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## Are songs effective and Beneficial in EFL classrooms?

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# Are Songs Effective and Beneficial in EFL Classrooms?



Mémoire de Master MEEF Anglais soutenu par **Léa Leriche**.

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Léa Leriche

# Are Songs Effective and Beneficial in EFL Classrooms?

Mémoire réalisé dans le cadre du cycle Master MEEF A

Sous la direction de Monsieur Glain, maître de conférences HDR en linguistique anglaise et Monsieur Ogier, enseignant en anglais et didactique de l'anglais.

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## **Résumé**

Ce mémoire a pour objectif d'étudier l'utilité et l'efficacité des chansons en anglais comme support d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement des compétences de communication en cours d'anglais. Bien que comparé à d'autres systèmes scolaires, nous nous concentrerons sur le système scolaire français et sur les apprenants du second degré qui étudient l'anglais LVA. En effet, l'emploi des chansons en classe n'est pas une nouveauté et certains professeurs ont déjà ressenti qu'elles pouvaient être bénéfiques à l'enseignement mais aussi à l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise. Cependant, d'autres enseignants n'approuvent pas cette méthode qu'ils considèrent inconventionnelle, peu productive, ou encore trop difficile à mettre en œuvre. Dès lors, il semble nécessaire de présenter objectivement les qualités d'un tel support artistique exploité à des fins pédagogiques. Nous comparerons dans un premier temps la façon dont le langage et la musique sont traités par le cerveau, pour comprendre l'impact des chansons sur ce dernier durant le processus d'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère. Ensuite, il sera démontré que les chansons ne sont pas seulement bénéfiques pour développer la compétence linguistique, mais également en tant qu'exposition authentique aux cultures du monde anglophone. Cette étude nous permettra enfin d'évaluer les différents procédés d'enseignement des chansons afin de proposer un guide pratique d'application en classe.

Mots clefs : musique et chansons, cours d'anglais langue étrangère, enseignement d'anglais LVA, mémoire, motivation, compétences linguistiques et culturelles, théorie et pratique d'éducation, diversité pédagogique, démarche actionnelle.

## **Abstract**

This work aims at verifying the possible effectiveness of using English songs as a means to improve English language skills, with a focus on French students learning English as a foreign language. In fact, the use of songs in class is not new and some teachers have already felt that it is beneficial to foreign language teaching, but also to foreign-language learning. Nevertheless, other teachers consider this method as unconventional, unproductive or too difficult to implement in their lessons. Therefore, I wanted to study this field to find hard evidence that underpins the effectiveness of using this art for educational purposes. I will first compare how language and music are assimilated by the human brain to understand the impact of songs on the brain in the process of learning a new language. Then, it will be demonstrated that not only can songs serve as a learning tool for linguistic skills, but they also get authentic cultural knowledge about the English-speaking world. All these elements would help me to evaluate which approaches to songs are of most pedagogical interest to establish a guide that gives advice about practical applications of teaching English songs.

Key words: Music and songs, EFL classrooms, language teaching, memory, motivation, linguistic skills and cultural knowledges, theory and practice of education, pedagogical diversity, action-oriented approach.

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## **List of abbreviations and explanations.**

**CEFR** : Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CECRL in French)

**CP** : Year 2 (UK), first grade (US)

**CPH** : Critical Period Hypothesis

**EFL** : English as a Foreign Language\*

**L1** : First Language, native language

**L2** : Second Language\*

**SSIMHP** : The Song Stuck In My Head Phenomenon\*

**Terminale** : Final year before the baccalauréat; Year 13 (UK), Year 12 (US).

\*A Foreign Language and a Second Language are quite different. To simplify, learning a Second Language means one learns a language that is not their L1, but that can be heard outside of the classroom in a variety of settings (English Study Breaks, 2018). For instance, if the learners are Indian, they would have opportunities to learn English as a Second Language. On the other hand, learning a Foreign Language means one is exposed to the target language only several hours a week in the classroom, because they study a language that is not widely spoken in their native country. It would typically be the case of a French speaker who learns English at school.

\* The SSIMHP is a term used by Murphey (1990) to mention an experience, common to many people, of a popular song dinning through one's head many times.

## **Introduction**

I have always loved music. As many people, I can hardly live without it. It helped me a lot in sad and stressful moments. It was also there during joyful celebrations and probably in the best days of my life. This particular idea that a soundtrack exists for every moment and every aspect of one's life motivated me to start research on the topic. Indeed, music has an important role in our everyday life, and it is basically so stimulating that it helps us to feel good. Humans play music for entertainment, for fun, for therapy, for identification with social and cultural groups, for money or sometimes just for the sake of art. Every day, we sing our favourite songs in the car, we go dancing, we sing our national anthem before a match, we sing to celebrate birthdays and religious feasts. In other words, even though we are not professional musicians, we are nonetheless music consumers and performers.

Moreover, my interest in teaching methods mainly dates back to the English language teaching module I took when I was a student at the University of Kent, during my Erasmus program for my bachelor's degree. I learnt a lot about teaching methods and about the importance of working on cultural and social issues to challenge the learners and give them opportunities to have meaningful exchanges. To do so, I wanted to focus on the effectiveness of non-conventional teaching methods and especially songs in the English as a foreign language learning process. I also wondered whether English teachers like or dislike teaching songs and the reasons why some of them rarely teach songs.

More recently, as an English teacher, I wanted to use songs in my class to improve my pupils' language skills. However, I noticed that songs were not completely part of the curriculum, and I then started realising that adapting this material to the pupils' levels and needs was not as easy as it first seemed.

The purpose of my research is to demonstrate the benefits of using songs in English language teaching, with due consideration for the challenges it may involve. To give a context to this paper, we will first give a general overview of songs and learning, by analysing the literature review and studying how the brain functions in the processing of language and music. We will then evaluate some language teaching methods using songs of French teachers by analysing the results of a conducted survey for our research.

Then, in chapters 2 and 3, we will consider the different assets of songs. Therefore, the present work will address the following questions: To what extent do songs help to know more about the English world and its culture? If songs can enhance listening skills, do they educate the learners' ears to the English musicality? Can listening to songs in the foreign language classrooms benefit the learners' lexical learning and their pronunciation?

After having considered all these elements, we will finally wonder how to adapt songs to the teaching context in Chapter 4 by proposing some guidelines and examples of activities using songs.

# **Chapter I. A General Overview of Songs and Learning.**

## **A. Definitions.**

To start, it seems essential to provide a brief explanation of the terms used in this master's thesis. In Western cultures there is a tendency to distinguish songs from music, making the broad term music synonymous with instrumental music. However, the definition of music is less strict in English. Generally, the term 'music' conveniently covers both instrumental music and songs, as a melodic unit that is sung or played (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2021). To be more precise, music corresponds to a pattern of sounds made by instruments or voices (or both) intended to give pleasure to people listening to it, whereas songs are short musical compositions of words put in music, as defined by the online *Cambridge Dictionary* (2021). Therefore, we will study the role of songs in EFL classes as we will focus on the lyrics and melodies since they will be proved to be both relevant in language teaching.

## **B. The use of songs and their effects on the language achievement:**

### **A literature review.**

Over time, some research has been carried out to know if songs would improve the learning of a foreign language. Researchers particularly focused on the linguistic aspects of songs.

First, the American psychologist Bruner (1960, p.34) writes "the child learns how to represent the external world through symbols". It means that, in their development, children can understand symbols before even understanding words, which suggests that even though their referents are different from ours in the real and concrete world, they also convey meaning. Bruner also suggests that music, as it deals with "humanistic learning" (p.80), is part of this symbolic representation of the world for children. What is clearly suggested through Bruner's cognitive learning theory is that education should not only develop enactive and iconic representations, but also active and symbolic thinking in children through their own experiences (p.68). Bruner considers learners of very young ages to be capable of learning any material as long as the instruction is organized appropriately. It thus proves that songs can be studied by all once they are adapted.

This theory is supported by Lowe (1998), who follows a concept of interdisciplinarity within the pedagogical context and who worked to incorporate “leçons musique/langue” (p.624) in the Canadian school curriculum. The subjects of her study were 53 second-grade students (7-8 years old) of the French Immersion program in Canada that were set up in interdisciplinary music and French classes. English-speaking students were given eight weekly units of five 15-minute music lessons that were incorporated into the French beginners’ lessons, in which they studied some melodic-rhythmic patterns. The research not only indicates that classes receiving daily music instruction academically surpassed classes receiving less frequent instruction, but her findings also lead to the conclusion that students improved their oral grammar, listening and reading comprehension in French through motivating musical activities. Indeed, learners appeared to be more creative, spontaneous, and motivated after having been exposed to melodic-rhythmic patterns by listening, after having themselves composed melodies and sang songs. She thus claimed that music should take a more important role as part of the curriculum, from an interdisciplinary approach, since it helps learning a foreign language.

In 2014, Haghverdi examines the effect of songs on the language achievement of Islamic high-school students in Dehdasht. These high-school students were aged 15-17. There were 30 girls and 30 boys randomly assigned to two groups, the experimental group and the control group. The first group took part in experimental procedure about songs, while the control group was given a text and was separated from the rest of the experiment so that the results could not be influenced. The students already had 3-5 years of English education in secondary school, and they were now encouraged to seriously participate in the experiment, as it would count for their class work grade. During sessions, the researcher chose different songs in English, students were given a text in the experimental group, and they were asked to listen to the song once, then read the text, point out new vocabulary and try to understand the pronunciation of the words. They could even sing if they felt confident during the second listening. On the other hand, the same text was given to students in the control group. After reading it, they did not listen to a song, but to a spoken version of the text. In the end, the difference between the two groups was highly significant. The results obtained reveal that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The experimental group got better listening performance than the control group, and they made progress in the mastery of vocabulary and grammar, and in the reading sections. Consequently, songs turned out to be positively stimulating. Songs enhanced second language acquisition, proving that listening to authentic material is particularly beneficial to learn a language.

