Polo del Conocimiento

Letras de canciones en inglés para mejorar las habilidades auditivas de los estudiantes de inglés

Song Lyrics in English to Improve Listening Skills in English Learners

Letras de músicas em inglês para melhorar as habilidades auditivas de alunos de inglês

Jefferson Alberto Sánchez Paguay [I]
jefferson.sanchezpaguay3411@upse.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2116-8008

Yana Inzhivotkina [II]
yana.inzhivotkina@ug.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4297-2364

Correspondencia: jefferson.sanchezpaguay3411@upse.edu.ec

Ciencias de la Educación
Artículo de Investigación

I. Lcdo. Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, Ecuador.
II. PhD. Investigador Independiente, Ecuador.

Resumen

El objetivo principal del siguiente estudio es explorar el uso de letras de canciones para mejorar las habilidades auditivas en estudiantes de inglés. Para lograr este objetivo, fue necesario recopilar experiencias de otros docentes que aplicaron diferentes alternativas a sus clases de inglés; de igual manera, se tomaron algunos de los puntos de vista de los estudiantes sobre el aprendizaje de otro idioma y sus desafíos para conocer su perspectiva sobre el uso de esta alternativa para aprender y mejorar. Es así que para el desarrollo de este estudio se tomó algunos recursos que otorgaron testimonios con antecedentes que han sido estudiados previamente por expertos en el área quienes llegaron a una conclusión que obtiene un resultado particular que depende del contexto donde se obtiene. En otros términos, el análisis de este estudio describirá algunos de los beneficios que se podrían obtener al aplicar canciones a las lecciones diarias; y al final de este se discutirán los resultados obtenidos comparando nuestra realidad actual para llegar a una conclusión.

Palabras clave: Canción; lírica; mejorar; escuchando.

Abstract

The main aim of the following study is to explore the use of song lyrics in order to improve listening skills in English learners. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to gather other teachers' experiences who applied different alternatives to their English classes; in the same way, it was taken some of the students' points of view on learning another language and their challenges to know their perspective on the use of this alternative to learn and improve. Hence, as long as this study was developed, it was taken some resources that granted testimonies with background material that have been studied beforehand by experts in the area who had come to a conclusion that gets a particular result which depends on the context where this is obtained. In other terms, the analysis of this study will describe some of the benefits that could be obtained from applying songs to daily lessons; and at the end of this, the obtained results will be discussed comparing our current reality to get to a conclusion.

Keywords: Song; lyrics; improve; listening.

Resumo

O principal objetivo do estudo a seguir é explorar o uso de letras de músicas para melhorar as habilidades auditivas em alunos de inglês. Para atingir esse objetivo foi necessário reunir experiências de outros professores que aplicaram diferentes alternativas em suas aulas de inglês; da mesma forma, foram levantados alguns pontos de vista dos alunos sobre a aprendizagem de outro idioma e seus desafios para conhecer sua perspectiva sobre o uso desta alternativa para aprender e melhorar. Assim, ao longo do desenvolvimento deste estudo, foram utilizados alguns recursos que concederam testemunhos com material de base que foi previamente estudado por especialistas na área que chegaram a uma conclusão que obtém um resultado particular que depende do contexto onde este é obtido. Em outros termos, a análise deste estudo descreverá alguns dos benefícios que poderiam ser obtidos com a aplicação de músicas nas aulas diárias; e ao final serão discutidos os resultados obtidos comparando nossa realidade atual para chegar a uma conclusão.

Palavras-chave: Canção; letra da música; melhorar; audição.

Introduction

Approach, formulation and statement of the problem

The English language as a means of communication in all aspects has become a tool that helps non–native English speakers to convey ideas and messages encoded in other languages, making possible the comprehension of the main content. Learning English develops a variety of opportunities that could be granted depending on the level of proficiency which has been achieved. English in the professional field has become essential throughout the years around the world; nevertheless, in Latin America, it is evident the fact that there is a great difference in levels in all the region. According to the Statista Research Department (2023), on the scale of the level of English proficiency in Latin America, Argentina achieved a total score of 560 out of 800 points of proficiency, which may catalog this country as the most proficient in the continent; additionally, in the second place is located Honduras with 544 points and on the third place is Costa Rica with 534 points, leaving behind Ecuador as the antepenultimate country on the scale with 467 points. It is important to remark that a great majority of the Ecuadorian population does not possess the required levels of competition, unlike the rest of the countries from the Latin American continent.

