____ when you talk about yourself? You don't have to be so hard with yourself. (Selfish in a petty way; unkind)
9. I _____ you for your sister, you look like each other. (confuse)
10. Don't _____ the power of this director. It is well known that in the company does whatever he wants. (to make an estimate lower than that which would be correct)
11. The student had a lot of _____ for the teacher because he failed him. (Intense animosity or hostility)
12. If you don't understand the exercise it is a _____ of _____ trying to do it. (the devotion of time to a useless activity)
13. Just after _____ (-ing verb) that poisonous liquid she started to feel sick, so we took her to the hospital.
14. During the race I was _____ (phrasal verb, follow somebody) the first position runner, but I couldn't overtake him because he was too far from me.

Zein da zuen klaseko hauen aktibitateei buruzko iritzia? Bakoitzak idatzi behar du tokatu zaionari buruz, ez beste taldeko klaseari buruz.