In 2015, Tizian published her thesis, in which she organized an experiment between two different groups over a three-week experiment. Although her research tackled university students, it can be related to our study because the selected students were Italian, and they chose English as a L2 to improve their beginner to low-middle level. There were six males and four females, aged from twenty to thirty. The first group, known as the control group, used the traditional method by studying phonetics, whereas the experimental group listened to and sang the songs that contained the same phones the first group was asked to focus their attention on. They had to record themselves before and after the program to see if their pronunciation evolved. The results proved that songs could be a valid tool to improve English pronunciation. Because they offer authentic sounds that students are less trained in perceiving, songs easily enhance pronunciation.

In a nutshell, the reviewed literature above shows that songs can be beneficial for students to improve their language learning, whether they learn EFL or English as a L2. It seems feasible to use them in various ways in EFL classrooms to practice linguistic skills. However, there is less research that tackle the cultural and intercultural value of songs, which is yet worth being examined. This is why this study will also focus on songs as authentic cultural resources, which break the boundaries between the learners' culture and the English-speaking world culture. But first, we will ponder over the link between songs and learning, from a neural and cognitive perspective.

### C. Songs and the brain: perception, action, memorisation, and learning.

Arbib (2013, p.18) writes: "The profundity of music shows us how unique the human brain is. Music provides one of the most powerful ways we have to investigate the mysteries of the human brain though, alas, most investigations are still limited to the lower reaches of musical effect and affect". This is the reason why I wanted to investigate the relation between music and the brain from a scientific and biological perspective to better understand the pedagogical approaches needed in class.

The brain is basically the most complex part of the human body. Located within the skull and considered as the administer of the nervous system, the brain consists of several substructures that are organised to methodically receive, interpret, classify, and distribute information from the mind to the body. This organ "coordinates movement, thought, perception,

emotion, memory, and learning via interactions with [the human] body” (Arbib, 2013, p.25). In other words, the brain is the controller of human learning. Therefore, how is it impacted by songs? How does it assimilate melodies and lyrics? Is this assimilation of songs the same as the assimilation of language?

To answer these questions, we shall admit that research on songs has generally focused on the question of whether melodic information facilitates the brain retention of linguistic information. So first, we will try to clarify a rather controversial topic: how is language organised in the brain?

### C.1. Language and the brain

Thanks to progresses in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), experts are now able to observe brain activity during learning. Hence, they have insight into how the brain works in the acquisition and use of language. What is important to understand is that language is mostly involved in the left hemisphere of the brain, although it is not exclusively processed there. Indeed, there is evidence that the right hemisphere participates in the understanding of metaphor and humour (Arleo, 2000). As suggested, the brain process of language is complex because it consists of various sets of skills that are not confined to only one hemisphere, so I tried to decipher this riddle. There are first the temporal lobes, in the lower part of the brain, which are considered as the language centre. On the other hand, the frontal lobes favour people to master the rules of linguistic syntax (University of Central Florida, 2017).

Two other zones are triggered in the language processing: the Wernicke’s and Broca’s areas. While the Wernicke’s area works to comprehend written and spoken language, the Broca’s area is involved in the production of language, as it controls the movement of lips, tongue, larynx, pharynx, and other muscles of the speaking system (Rahal, 2018, p.14). This summary will now help us to examine the differences and similarities between music and language processing from a neural and cognitive perspective.

### C.2. Music and the brain

“Music is a continuously updated modern form of artistic expression yet provides a prehistoric record of the original bases of human communication through rhythmic, chanted, repetitive yet varied vocalization” (Arbib, 2013, p.18). Indeed, music and language have many



common traits including being first perceived through the auditory system, having similar acoustic attributes and reflecting analogous generative syntactic systems (Ettliger, Margulis, Wong and M.C.P, 2011). Current interest in the relationship between them has shown that these two uniquely human capacities evolved from “protomusical and protolinguistic expressive utterances” (Lerdahl, 2013, p.259) to current music and language processed by the modern human brain. Protomusical and protolinguistic utterances are hypothetical first occurrences of musical sounds and linguistic signs expressed by the first Homo Sapiens who appeared on earth. It is then assumed that they communicated by musical vocalisation and gestures. Besides, many anthropologists believe that human beings signed and sang before they knew how to speak (Livingstone, 1973; Hamilton, 2010).

Other scientists go further by supporting that “language and the human brain have acted as selective forces on each other via a process of co-evolution” (Deacon, 1997 cited by Miras, 2014, p.17). This statement suggests that natural selection would have influenced verbal language acquisition mechanisms whereas music is more about a human creation, just like fire, the practice of which has modified the human brain structures (Miras, 2014). In other words, musical capacities demonstrate the human ability to modify themselves over time.

Based on our research, it was first quite difficult to know if the two cognitive processes of listening to music and speech were identical, because some studies proved they are different and independent (Bonnell, Faïta, Peretz and Besson, 2001), whereas others showed correlations and similar interactions between them (Katz, and Pesetsky, 2011; Lerdahl, 2013). These studies basically suggest that the integration of what one can hear requires neural resources that could reflect a general mechanism for processing musical or linguistic information. More recently, Michael Ullman, Ph.D. and professor of neuroscience, psychology, neurology, and linguistics has claimed that language and music both depend on two different brain areas, but they do depend on some of the same brain systems (Georgetown University Medical Center, 2007). In other words, listening to a speech and listening to a song produce the same work in the brain, which can be summed up in 3 major steps: reception, assimilation, and memory. Nonetheless, all these steps take place in different parts of the brain.

As it mostly deals with sounds and feelings, music is generally associated with the right hemisphere, which is more inclined to the perception of emotions. On the one hand, there is the temporal lobe that helps humans memorise arbitrary information, in which music and sounds are interpreted, mainly in the right hemisphere still. Harmony is dealt with in the frontal lobes. Comparably to language processing, we use the Wernicke area while analysing a piece of

music. When we enjoy it, it releases dopamine and acts on the Nucleus Accumbens (the same part affected by illegal drugs), which explains why some people are addicted to music. In addition, rhythm is processed by the Putamen, which regulates coordination as a response to sounds. For those who play an instrument, their Cerebellum and Corpus Callosum have memorised how to coordinate their fingers to produce melodies. Finally, the Hippocampus is affected by music, which could be a way to produce new neurons and improve memory. In brief, by listening to music we can enhance a lot of brain functions. All these pieces of information have been gathered from a very educational website published by the University of Central Florida (2017). Thereafter, I created the diagram below to offer a visual explanation of the different parts of the brain that work when one listens to music:

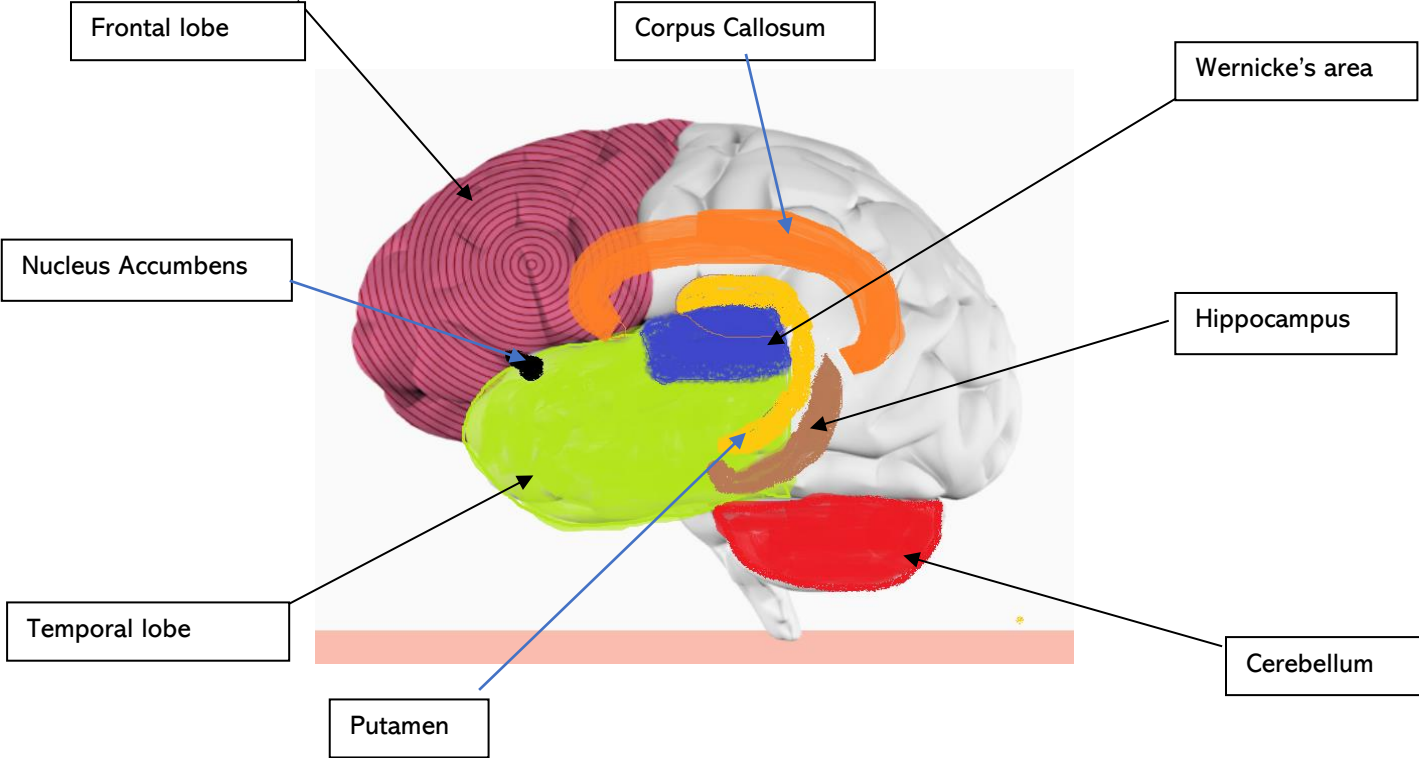


Diagram 1, Appendix 1.