Sempértegui (2022), mentioned that the methods and the difference in timetables between private and public schools are the main nuances that mark the inequality in Ecuador. Besides, there was an existent gap that remains as inconvenient nowadays which is mentioned by Ponce Merino et al. (2019) that in Ecuador before February 17th of 2016, English was not a mandatory subject in public education; and now, the consequences are faced. Additionally, in the year 2023, there was an evident change in the curriculum design that made an impact in the English area, which was the reduction of weekly hours going from 5 to 3 hours (Cervantes Intriago, 2023).

Another point to add is the lack of motivation encountered in this generation that was guided by teacher-centered modalities, making a short participation of students starting by the first levels of education, which is still happening nowadays (Bravo et al., 2017).

Taking the last statement as a starting point, all of these are factors that are correlated with the remarkable amount of the Ecuadorian population that has not had the opportunity to communicate with a native English speaker (Intriago et al., 2019). This increases the lack of knowledge of English sounds, even when it comes to young adults as learners who are the group of people who were affected due to these decisions.

Due to the need for the English language nowadays to get a better quality of life, this subject is being taken more seriously in the curriculum design to be taught in schools; considering all aspects, so that is the reason why the strongest part of the English learning language relies on listening.

Gutierrez-Heras and Villacrés Camino (2022) mentioned that the best option teachers choose nowadays is to provide as much vocabulary as is necessary and expose learners to a real context where they can listen and understand effective communication.

But how is it possible to increase the listening competencies to get that effective communication done? Memorizing a whole list of words and how they sound may be a strategy that still works for a few people. Still, it is considered an ancient practice that may be tedious and frustrating, even when it is not possible to memorize most of them by heart when teachers command it. Because of this, it is believed that immersing learners in a vast world of English is the solution to fill these existent gaps, and these ways to immerse could be through social media, reading books or the news in English, watching interviews from favorite interests, watching movies, and listening to music in English.

2363

Literature review

Music

Music is a mixture of harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and repetitions that use patterns to make a likable result, that is meant to be interpreted through a message in a specific encoded language (Gordon, 2024). Music throughout the years has been an instrument, which is key to communicating and expressing different messages and feelings cyphered through diverse languages, among these languages, English is one of them.

Music is an element that could be used as an enhancer in the educational area, where it is applied to improve memory and auditory senses (Shakhnoza et al., 2024). Using music in class for motivation demonstrates that English could be influenced naturally through stimuli that attract learners by catching melodies, making the process of memorization easier, and analyzing the encoded message.

Songs

Songs are a means of having different experiences, they allow the listener to free dopamine while listening, making the listener feel good as a positive result. As Johnson (1884) mentioned, this is not only poetry but the association of the beauty of words, combined with harmony and different attractive melodies. Sometimes these combinations of factors might be simple or complex, and it depends on the people's taste and whether the song is scatchy or not. Additionally, with the effects that are caused on learners, this proposal as a mechanism of learning is analyzed as an opportunity to make lessons easier to understand (Astutik & Pangestu, 2022).

Listening to songs in English

Listening to music in English is primarily a main way of motivation due to the stimulus that this strategy brings in class, causing the improvement of the competencies in the language learning process and developing a variety of ways to express communication. Listening to songs in English in most cases is the first experience that people are exposed to in the world of learning a foreign language, listening first to some basic vocabulary; and next, challenging themselves to learn more complex vocabulary with more colloquial songs (Teppa et al., 2022).

Listening to songs in English to improve listening skills

Hendrawaty (2019), proposes the effectiveness of listening to songs in English as a way to improve this skill, for the reason that there is a great majority of young people who use songs because of

the attractive sounds, rhythms, and singers; moreover, the lyrics in most English songs tend to be touching and meaningful.

It is suggested that music can generate an impact on students, to have better control to convey emotions and enhance memory; besides, it generates a good influence on their learning process when songs are repeated. As Forde Thompson (2023) mentioned, verbal memory is especially correlated to music for the reason that it conveys powerful emotions through different pieces that make people feel related. The more songs are repeated, the more they are memorized; by doing so, the lyrics start to be analyzed and acquired into the daily vocabulary, managing that the human ear can get used to these sounds, these examples could be expressions, collocations, specific and general vocabulary, as well as active and passive vocabulary (Cevallos & Cedeño, 2023).

Research questions:

-Main question:

-Can song lyrics improve listening skills in English learners?