According to Parson and Janata (2013, p. 309), “musical experiences have at their core both perception and action components”. As demonstrated by their Figure 13.1 below, attention and memory play an important role in facilitating smooth functioning of the perception and later in the production of actions. This part of the musical experience is considered as a real process of the brain organised in the frontal lobe, where music is firstly perceived. Then, it leads

to one's actions that may consist in singing, reproducing the melody with an instrument or even tapping one's fingers on a table.

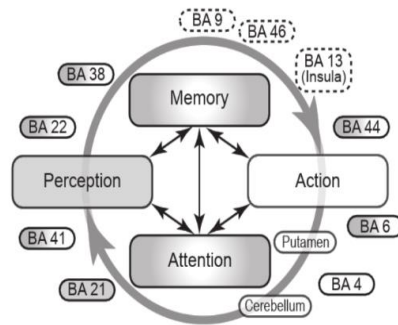


Figure 13.1, Parson and Janata (2013, p. 309), Appendix 2.

Hodges, the former Director of the American Music Research Institute, insists on the fact that “the human brain can respond to and participate in music” (2002, p.2). Therefore, if we consider that all human beings are musical, the study of songs now seems to be unequivocally beneficial for all. He hence declares “music education should not be reserved for those ‘with talent’, nor should it be restricted to those who can afford it or whose parents deem it important. All members of our society, from cradle to grave, stand to benefit from being musically involved” (p.2).

Lowe (1998) uses the analogy between music and language. She writes (p.627) :

Les sons du langage et de la musique comportent deux éléments communs : premièrement, chacun constitue un signe auditif produit par un appareil émetteur de sons comme les cordes vocales, les cordes du violon, un oscillateur et ainsi de suite ; deuxièmement, chaque son est traité par des mécanismes auditifs perceptifs et auditifs spécifiques du cerveau.

She concludes that musical perception is similar to linguistic perception, since both result from deep and surface structures that are processed by the brain. Contrary to Chomsky's linguistic perception (1971), Lowe explains that the musical surface structure is based on the melodic-rhythmic patterns, while the deep structure depends on one's reception skills and the ability to connect these melodic-rhythmic patterns (1998, p.627).

Moreover, musical intelligence is one of the eight intelligences (Pardede, 2019), among visual intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, mathematical intelligence and linguistic intelligence (Gardner's 1983 multiple intelligences theory cited by Williams, 2014). Pardede thus claims that everyone possesses all eight intelligences and can develop their musical intelligence (i.e., the ability to

perceive, remember, make sense of and produce various sound patterns, either independently or collaboratively with the other seven intelligences).

### C.3. Songs and the brain.

It has been scientifically proved by Parson and Janata (2013, p. 308) that listening to instrumental music without lyrics engages most of the same action systems of the brain that are engaged when one listens to songs. The difference lies in the fact that listening to songs will be a more complex activity for the brain, as songs span across different sides of the brain at the same time, both left and right hemispheres. This is due to the fact that songs are a “hybrid form” (Arleo, 2000, p.10), a mix between music and language. Moreover, listening to songs generates cognitive mechanisms, involves about 200 muscles, and reinforces hundreds of thousands of neural wirings (Rahal, 2018, p.16). Songs then seem beneficial for the development of the brain, as they could improve cognitive mechanisms, emotional skills, and linguistic knowledge.

In brief, in the process of language acquisition through the use of songs, specific tasks are made by the left and the right hemispheres in several parts of the brain. However, Tizian (2015, p.15) argues that the current European educational systems strongly orient the lessons towards the left hemisphere and tend to ignore the right hemisphere, thus creating difficulties for some students. Songs thus open new opportunities to learners who have a strong right brain orientation (Salcedo, 2002). Therefore, it seems appropriate to consider that studying songs would train the students’ brains and would open their minds to be exposed to authentic English, thus being a useful tool in the foreign language acquisition. Anton (1990, p.1170) supports this assertion, saying 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”.

### C.4. Songs and memory.

One may remember their parents saying “If only you knew your lessons as well as you know these songs”. It is undeniable that music triggers memory more easily than random words. Salcedo (2002) asserts that spoken texts (e.g., oral stories, interviews, dialogues) are the least recalled, followed by rhyming texts (e.g., poems), and then with melodic texts (e.g., nursery rhymes and songs) are the easiest to remember. These songs then contribute to people

remembering a great number of elements, such as vocabulary, grammar, melodies, and rhythm, through the implicit memory. As a matter of fact, neuroscientists claim that words set to music may be the focus of the memory and they are remembered by the implicit memory, which is emotional as well as durable (Jenkins, 2014; Dartmouth University, 2005). Moreover, the dopamine released while listening to pleasurable songs contributes to memorisation of linguistic structures. Songs “[...] provide sequential information, line and syllable length information, chunk linking, and rhythmical information which has the potential for making accurate reconstruction of the text” (Salcedo, 2002, p.47). In other words, as the brain is actively engaged with what it can hear, it memorises some parts of the songs almost automatically, without being explicitly aware of it.

All things considered, the melody of songs undoubtedly affects the unconscious and music often evokes memories, so they are never completely lost, contrary to language. That is a reason why adults usually remember songs from their childhood because they were played and listened to repeatedly, and sometimes even Alzheimer’s patients who are unable to remember their own names start singing without hesitation a song they learned at school. To quote Arleo (2000, p.11) “the fact that music ‘sticks in our heads’ suggests that it [cognitively] plays a role in our short and long-term memory”.

In the same way, songs have proved their worth in improving certain language dysfunctions. Tizian (2015, p.68) evokes an experiment on 8-to 10-year-old children with linguistic impairments who are submitted to active musical training. She states that:

The results demonstrate not only that neuroplasticity (the brain’s capability of changes during the life-time of every human being) is present in the child brain but that the active musical training leads children to improve duration perception in speech and phonological representations. In particular, verbal ability enhanced in 90% of the children after only 20 days [...]

It can then be deduced that music, whether listened to or practiced, is an excellent brain stimulant, as it helps to develop cognitive skills.

In these cases, listening not only to the melody but also to the lyrics play an important role in language learning, as the human voice brings a significant stimulus to the brain. The result of such stimulus is more durable learning for listeners of all ages (Trehub, 2013, p.468). Regarding a young learner’s brain, its process is similar to an adult’s. Experts agree to claim that like adults, children can be attentive to expressive nuances conveyed by rhythm and

melody. They can perceive the overall aspects of music and even show long-term memory for music patterns and lyrics, although their brains are less developed in terms of cognition and action (Trehub, 2013, Plantinga and Trainor, 2005, Ilari and Polka, 2006, Saffran et al., 2000) and their degree of memorisation lower than adults'. Neurologically speaking, young learners can appreciate music and recognize familiar sounds, tunes, and tones. Children can also detect regularity or irregularity in pitch and rhythm. Trehub (2013) then suggests that young learners perceive and remember the rhythmic patterns of songs, which implies that their brains perceive the rhythm of speech even though they are not conscious that they have distinguished a contrast with their mother language (e.g., the stress-timed pattern of English which varies from the French syllable-timed pattern). We will discuss in more depth the implications of speech pattern and rhythm (cf. chapter 3 section C). In short, the sooner students' listening skills are encouraged in class, the more developed they will be.

Besides, it is commonly believed that it is easier for children to learn a foreign language, and that language learning which occurs after puberty will be slower and less successful (Krashen, 1975). To put it bluntly, scientists defending the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which can be traced back to Penfield and Roberts' *Speech and Brain Mechanisms* (1959), hold that language acquisition would be more effective if it occurred before the cerebral lateralisation, that is before the functional specialisation of the brain hemispheres. Undoubtedly, there are many advantages to learning languages as a child. Children do not fear making mistakes and they can also learn without much effort, because their brain is in constant development, as they learn to walk, speak, and understand the surrounding world (Galatro, 2018). However, the fact that some adults L2 learners reach native speaker levels has been interpreted by some researchers as evidence against the CPH (Long, 1990; White and Genesee, 1996; Birdsong and Molis, 2001). In addition, some studies suggest that you may be better off learning as an adult. First, because adults are great at conscious learning, contrary to natural but unconscious learning for children. In addition, as they master their mother tongue, the pre-existing language knowledge helps adults (Brainscape, 2021). Adults normally have expectations concerning the mechanics of grammar so, when learning another language, they look for parts of speech required to build a proper sentence. Generally, what restrains the grown up from learning is their slow improvements, but against the odds it has been proved that the slowest second language acquisition occurred in subjects aged 3-5 years (Snow, 1978, p.1125). On the contrary, it seems that teenagers are faster in acquiring foreign language (p.1115). Snow's study focused on English people of different ages, who were tested 3 times during their

first year in Holland. The study demonstrates the 3-5-year-olds tested on their second language acquisition of Dutch within a few months consistently scored worse than the older groups on all tests, whereas the 12-15-year-olds showed the better and faster acquisition for all the linguistics skills tested (i.e grammar, syntax, phonology, pronunciation) (p.1122). Indeed, the teenagers had achieved almost native-like performance extremely quickly and maintained their superiority all along the study. For this investigation, Snow admits that it was very difficult to design tests which were equally usable with 5-year-olds and with adults, so she chose to use quite childish materials for the extensive test battery designed to assess several aspects of the English subjects' ability in Dutch (p.1123). In other words, it is tricky to say if there is a critical period for language learning since the topic is quite debatable. Therefore, we must keep a balanced opinion on this point and focus on the French 11-18-year-olds students, who seem to be likely to learn a foreign language without great difficulty.

These views are of great importance since memory is linked to improvements in language performances. Fennell, Bugos, Payne et al. suggest that "a musical stimulus produces similar working memory interference as a linguistic stimulus, so both rely on a similar working memory process" (2021). Nevertheless, in her thesis, Salcedo's (2002) experiments revealed that when the music was too difficult, it could have the opposite effect on learners' memorisation. She therefore concludes that songs can enhance language learning as long as they are not too complicated regarding the students' level of L2 proficiency.

### C.5. What about students learning English as a foreign language?

In effect, regarding learners of a foreign language, one can argue that songs are difficult for them to study as they could not grasp what is at stake, in terms of grammar, linguistic aspects and cultural meanings. We will try to answer these questions, step by step, throughout this thesis. But we will first focus on the fact that Trehub, a Canadian psychologist, underlines the idea that "the indeterminacy of musical meaning may enhance the appeal of music rather than reduce it" (2013, p.463). In the same way, Morriongiello and Roes (1990) found evidence to suggest that, although lyrics seem first to be more salient than melodies during song listening, lyrics are recognized more easily later when they are paired with the melody. In other words, when lyrics and melodies are presented together in a song to foreign language learners, they are more easily assimilated and memorised by their brains.

If experts like Trehub (2013) maintain that the voices and vocal tones in songs produce larger and more distinctive responses of the brain than instrumental tones, it appears that even though learners are not able to understand all the lyrics, their brains would naturally notice some words and the emotions conveyed. Brun (2016) calls it the “universal cognitive ability”, and she claims that music of the world shares a musical language that listeners unwittingly infer, and that this implicit knowledge then affect their emotions. Obviously, learning song lyrics in a new language will require more of a processing effort, but if students are correctly guided through the learning process, it could be very promising.

There are many other reasons why songs contribute to memorising. The structures of songs, their rhymes, rhythms, and melodies are powerful factors that encourage this cognitive process. Arleo (2000, p.11) claims that songs improve the memorisation of vocabulary, grammar, and phonology since they could be easier to understand than some natives’ everyday-life conversations, and at least more playful than ordinary speech. In addition, Arbib (2013, p.20) states that young people are naturally equipped to engage with the music of any culture and this idea can be related to MacLeod’s claim (2011, p. 10):

Les bénéfiques [de la chanson en classe] sont immenses et contribuent à développer toutes les compétences de nos jeunes : mémorisation, prononciation, compréhension, expression, culture, curiosité.

Although it diverges from traditional and long-established language teaching practices that are more conventional, all these elements help us to draw a didactic conclusion that studying songs should no longer be considered as a purely playful activity, but it must now be at the heart of foreign languages curriculum, especially in EFL classrooms.

#### D. How can music promote motivation in EFL classrooms?

It is commonly thought that students learning English as a foreign language can get demotivated and do not enjoy the class because lessons are sometimes quite monotonous. Demotivation obviously leads to a lack of energy and a lack of will to learn and remember what is studied. On the contrary, “motivation influences learners’ autonomy, attention, effort, persistence, the frequency of using learning strategies and their learning achievement”, as explained by Zhou (2011, p.1318). For the past few years, teachers and experts of education have tried to find methods to stimulate motivation. Cognitive, social-behaviourist and constructivist perspectives have progressively arisen to show that the mental processes in the



learning process goes along with the importance of the active role of students. As a matter of fact, learners are more motivated to learn a foreign language if they think it is interesting and useful, and their motivation is enhanced if they perceive that a learning task is related to their personal needs and interests. The CEFR also promotes action-oriented tasks that involve the students in an authentic situation in which, as social actors, they can work on their language skills. Furthermore, research shows that people are naturally motivated to learn when they do not fear failure and “when they perceive what they are learning as being personally meaningful and relevant, and when they are in supportive and respectful relationships with teachers” (Brown and Heekyeong, 2015, p.15). This is one of the reasons why it is recommended in the current curricula that teachers should propose proper tasks with precise instructions and clear objectives, and finally feedback to help students strengthen their understanding and learn from their mistakes, all the while getting a sense of achievement and progression.

Young people from all around the world enjoy listening to music. Not only is it one of their favourite activities to do on the Internet when they are at home (Kredens and Barbara, 2010), but music is also one of their favourite topics studied in secondary school (Juillan, 2016, p.24). The students Juillan questioned admitted having more motivation and interest in lessons about English countries’ traditional food, video games, travels, and sports than in sequences on immigration, school in Great Britain, or even Australia. Yet her study shows that even when the teacher proposes a sequence on immigration, which does not belong to the most appreciated lessons, she manages to motivate her students with a song activity. After diverse tasks and several opportunities to practice, the learners wrote their own lyrics and sang their songs (p.25). We may deduce that songs are motivating because they are enjoyable for learners of all ages, in secondary or high schools. As an example, learners tend to like the English language because they can hear it while listening to the music on the radio. Others would love learning songs because they play an instrument, or they are keen on singing. As Brown and Heekyeong suggest (2015, p.95), it is of great importance to:

give students credit for the many abilities and talents they already have, even though they feel somewhat incapacitated as they struggle with a new language. [...] Recognizing and using some of their artistic, musical, or sports-related skills will help to build self-confidence and worthiness as they seek to invest their time and effort in the L2 learning process.

Furthermore, young learners are more likely to be receptive when the material used is audio or visual. Sometimes music videos can be stimulating if they contribute to the language learning, so they can be analysed just like lyrics. Arleo corroborates this element, as he claims: “music can be used profitably with virtually all language learners” (2000, p.12). It will then depend on the teacher’s choices to adapt the study of songs, depending on the students’ age, their English proficiency, and their cultural and musical interests. In brief, song-based activities can contribute to study challenging cultural and/or linguistic points in a more casual but more involving atmosphere, which can encourage students to listen to new songs outside the classroom and promote their language skills as pointed by Rahal (2018, p.20). As they differ from ordinary language, songs become a beneficial tool in EFL classrooms, even for learners in the first learning phase (Schön, 2008), learners with schooling difficulties (Rahal, 2018) and hard to reach students (McCombs, 1996). Last but not least, a friendly and peaceful environment undoubtedly fosters learning, this is why songs can be used in EFL classrooms as they participate in group cohesion, when all students are singing or at least listening to songs, thus sharing the same emotions.

As a motivator, the role of a teacher is to enhance the development of students’ self-awareness and motivation for foreign language learning. As promoted by the CEFR, learning should be an active process, so teachers must adopt strategies and create activities to encourage goal-directed thoughts in learners. Songs therefore seem to have strong potential in EFL classrooms.

#### E. The role of music and songs in the official program of the French Ministry of National Education.

English songs and especially nursery rhymes are usually used in French primary schools. Whether they are didactic or authentic, they are always playful and highly recommended to raise pupils’ awareness to new languages. Songs constitute a beneficial tool to use in the daily twenty minutes ELF lessons that take place in *cycle 2*. As a matter of fact, Le Féron writes:

[L’apprentissage de l’anglais par les chansons et comptines aident à] développer chez l’élève les comportements indispensables pour l’apprentissage des langues vivantes (curiosité, écoute, mémorisation, confiance en soi dans l’utilisation d’une autre langue) et à familiariser son oreille à des réalités phonologiques et accentuelles d’une langue nouvelle (2005, p.5).

Her work emphasizes the idea that while learning a foreign language, pupils must go through vocal games such as songs, as they can lead to short exchanges that get close to real communication situations. Hence, she proposes some listening and speaking activities in which pupils reproduce rhymes, phonemes, and tones they can hear in traditional children’s songs. For instance, she plays “Old McDonald Had a Farm” for her pupils to learn farm animals, “Hello song” to learn greetings, or even “Head and Shoulders”, which requires children to mime and show body parts.

Researchers and teachers agree to say that arts develop sensitivity, creativity and offer new access to knowledge. Additionally, we have deduced that songs contribute to the students’ self-confidence and to the mastery of languages. Songs can also be an asset when it comes to students listening to or paying attention to one other. They can also help young students with grammar in primary and elementary schools. Therefore, they are recommended within the musical education programme in *cycles 2 and 3*. However, once we read the curriculum of *cycle 4*, we cannot find anything specific about the use of songs in classrooms. Studying songs is mainly considered as an activity that contributes to the aesthetic use of language, just like theatre plays or comics (CECRL, 2001, p.47).

Surprisingly, there are only 7 occurrences of the term “music” and 2 occurrences of “song” in the CEFR additional volume of 2018. In fact, they are both mentioned as subjects of personal interest for students, who can talk about them with their teachers and classmates in formal and informal conversations, especially in high school (from a B1 level). To quote two examples:

<u>B1, overall oral interaction</u>	« Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music, etc. » (CEFR, 2018, p.83)
<u>B1, reading as a leisure activity:</u>	« Can understand simple poems and song lyrics provided these employ straightforward language and style» (p.65)

Music is also referred to as a “cultural topic” (p.86), which is an interesting point, on which we are going to reflect on in a next part. Nevertheless, in the CEFR music and songs are not mentioned as part of the pedagogical approach to adopt. Why?

Does music have a complete role in the British curriculum, as opposed to the CEFR? Since 1990, music has been a part of the British curriculum for all children up to the age of 14. Experts

agree that music and songs are particularly good for children's development, memory, creativity, and aesthetic sensitivity. Besides, in the foreword of the *Model Music Curriculum in England*, the Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb, claims that "having the opportunity to study and explore music is not a privilege; it is a vital part of a broad and ambitious curriculum" (2021, p.2). Indeed, in the UK some teachers are interested in using songs in their classroom to enhance modern language teaching practice (Ludke, 2009). Furthermore, British pupils in their key stage 2 (aged 7-11) on foreign language should be taught to "explore the patterns and sounds of language through songs and rhymes and link the spelling, sound and meaning of words" and "appreciate stories, songs, poems and rhymes in the language", according to the British Department for Education (2013). It suggests that music and songs are not only of pupils' personal interests, but they are also significant to improve their skills in a L2, even in their early stage of education. Notwithstanding, as they grow up students are less likely to improve their skills in foreign languages.