-**Specific questions:**

-What are the background studies that support the implementation of song lyrics to improve listening skills?

-What are teachers and students' experiences and challenges facing the use of song lyrics to improve listening skills in English learners?

-How can teachers benefit with the use of song lyrics to improve listening skills in English learners?

There is a discussion that mentions that there are a few quantities of teachers who consider that implementing this strategy would only apply to students with a high level of musical comprehension and the rest of the students who consider it complex, might feel it saturated (Kumar et al., 2022). Although, it cannot be accepted due to the lack of data that these suppositions assure, because the use of song lyrics to improve vocabulary in English learners, is still under-explored.

General and specific objectives

General objective:

-   To analyze the use of song lyrics to improve listening in English learners.

Specific objectives:

- To explore the background studies that support the implementation of song lyrics to improve listening skills.
- To gather teachers and students' experiences and challenges facing the use of song lyrics to improve listening skills in English learners.
- To analyze the benefits of the use of song lyrics to improve listening skills in English learners.

Methodology

Type of research explanation

To carry out this research, it was necessary to use the qualitative method in order to gather experiences and testimonies provided by teachers with expertise in the area who granted the opportunity and their time to collaborate through interviews, which was a suitable way to collect data. These professionals were four English teachers from "Centro Tecnológico Naval" (CETNAV), and it was used a total of five open-ended questions that were asked to them. These interviews took place with two teachers in a face-to-face modality; with the other two, the interviews were carried out on a virtual modality.

The main focus of Qualitative interviews consists of not only catching a different variety of experiences from experts who have worked in the area but interpreting and correlating with other contexts that were already studied by different authors who provided previous ideas to continue the study (Edwards & Holland, 2012, as cited in Foley et al., 2021).

Additionally, it was essential to request the participation of twelve military students who are between the ages of 18 to 22 years old, who took part in this study to discover their thoughts on this alternative. It was possible to gather this information using questionnaires with five open-ended questions. A questionnaire is a structure composed of a system of questions, which follow a logical point with the purpose of obtaining responses from a common topic (Córdoba, 2005).

Moreover, the design that was implemented to achieve this, was the Phenomenological study which is a design that is meant to collect previous exposures to the topic in common. Neubauer (2019) in his research about "Phenomenology", points out that the comprehension of different phenomena relies on the need to be familiar with previous experiences to build a supporting appreciation for them.

Expected results

Findings

Professionals

The obtained opinions were collected in the participants' native language to have a better criterion of their thoughts. These results were transcribed and then explored in depth to see the similarities that might exist in common. The following round of questions for teachers was classified into four topics that were necessary to analyze. These topics were: identified problems, alternatives, motivation, and benefits and limitations of the proposal.

Starting with the first topic, two could agree that one of the main problems tends to come from secondary education, because of the provided time that the English subject is taught. For example, they mentioned: *"One of the difficulties is that students did not have the right amount of time for English classes in school because the Ecuadorian education's curriculum design does not support L2 education"* (participant 1). Another of the participants' thoughts described the following words: *"There are different English levels that are presented in this military school because of the previous education that they had in high school"* (participant 2).

On the contrary, participant 4 pointed out that the background problem relies on the lack of immersion: *"Outside the classroom, it does not exist a direct exposure to the L2; therefore, the listening skills are only practiced through speakers"* (participant 4).

Interpreting the second topic; considering alternatives, participants 1 and 3 have considered the use of music in the classroom, using their own strategies to make learning comprehensive, in particular: *"It is possible to have a better organization using music because students engage with ease to the content, even with the verb tenses"* (participant 1), *"There are songs that students have heard but they do not understand, so to get familiar with the meaning of the song, it is necessary to project the song with captions"* (participant 3).

Unlike the other participants, there was another alternative that was considered to improve listening skills, and it was: *"To make a reinforcement on previous words that were learned, related to the audio that is going to be played"* (participant 2).

Concerning the third topic, participants 1, 2, and 3 have considered it, and their way of implementing the strategy is through the use of projections, captions and worksheets. According to the testimony of participant 2, she mentioned that: *"It is important to use the songs depending*

not only the level of proficiency, but the ages, and trending topics that make learning more engaging for students".

Among the genres that could be considered, participants 1, 3, and 4 have the same thoughts on using pop music from the decades of the '70s and '80s, due to the reason that these songs contain a vocabulary that is simpler to understand, and they do not possess abstract meanings that make learning hard and complex, besides, the rhythm and sounds from those ages, are considered "catching" by the participants.