Indeed, it goes without saying that many English speakers do not spend much time on learning foreign languages as they already speak an international, universal language. I personally remember talking with my British flatmates who told me they would have loved to speak French, but they had to make a choice in specialisation at school, so they chose anything but foreign language classes. In the same way, if university students were to go to a club in the UK, they would be lucky to hear one song that is not English (or maybe Spanish). That is a pity because it reduces the opportunity to listen to other languages and to be more aware of cultural diversity through different types of music with different origins.

In most countries in the world, it seems that teachers are mainly positive about the incorporation of music into foreign language classes. Nevertheless, despite this positive attitude, the use of music appears to be rather occasional in the classrooms in France. Degraeve's study (2019) suggests two main explanations for this lack of music integration: a limited knowledge of adapted material and a lack of theoretical grounding to support the study of songs in the foreign-language classroom. I decided to conduct a survey to know more about the use of music and songs in French EFL classes. The following part will therefore be dedicated to the examination of the results of this study.

## F. Teachers' willingness to use music and teach songs in EFL classes.

The survey is entitled “Teachers’ willingness to use music and teach songs in EFL classes”. The major point of it was to find out if teachers felt confident enough to use songs. If so, how often? If not, why not?

After having created this survey online, via *Framaforms*, I shared a link with my colleagues and acquaintances. Accordingly, 25 French teachers of English were asked about their habits regarding songs in class. Some of them had been teaching for five years or less, others for more than twenty years, and the majority had been teaching for more than ten years in French secondary schools. Even though we only got a small number of answers, the results are still certainly a fairly good representation of the majority of teachers practicing in France.

The first questions were about the teachers’ personal hobbies, as I was first under the impression that teachers would gladly use songs in their classrooms if they personally enjoyed listening to music, singing, or even playing an instrument.

### Does music belong to your personal interests?

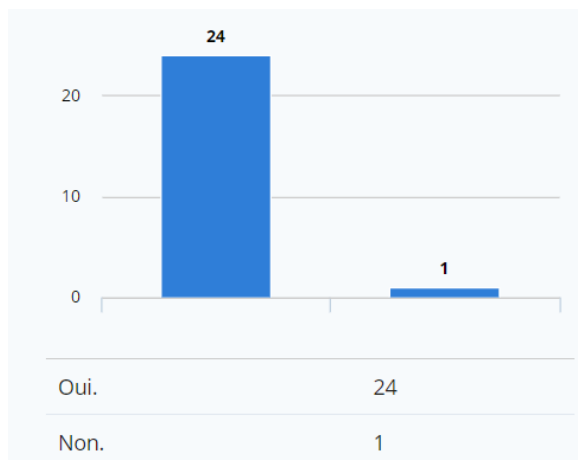
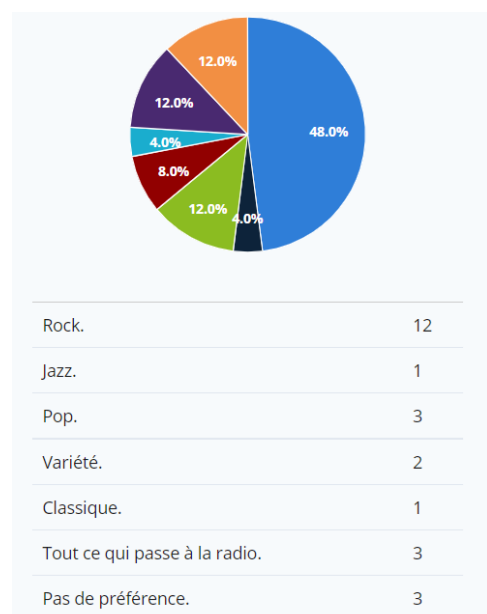


Diagram 3, Appendix 5.

Diagram 2, Appendix 4.



As we can understand, most of the teachers had music as a personal interest. They tended to prefer rock, pop and songs that are played on the radio.

**Have you ever felt a lack of musical knowledge or/and some difficulties to adapt songs to your teaching practice?**

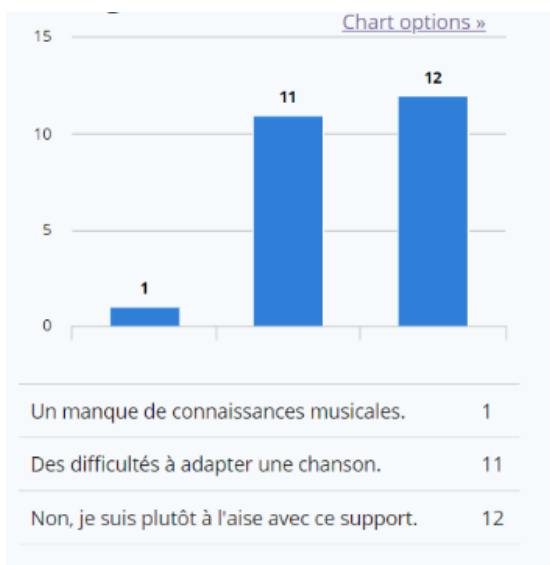


Diagram 4, Appendix 8.

Here are balanced results: while 11 teachers admitted they have already had troubles to adapt songs, 12 others felt at ease to work with songs. Only one person genuinely chose “a lack of musical knowledge”, although they liked music.

Then, teachers were asked “In your opinion, songs are beneficial to...”

Improve vocabulary/linguistics/grammar knowledge.	12%
Improve receptive skills and pronunciation.	32%
Improve cultural and intercultural knowledge.	24%
All three answers.	56%

These results are of particular interest, and I speculated that the teachers surveyed regularly used songs to show authentic materials to their students, to improve their receptive skills and their linguistic knowledge. The following questions were meant to compare my expectations to the real use of songs in EFL classrooms.

In fact, when asked “In your teaching practice, do you feel more confident with other materials?” (Diagram 6), only six people chose “yes, I do”. 3 people told “no preference”,

whereas 17 people answered “No, I do feel confident as I can get used to work with any material and I even appreciate diversification”.

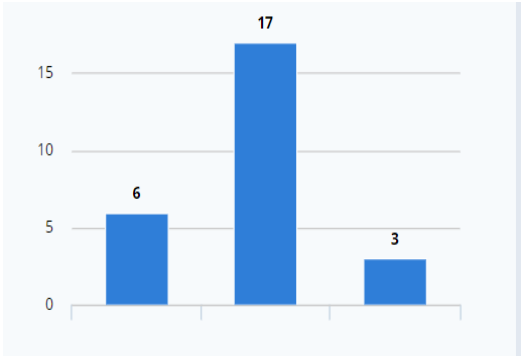
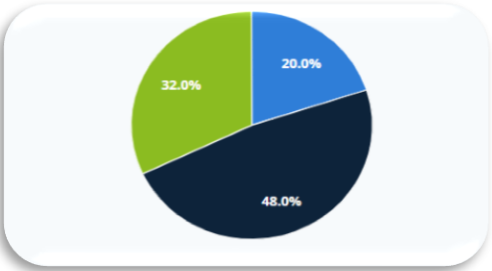


Diagram 6, Appendix 14.

Therefore, when asked “how often do you use songs in your lessons?”, it was quite surprising for me to find out that 32% answered “hardly ever”, 48% said “sometimes” and only 20% chose “often”.



Rarement	8 personnes	32%
Parfois	12 personnes	48%
Souvent	5 personnes	20%

Diagram 7, Appendix 9.

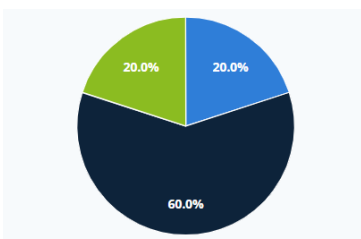
For teachers who answered “sometimes” and “often”, mainly agreed to say that songs were interesting to study because they were authentic and motivating. In our sample, the fact that songs enable the students to learn through a less common learning-method seemed less convincing to teachers. They might not admit that the repetitions of special structures and vocabulary can be helpful for auditory people as well as kinesthetic learners. On the other hand, for those who chose “hardly ever”, it seems that they were not “spontaneously attracted by songs but mostly by videos games and other playful activities”. Songs are described as “not necessarily motivating for all” and can be “difficult to adapt without always making pointless fill-in-the-gaps exercises”, which are besides more of assessments than playful and motivating activities. Some teachers did not know “how to choose songs, and then to adapt them to the topic of the unit”, as they even feared “students would find songs has-been/old-fashioned” (appendix 10).

After reviewing these answers, I felt puzzled and even wondered why most of the teachers only used songs occasionally, when they affirmed that they actually felt confident enough to adapt them. I also wanted to know why the gap between the latter teachers and those

who felt overwhelmed by using songs was so large. The problem may stem from a wrong decision when choosing the right song? Maybe teachers struggle with using songs in an action-oriented lesson? Are the teachers well prepared to use every possible sort of material in their classrooms? In any case, none of them mention an anxiety or an embarrassment towards singing in front on their pupils. Even though one is not obliged to sing when teaching a song, it could have been an obstacle for some teachers.

The next part thus focused on the teachers’ choices of songs, and I believed it necessary to know more about their criteria to do so. The surveyed teachers were free to answer what they wanted to “What musical genre do you usually propose to your students?” (Appendix 13). 2 teachers did not answer, others suggested “pop music” (32.35%), “rock” (26.49%), “rap” (8.82%), “folk” (2.94%), “indie” (2.94%), “reggae” (2.94%) and “R’n'b” (2.94%). Others claimed that their choices were not so much based on genre, but most importantly on the cultural backgrounds of songs (20.59%). This idea is linked to the following data: songs are considered as a support for culture more than a support for idioms and linguistics skills.

**What is the most important criterion for choosing the right song to study in class?**



It must be rhythmic and motivating	20%
It must tackle a cultural element of the English-speaking world.	60%
It must be understandable for the learners so that they are able to grasp the meaning of the lyrics and repeat them.	20%

Diagram 8, appendix 17.

Furthermore, the study reveals that most of the teachers had no preconceptions about when songs must be studied. At the beginning or at the end of units, it clearly depends on what is taught and the pupils’ needs. In the same way, almost half of the surveyed teachers declared they offered varied activities when using songs in class. However, by majority of votes they admitted using songs to improve their students’ oral comprehension (Appendix 20), which proves teachers tend to use songs in accordance with established and traditional practices.

When asked “What are your teaching methods for your pupils to study a song in an action-oriented approach?” (Appendix 25), activities were deliberately given to select. It appeared that some students worked in workshops (21.7%), other had to fill in the gaps of lyrics (17.4%). Many students analysed the lyrics and next listen to the song (17.4%) or analysed a grammar point in relation to the lyrics (13%). Only one teacher (4.3%) asked their students to



list the verbs of action from the lyrics and mime them in order to understand the story behind. The idea of having one's students listening to the instrumental version (without lyrics) to speak about the conveyed emotions and deduce the topic of the songs is not part of the mainstream activities either (4.3%). Many teachers voted for "unspecified other activities" (21.7%), which is a pity not to know precisely what they could imagine for their pupils to do. In other respects, two surveyed teachers wrote very complete answers I wanted to share:

Au British Council, lors d'une formation, on nous proposait de mettre des mots, extraits de la chanson, éparpillés au tableau. Les élèves pouvaient essayer d'imaginer le thème de la chanson à partir de ces mots, les classer par catégorie (grammaticale, lexicale etc... ce sont les élèves qui proposent) puis ils utilisent les mots pour former des phrases et imaginer les paroles. En écoutant, ils peuvent repérer les mots plus facilement suite à ce travail. Les élèves faibles aiment bien cette démarche ! Ils retrouvent pas mal de phrases et, à la fin, ils ont les paroles avec des mots manquants (ceux qui étaient au tableau) et sont souvent contents de les retrouver de tête, ne me laissant pas le temps de lancer une écoute supplémentaire. <sup>1</sup>

Chaque scénario dépendra de l'entrée souhaitée, des objectifs et du support. On pourra, par exemple, s'appuyer sur le rythme ou les variations éventuelles pour anticiper ou confirmer des hypothèses avant ou après être entré dans le sujet. Il est aussi possible de rechercher les mots-clefs (avec ou sans fiche d'aide) pour accéder au sens et, par la suite, travailler sur un texte à trous pour une réutilisation de support et pour de nouveaux objectifs (intonation, prononciation). Enfin, on peut imaginer associer l'éventuel clip avec les paroles pour vérifier, justifier ou appuyer la compréhension. <sup>2</sup>

Finally, surveyed teachers could answer to "Vous sentiriez-vous prêt à intégrer une chanson par séquence si cela était requis par le BO de l'Education Nationale ?"<sup>3</sup>, which would represent approximately 6 or 8 songs annually. 13 teachers chose "Yes, I'd love to", 8 teachers chose "Why not? But I'd need to share and receive advice from my colleagues", 4 teachers answered "No, it seems infeasible and inappropriate" (Appendix 24). These results are quite

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<sup>1</sup> At the British Council, during a training program, we were advised to put scattered words, excerpted from the song, on the board. The students could try to imagine the topic of the song, classify these words in different categories (grammatical, lexical etc... [...]). They can use the words to make sentences and imagine the lyrics. Then, when listening, they can spot the words more easily. Low-level students appreciate this approach! They eventually guess a lot of sentences. When they are distributed the lyrics with only some missing words (those who were on the board), the students are generally happy and excited to remember them, even before I had time to do an extra listening. (Anonymous surveyed 1, 2021, Appendix 26).

<sup>2</sup> Each scenario will depend on the objectives, the desired inputs, and the chosen support, but to give examples we can focus on the music pace or potential variations to anticipate the topic and make assumptions. We can work on keywords to access the meaning of lyrics [...] and then work on intonation and pronunciation. At the end, we can also watch the music video to check, justify or support the students' understanding. (Anonymous surveyed 2, 2021. Appendix 26).

<sup>3</sup> "If it were required by the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Education Nationale*, would you be willing to integrate a song per unit?"

surprising, but they actually reveal how French teachers struggle to use songs in the EFL classrooms. Indeed, although it may appear that more than half of them would be happy with that request of using one song per unit and would even try to change their teaching habits, it can be seen that one third of the surveyed teachers did not feel completely comfortable with this challenge. They would need advice and training. Furthermore, four colleagues considered that songs should not figure into the curriculum because of its difficulty, in spite of their personal interest in music (cf. Appendix 4). What was particularly unpredictable is that the question specified “une chanson”, only one song, which is not an outrageous number. Some school textbooks already suggest one song per unit. To only mention one of them: *I Really Bet You Can* (2021), offers rhythmic and easy-to-comprehend songs to review vocabulary and introduce new cultural and linguistic knowledge.

Teachers did not seem apprehensive about using songs, at least they did not admit they might be sometimes, yet they suggest similar and conventional activities. Some of their options are even unfavourable for students (e.g., fill-in the gaps exercise, which consists in an evaluative exercise). Using evaluative exercises instead of learning activities proves that teachers are certainly not trained enough to use this material. In France, INSPEs (*Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Éducation*) are training institutes made to train primary- school teachers and secondary-school teachers. In the curriculum, secondary school teachers are not particularly trained to use songs in their lessons, contrary to primary school teachers. Why not? Why are they properly trained to work on pictures as a didactic medium, but not on songs? It seems that this medium is more complex. There is also the fact that dealing with songs still seems innovative for many and depends on the teacher's personality and their classes' involvement, which might also be challenging for teacher trainers to teach from a theoretical perspective.

To conclude, this survey revealed that although they love music, teachers do not feel perfectly confident when it comes to use songs in their classrooms through varied and motivating activities. Yet, it is clear that the teachers surveyed admitted the benefits of songs, as they considered songs could mostly improve cultural knowledge (cf. Appendix 17). It may thus reflect a general trend towards improvement and new challenges in their teaching, and that is a reason why it would be useful and gratifying to provide them recommendations and support in this work.

## **Chapter II. The Cultural Value of Music.**

### **A. Breaking boundaries: songs are authentic cultural resources.**

Music is often considered a form of communication, quite different from language, of course, but one sharing a number of common properties, the most basic being the auditory–vocal channel and cultural transmission

(Trehub, 2013, p.463).

One of the reasons given by students for learning a second language is to relate to another culture. Indeed, as Brown (2007, p.194) asserts, “second language learning involves the acquisition of a second identity”. For English as a Foreign Language students (EFL), learning English is a valuable ability. It enhances various skills that enable them to be fully immersed in the era of globalisation, as they can communicate and share ideas with people from all around the world (Stein-Smith, 2017). It cannot be denied that, over the past decades, EFL students have been exposed to a wide variety of lessons that go beyond grammar and vocabulary, with the aim of enriching the language learning experience. It can be argued that studying the culture of the target language develops cultural awareness as well as linguistic skills.

At this point, it is worth stating that learning English as a foreign language raises cultural awareness, notably about people living in the Anglosphere and the students’ own identities. In a few words, cultural awareness can be defined as the knowledge of cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions of people from different backgrounds and origins (Belli, 2018). Belli (2018) also declares that one needs to consider that communication might be more challenging for language learners that have not been exposed to their interlocutors’ cultural backgrounds. For that reason, studying culture is beneficial since it provides the EFL learners with a sense of English identity consciousness. Moreover, the Council of Europe Language Policy Division (2010) reports that the study of History enables students to compare the cultural history of several countries, notably their own historical background to the target language’s. For instance, it could be stimulating for French students to learn how French words began to creep into English. As soon as they would be introduced to the Norman invasion of 1066, learners could understand how the French William the Conqueror instituted a French-speaking nobility, after having won the British throne in the Battle of Hastings. In this case, the historical example is beneficial for the knowledge of language.

Furthermore, cultural knowledge has always been of great importance for the Ministry of Education as opposed to certain private companies that have more functional views of language teaching. Indeed, contrary to methods for teaching functional language, which consider that language is primarily a tool for getting meaning and perform an action, the *Common European Framework of References for the Languages* (2001 and 2018) and the Ministry of Education intend to include cultural background to the activities enhancing social and communicative skills. On *Eduscol* (2022), the Ministry of Education writes:

Enseigner une langue vivante présuppose pour être efficace de **combiner les deux dimensions que sont la langue et la culture qui sont si intimement liées** que les considérer séparément contribue à nier ce qu'est véritablement une langue. Que cette langue soit parlée dans des pays plus ou moins éloignés les uns des autres n'empêche nullement une communauté de représentations, ni des variations qui renforcent, précisément, un ancrage dans une réalité donnée.

This is also reflected in the Council of Europe's recent initiative to develop competences for democratic culture, such as valuing cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices (CEFR, 2018, p.22). Their aim is to allow learners to use linguistic resources to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures. (CEFR, 2018, p.27).

In their book *Enseigner l'anglais* (2009), Julié and Perrot define culture and deconstruct prejudices that support one can be good at a language without knowing anything about its culture.