Regarding the fourth topic, among the benefits that could be found, there is the increment of motivation as it was mentioned by participant 3: *"Listening to songs in English generates motivation and enriches knowledge, it breaks the mental barrier that students create when they are learning a second language".*

Participants concluded as well, saying that the use of songs in the learning process is a resource to not only improve listening abilities but to get to know different expressions, practice pronunciation, and intonation. *"There are a lot of benefits, like having the opportunity to listen to another kind of pronunciation, different accents, and colloquialisms, learning becomes more real"* (participant 2). The most remarkable limitation in common was the reactive part, for the reason that this might influence on students' motivation because if the material is not revised and analyzed, it will not have the desired results. According to participant 1, sometimes teachers do not put enough productivity into their work, which is interpreted as a lack of effort to explore the strategy.

Students

Once the questionnaires were provided to students, it was possible to make an interpretation in which it could be noticed that most of the results coincided. It was a total of five questions which were classified into five different topics that were adapted to know students' ideas and preferences, these topics were: challenges, autonomous alternatives, motivation, importance, and genres.

In the first topic, it was possible to realize there was a great majority that agreed that the main challenge is related to the lack of comprehension that is found in the foreign pronunciations that they tend to hear when listening exercises are played. Therefore, there is not a total understanding of the meanings.

For the second topic, students were asked for alternatives they had taken to improve their listening skills on their own. Some of these alternatives were mentioned to explore the means they use to increase their motivation, and according to the results, it was possible to learn that they try to

2368

immerse themselves in the L2. These alternatives were: Listening to songs in English, watching videos on YouTube, or listening to podcasts in English.

When it comes to motivation on the third topic, the students talked about feelings that keep them engaged, combining other factors such as the messages that are transmitted and the curiosity to know what the songs say, the kind of rhythm and how feelings depend on it, and the energies that are provided that make them feel good in the classroom.

The fourth topic mentioned the importance that is considered by the students, highlighting some criteria like learning while they are listening and analyzing words with the lyrics that songs show, which they mentioned causes the improvement of their listening abilities when they get familiar with the vocabulary, additionally, their lexicon and knowledge about pronunciation could be increased.

Finally, the last topic states the students' preferences about genres, having kinds of music with attractive melodies such as Pop or Electronic since they have that impact on students to expand their engagement. The questionnaire showed as well that they have some preference for hard genres like Rock or urban styles such as Rap. But there was another part where they described that they feel good with any kind of genre.

Discussion

According to the obtained results taken from the qualitative research, the explored perspectives of teachers and students demonstrated that there were aspects in common to consider. The main problems detailed by Ponce Merino et al. (2019) and Cervantes Intriago (2023) are related to the obstacles that are presented in Ecuadorian public education is a reality that is described on the first topic by teachers, like the English language as a non-obligatory subject in 2016 and the reduction of hours in the curriculum design in 2023. Another additional point that was mentioned by the participants was the lack of exposure to L2, which is related to the lack of comprehension that students face when they are practicing with a listening exercise as it was described by Intriago et al., (2019) in previous studies.

Despite these problems, among the alternatives to improve English listening skills, it was possible to find a coincidence in the statements provided by teachers and students about the use of music, taking into consideration the different kinds of music to be used according to the levels. As Teppa et al., (2022) stated, the first exposure to a real English context is through songs.

2369

Hendrawaty (2019) established that the success of improving listening skills with music relies on the parts and factors to which students can feel attracted. Teachers declared that the most adequate songs to practice with, are the songs from the '70s and '80s because of the catching melodies that they possess. On the contrary, students selected Pop music as their main preference to practice with.

Teachers and students point out the benefits and importance of using song lyrics, including the acquisition of more vocabulary, getting to know the message of a specific song, analyzing its meaning, and getting familiar with the pronunciation. Forde Thompson (2023), describes in his study the transmission of powerful emotions and enrichment of vocabulary as a primary benefit.

Finally, teachers mentioned a limitation that exists, and it is a lack of compromise in some teachers when it comes to selecting the most suitable songs for practicing. This discussion stated by Kumar et al., (2022), says that only a short number of students with a high level of understanding could achieve good results.

Conclusion

The final result of this investigation could demonstrate that teachers and students showed a high level of enthusiasm for bringing up a projection of working with song lyrics. The development of this research was possible to carry out thanks to the analysis of the answers taken with the qualitative tools that were used, acknowledging the collaboration of the participants who answered sincerely with the purpose of getting to know their expectations and thoughts about the use of English songs in class.