L'identité d'un pays, d'une communauté, se manifeste dans sa langue et dans sa culture. La partie immergée, mystérieuse et la plus difficile à cerner, est constituée de ce que nous appelons la « culture ». [...] Pour trouver sa place dans son nouvel environnement, on s'attaque en priorité à la langue, croyant que la partie sera gagnée une fois les problèmes linguistiques résolus. [...] En fait, la barrière de la langue ne fait que masquer l'absence de repères culturels. [...] On peut très bien parler une langue, mais mal connaître la civilisation qu'elle véhicule, avec comme conséquence inévitable les contresens culturels. Cependant, à partir du moment où l'accent est mis sur une communication authentique, le savoir-faire culturel, qui repose sur une connaissance de la civilisation du pays cible, ne peut être éludé. Enseigner la civilisation n'est donc pas seulement enseigner une culture et une histoire pour donner un poids aux mots, mais aussi transmettre un savoir-faire pragmatique. [...] Fonder l'entraînement aux activités langagières sur un contenu de civilisation présente de nombreux avantages. La civilisation motive les élèves les plus en difficulté, qui voient d'autant plus d'intérêt à leur cours que celui-ci est en prise directe avec la vie extra-scolaire. Enfin, les faits de langues sont mieux maîtrisés lorsqu'ils émanent d'une situation culturelle authentique.

Julié and Perrot, 2009, pp.142-143.

Teaching culture is clearly beneficial for students. However, this fascinating object of study is also complex and vague. Puren, a specialist of foreign-language didactics, (1998, pp.1-2) explains:

On peut dire que la culture enseignée en classe de langue est toujours apparue comme un objet complexe aux enseignants, comme le montrent par exemple depuis un siècle leur constante revendication de séjours payés à l'étranger en formation initiale et continue, la diversité des approches qu'ils ont simultanément mobilisées (géographiques, historiques, sociologiques, anthropologiques, artistiques,...), ou encore leur recours constant, en classe, au vécu des natifs (*via* les dialogues en 1er cycle et les mises en scène romanesques en 2e cycle) et aux réactions des élèves. [...] L'essentiel de la problématique culturelle apparaît ainsi déterminé par cette complexité fondamentale de son objet, qui le rend bien plus difficile à didactiser que l'objet langue étrangère, c'est-à-dire plus résistant aux opérations didactiques de base.

As they are not trained to be anthropologists or history teachers, English teachers have to make choices in order to choose appropriate content to teach culture. Getting the students' participation will also require motivating approaches. Therefore songs, as they are even referred to as "a cultural topic" in the CEFR (2018, p.72), seem to be a great approach as they give learners the opportunity to acquire a better understanding of the culture of the target language. This statement is supported by 60% of the surveyed teachers who consider songs as a great medium to study cultural elements of the English-speaking world in EFL classes. Teachers clearly tend to agree with Shen (2009, p.88), who states "language and music are interwoven in songs to communicate cultural reality in a very unique way", as they mostly use videos and songs to tackle cultural elements (Carsac, 2014, p.30).

Songs can be effectively used to teach culture as they are authentic cultural resources. Indeed, "song and dance have been important components of human culture for millennia" (Parson and Janata, 2013, p. 307). Stemmed from the perfect combination between music and poetry, songs have evolved over time following History, alongside natural selection and men's culture. It has been one of the most authentic ways of expressing the people's feelings and recounting their lives, in times of war, in peacetime, during political and economic crises or in times of great delight and high economic growth. As a matter of fact, Merriam (1964) argues that music is culture, hence it cannot be separated from life experience. In the same vein, Arleo writes "like art, film or literature, music is an integral part of the foreign culture; songs in particular reflect and comment on key social, political and historical issues" (2000, p 11).

To give only one example that is probably one of the favourite songs taught in France, "Sunday Bloody Sunday" by U2 can be studied in secondary schools and high school within the frameworks "rencontre avec d'autres cultures" (cycle 4), "le passé dans le présent" (seconde) or even "territoire et mémoire" (cycle terminal). Released in March 1983, "Sunday Bloody Sunday" is a political song, which evokes the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, Northern Ireland, where British troops killed unarmed civil rights protestors. Performed by the

Irish band U2, this hit can expose learners to some central elements of Irish culture and make them more meaningful and authentic than difficult texts and history lessons. Once the large puzzle pieces of Irish 20th Century history are in place, the song can transport the listeners into 1970's war-torn Ireland, witnessing the horror unfold as an observer. It can certainly help the students understand the traumatic legacy of the incident.

I can't believe the news today  
Oh, I can't close my eyes and make it go away

How long, how long must we sing this song?  
How long? How long?

'Cause tonight  
We can be as one  
Tonight

Broken bottles under children's feet  
Bodies strewn across the dead-end street  
But I won't heed the battle call  
It puts my back up, puts my back up against the wall

Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
Sunday, Bloody Sunday  
Sunday, Bloody Sunday

Alright, let's go  
And the battle's just begun  
There's many lost, but tell me who has won?  
The trenches dug within our hearts  
And mothers, children, brothers, sisters torn apart

Excerpt from U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday", 1983.

To make a quick summary of what can be seen in a classroom, considering the melody and especially rhythm, pupils can easily notice that the drumbeat is a four-beat rhythm, reminiscent of a military sounding march. This musical irony is meant to emphasise the extreme violence and pain caused by Bloody Sunday and other attacks against the Northern Ireland civil rights campaign. This protest song expresses a feeling widely shared by Irish people who were against the war. As it appeals to pathos, it also calls for national unity. As many other songs, "Sunday Bloody Sunday" illustrates how a song can be based on a true story and give an insight into Irish history, geography and cultural identity.

## B. Can songs enhance multicultural knowledge and intercultural skills?

Barton (2018) believes that schools should consider how to appropriately teach students cultural knowledge and expectations by inviting the whole community's involvement. Inviting the entire community's involvement means using songs to motivate the students as a group in order to get synchronised and cooperative mechanisms, reinforcing social bonds and having a group ready to develop their cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is a competence even beyond cultural awareness. It can be defined as "awareness and appreciation of the values, norms, and beliefs characteristic of a cultural, ethnic, racial, or other group that is not one's own, accompanied by a willingness to adapt one's behaviour accordingly" (*Apa Dictionary of Psychology*, 2022). The willingness to understand people with different backgrounds is an ongoing process that is necessary and valuable for the pupils to better understand the language they speak but also to become conscientious and respectful global citizens. Wermke (2015, p.5) supports that positive disposition towards other cultures and customs influences the acquisition of language. To do so, it is essential that the classroom environment should be a place where everyone feels safe, valued, and included. Boubakar (2010, p.24) reminds us about the teacher's mediating role in foreign language classrooms:

L'approche [culturelle] propre aux didactiques des langues-cultures fait de l'enseignant [de langue étrangère] un médiateur interculturel qui aura pour rôle de rapprocher les deux cultures et ainsi instaurer un climat d'ouverture et de respect indispensable à la société de plus en plus tenue par la mondialisation qui est la nôtre.

Once this environment is propitious, studying songs is convenient for the pupils' cultural awareness and sensitivity, since music has been proved to be a global phenomenon, which gives an insight into new cultures. Even if they don't speak fluent English, many students could learn from English songs. This exposition to the culture of the studied foreign language improves social skills and empathy. As they need cohesion, pupils will learn respect, collaboration and working as a team, which are all important social skills young people should know at school (Music Together Worldwide, 2019). Tardieu (2003) writes:

C'est en réfléchissant sur leurs cultures respectives (accès à la symbolique de l'autre culture), en essayant d'éviter les pièges redoutables de l'ethnocentrisme, que l'enseignant et les apprenants accéderont à une meilleure connaissance d'eux-mêmes et à une prise de conscience des rouages définissant les systèmes de pensée de deux cultures différentes. La classe doit être un lieu de tolérance. C'est par la connaissance d'autrui et surtout de soi-même qu'on accède à la tolérance.

(Cited by Boubakar, 2010, p.22).

Given that songs offer a view of diversity, several cultures and even multiculturalism, they enable the students to compare what they know from their own culture to what they learn about cultures of The English-speaking world. Indeed, from a didactic perspective, cultural representations become essential since they problematise the relationship of the learner's own identity with the foreign culture studied in class (Boubakar, 2010, p.14). In the EFL classroom, it is possible to study songs from all English-speaking countries, which inform the listeners about the differences and similarities between these countries' cultures.

Looking back into the distant past, conquests, famines, and religious oppression encouraged people to flee and settle in new places. These migrations increased over time and created multicultural societies. This idea applies very aptly to the United States but also to the United Kingdom, which is definitely multicultural, as it is made up of four different nations with different dialects, customs, languages and cultures. In effect, music enables listeners to access different cultures, different people's stories and social realities, within the same country. Rahal (2018, p.22) asserts that cultural elements often become more affordable and take an immediacy for learners if they are studied through songs. She also gives the example of music of the United States, saying that while country music mainly comes from the culture of the countryside, rap and RnB offer access to a more urban culture. As another example, Milano (1994) asserts that EFL students can learn about American culture by studying dialogs and songs contained in Broadway musicals. It is such different exposures to multiculturalism that promote the development of social and cultural competencies, as pupils will be able to go beyond the "our" culture and "their" culture (Elliott, 1990).

On the other hand, if songs promote enculturation, especially in childhood education, as they belong to the cultural transmission of one's peers, which convey native cultural traditions and shape one's identity (Del Mar Bernabé Villodre, 2014), we may consider that songs about other cultures can in the long-term promote listeners' acculturation. Acculturation can be defined as the learning process of a foreign culture, and it is important to adapt to foreign environment (Surbhi, 2019). Besides, some studies argue that foreign language learning must not be separated from acculturation (Mekheimer, 2011, p.44). Boubakar (2010) analyses the fact that in these situations of acculturation, in the sense of being exposed to new cultures, one will adopt strategies to find their place, which can range from egocentric denial to the recognition of other cultures. These strategies may conclude with an inner crisis and rejection,



or by assimilation and integration. In fact, the English teachers represent the reference culture, and they work as cultural guidance to enhance English acquisition. Acculturation takes place when pupils start comparing their own culture to the target culture and decide to adapt their language and behaviour to the target culture, thus improving their cultural and sociolinguistic competencies (Boubakar, 2010). In our case of study, this process of acculturation can thus be due to the intercultural transmission pupils faced during a music-based experience (Marsh, 2012).