The main limitation of this study was that it was only possible to adapt it into an exploratory study, focused on phenomenology. It revealed the possible good results and benefits that could be gotten; nevertheless, it will be possible to know that information to be implemented in further research in the future.

Therefore, all knowledge is valid; for this reason, once these affirmations were taken, it will be necessary to select determined songs to be played with different levels and make a comparison with the results in the future.

References

1. Astutik, Y., & Pangestu, K. I. D. (2022). The Use of English Songs in Teaching Listening Skills Through Online Learning at Junior High School Level. Borneo Educational Journal (Borju), 4(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.24903/bej.v4i1.950

2. Bravo, J. C., Intriago, E. A., Holguin, J. V., Garzon, G. M., & Arcia, L. O. (2017). Motivation and Autonomy in Learning English as Foreign Language: A Case Study of Ecuadorian College Students. English Language Teaching, 10(2), 100. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n2p100

3. Cervantes Intriago, M. C. (2023). Percepción acerca de la Enseñanza Actual del Inglés en los Colegios Fiscales de Esmeraldas. Revista Científica Hallazgos21, 8(3), 310-315.

4. Cevallos, C. M. M., & Cedeño, C. C. (2023). Songs for enhancing oral communication through the acquired of vocabulary. UNESUM - Ciencias. Revista Científica Multidisciplinaria, 7(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.47230/unesum-ciencias.v7.n1.2023.707

5. Córdoba, F. G. (2005). El cuestionario: Recomendaciones metodológicas para el diseño de cuestionarios. Editorial Limusa.

6. Foley, G., Timonen, V., Conlon, C., & O'Dare, C. E. (2021). Interviewing as a Vehicle for Theoretical Sampling in Grounded Theory. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20, 1609406920980957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920980957

7. Forde Thompson, W., Bullot, N. J., & Hellmuth Margulis, E. (2023). The psychological basis of music appreciation: Structure, self, source. https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2022-51965-001.html

8. Gordon, E. (2024, julio 24). Music | Art Form, Styles, Rhythm, & History | Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/art/music

9. Gutierrez-Heras, C. B., & Villacrés Camino, M. A. (2022). Communicative Language Teaching to Enhance Speaking Skills in B1.1 Level. 7. https://doi.org/10.23857/pc.v7i4.3891

10. Hendrawaty, N. (2019). The Influence of Listening English Pop Songs to Improve Learners' Vocabulary at LKP Nuansa Jaya. Loquen: English Studies Journal, 12(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.32678/loquen.v12i01.1192

11. Intriago, E. A., Villafuerte, J., Bello, J., & Cevallos, D. (2019). TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY: CHALLENGES FROM THE ECUADORIAN CONTEXT. 2.

12. Johnson, H. K. (1884). The Meaning of Song. The North American Review, 138(330), 487-501.

13. Kumar, T., Akhter, S., Yunus, M. M., & Shamsy, A. (2022). Use of Music and Songs as Pedagogical Tools in Teaching English as Foreign Language Contexts. Education Research International, 2022, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/3384067

14. Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. Perspectives on Medical Education, 8(2), 90-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

15. Ponce Merino, S. R., Parrales Poveda, M. E., Baque Arteaga, S. Y., & Parrales Poveda, M. L. (2019). Realidad actual de la enseñanza en inglés en la educación superior de Ecuador. Dominio de las Ciencias, 5(2), 523-539.

16. Sempértegui, B. (2022, noviembre 18). La suficiencia en inglés, una brecha educativa de Ecuador. Conexion PUCE. https://conexion.puce.edu.ec/la-suficiencia-en-ingles-una-brecha-educativa-de-ecuador/

17. Shakhnoza, I., Zamira, S., Sevinch, N., & Asqar, O. (2024). IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH MUSIC AND SONGS. Western European Journal of Linguistics and Education, 2(4), Article 4.

18. Statista. (2023). Latin Americans who best speak English 2022. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1053066/english-proficiency-latin-america/

19. Teppa, R., Rorimpandey, R., & Posumah, J. (2022). IMPROVING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL BY USING SONGS' LYRICS A STUDY CONDUCTED AT SMAN 1 MELONGUANE. JoTELL: Journal of Teaching English, Linguistics, and Literature, 1(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.36582/jotell.v1i2.3428