Yet the boundaries between knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness are not really clear-cut, as the CEFR explains (2018, p.53). It is also important not to forget that there is now a cultural program for all French educational cycles, from *CP* classes to *Terminale* classes. Each program offers content according to different notions and fields, in which authentic documents enable learners to achieve cultural competencies while practising communicative language activities (i.e., reception, production, interaction and mediation, as mentioned in the CEFR, p.31). Therefore, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers recommends the "use of the CEFR as a tool for coherent, transparent and effective plurilingual education in such a way as to promote democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue" (CEFR, 2018, p.25). Their point is thus to promote intercultural education and to give the opportunity to build on pluricultural repertoire through an action-oriented approach. For instance, the descriptors include:

The need to deal with ambiguity when faced with cultural diversity, adjusting reactions, modifying language, etc.

The need for understanding that different cultures may have different practices and norms, and that actions may be perceived differently by people belonging to other cultures;

The need to take into consideration differences in behaviours (including gestures, tones and attitudes), discussing over-generalisations and stereotypes

(CEFR, 2018, p.158)

Puren goes even further by claiming the need to redefine the concepts and components of the CECRL's cultural competence, which he considers precarious and confused. Although the intercultural approach was naturally favoured in the foreign language classrooms, he suggests that in class learners are confronted with metacultural, intercultural and multicultural approaches (Puren, 2013, p.3). He besides writes:

[On est allé jusqu'à] considérer comme relevant de l'approche interculturelle la comparaison explicite de réalités culturelles, comparaison qui relève en réalité de ce que l'on peut appeler le « métaculturel » : l'approche comparative porte en effet sur les connaissances, alors que l'approche interculturelle porte sur les représentations.

(2013, p.2)

Puren later defines the intercultural competence as the one mainly linked with the communicative approach. It is the ability to handle the contact between different cultures when communicating with foreigners during meetings, trips, and other exchanges. Puren's baseline activities are "meet" and "discover"<sup>4</sup> (2013, p.5). This competence particularly consists in identifying the misunderstandings caused by the interpretations of another culture based on the knowledge of one's own cultural reference. The point of intercultural competence is to go beyond the clichés and consider otherness as enriching, and dialogue as a humanitarian principle (Boubakar, 2010). On the other hand, the metacultural competence is more about the ability to mobilise cultural knowledge and notice new cultural elements that are representative of foreign cultures, mentioned in authentic documents studied in class or at home, through a comparative approach (Puren, 2013, p.5). His baseline activities are "identify, compare, analyse, interpret, transpose"<sup>5</sup>. Finally, the multicultural competence can be defined as the ability to live together in harmony in a multicultural society (p.5), so the baseline activity is "live together"<sup>6</sup>.

In short, lessons in the EFL classrooms are meant to improve all three competencies, but also to develop pupils' social skills, curiosity and open-mindedness to others (Zghaibeh, 2019). Songs are especially beneficial to enhance metacultural competence, as they authentically develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. Furthermore, using songs meets the requirements of the active methods and action-oriented approach. It is supposed to engage students with motivating themes and expose them to authentic documents. Songs enable the students to discover cultural elements they did not know about, because they are rather distant in time or in space. In other words, songs genuinely seem to have their proper place in the EFL classrooms if they are not reduced to simple oral comprehensions or gap filling exercises.

### C. Why is evaluating cultural competence so complex?

It is now essential to ponder on how cultural competence must be assessed. And this question is tricky because it seems difficult to assess cultural competence the same way language competence is assessed, through tests, written and oral comprehensions, but also written and oral productions. Puren (1998) even wonders if it is even possible to assess this

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<sup>4</sup> « Rencontrer, découvrir » (Puren, 2013, p.5).

<sup>5</sup> « Repérer, comparer, analyser, interpréter, transposer » (*Ibid*).

<sup>6</sup> « Co-habiter » (*Ibid*).

broad and complex competence? Here indeed lies a controversy in didactics. Specialists of foreign-language didactics argue cultural competence and its components (metacultural, intercultural and multicultural) cannot be assessed since they are intangible (Puren, 1998; Weidmann-Koop, 2000). Since culture cannot be separated from language, it is even more difficult to assess cultural elements on their own, without assessing vocabulary and grammar. Weidmann-Koop (2000) recommends that the assessment only focuses on one of the components at a time (either intercultural or metacultural) and must be based on specific exercises (simulations, interactions) to evaluate the learners' skills and knowledge. She also asserts that criteria for cultural assessment must be precise and limited. Both authors also point out that culture is a moving subject and that no document will ever be definitively authentic. Hence, the assessment of the cultural competence is complex and requires teachers to renew their lessons and vary their approaches.

Songs, like other works of art, can convey a strong cultural background taught through uncommon and playful activities from a communicative perspective. They therefore consist of good educational material, but also a way to assess the pupils' understanding of the subjects at stake in the lyrics, which are preferably topics covered in the current unit. The cultural competence can be assessed after working on songs through diverse criteria, obviously depending on the learners' level. To sum up these criteria, they would be based on pupils' curiosity, tolerance, their ability to analyse a foreign culture and their ability to overcome prejudices and stereotypes in order to adapt their behaviour and language, which implies a knowledge of codes, values and complex social phenomena (Weidmann-Koop, 2000). In our case of study, these criteria can be fulfilled by French learners of English as a foreign language, since British culture is geographically close, and it shares common historical and linguistic origins. In the same way, some aspects of American culture are predominant in our globalised world and French students know about them from advertisements, music, film, television, TV series, and social networks.

Further research could be conducted so as to know how to definitively precisely assess the cultural competence and all its components. This reflection joins Weidmann-Koop's (2000) who suggests it would be necessary to develop appropriate tools for assessing this competence on a large scale, at school and in the professional environment.

### **Chapter III. Songs as a Learning Tool to Improve Linguistic Skills**

We can consider that the study of linguistics enables EFL learners to improve their foreign language skills. Not only does the study of linguistics help in making the communication effective between pupils but knowing the different language rules and norms will also help them interact efficiently in English and build relationships with people from different cultures (Gudykunst, 2005). Therefore, during a second language acquisition students frequently face difficulties to cope with the grammar, the vocabulary and even the new sounds of the target language. Those troubles come from the fact that their brains are conditioned to think and speak in their mother tongues. That is one of the reasons why studying English linguistics through songs can help the learners to grasp some basis and the peculiarities of the English language, while simultaneously promoting cultural awareness.

As already mentioned in Chapter 1 section C.4, songs easily trigger short and long-term memory. As a matter of fact, the Song Stuck in My Head Phenomenon (SSIMHP), which is a process of the implicit memory, also called “involuntary mental rehearsal” can occur with songs within a significantly less input time (Salcedo, 2002, p.55). Salcedo (2002) also claims that the SSIMHP is sometimes triggered years after, and that one can remember the lyrics associated with a music, even though at the time one listened to it, they did not understand the meaning of the words in the target foreign language. Murphey (1990) suggests that the SSIMHP is widely spread as a result of the extensive popularity of the English language music worldwide. He also encourages further research on the potential impact of English songs on language learners. More recently, Salcedo (2002) confirms the latter hypothesis asserting the widespread occurrence of the SSIMHP following song exposure. Their findings suggest that songs are powerful primary sources of input that provide extended mental interaction with the material and have a significant impact on foreign language acquisition. Songs can be an important linguistic reference as they have the potential to contribute to the transfer of input (listening and reading skills) to output (writing and speaking skills) when students are put in communicative situations (Nunes Delfino, 2015).

## A. Grammar

The benefits of songs for teaching grammar should not be disregarded. In fact, the CEFR (2018) claims that “grammatical accuracy concerns both the learner’s ability to recall ‘prefabricated’ expressions correctly and the capacity to focus on grammatical forms whilst articulating thought. [This task is difficult and demanding], this is why accuracy tends to drop during complex tasks” (p.133). The fact that grammatical accuracy does not increase in a linear manner is reflected in the descriptors, which are organised following three key concepts: control of a specific repertoire (A1 to B1), prominence of mistakes (B1 to B2), degree of control (B2 to C2).

In order to determine the effectiveness of music in teaching grammar to beginner level students, Kara and Aksel (2013) conducted a small-scale study in the School of Foreign Languages, at Uludag University (Turkey) in 2012. Their students were taught grammatical tenses and aspects, as simple present, present continuous and simple past, through catchy songs that had short utterances and adequate repetitions. At the end of the experiment, 79% of the students would like songs to be used daily in their lessons and 47% of the students stated that they could memorise the grammatical structure more easily with songs. Students eventually claimed that songs make grammar more enjoyable than repetitive and monotonous exercises (2013, p.6).

It is interesting to consider that practically all grammar points and a wide variety of vocabulary can be found in authentic songs. English teachers should definitely not use artificially made songs for specific learning lessons with little or no musical value to present a grammatical point (Vida, 2013). As Falioni (1993, p.101) states, "the new structures that may seem isolated or out of context in pattern drills, are seen in a different perspective when they are part of a song". Indeed, Rahal (2018, p.25) supports that “ [utiliser la chanson pour travailler des points de grammaire] agit comme un tremplin pour la discussion d’un temp verbal spécifique, de même qu’un examen de sa forme”. Moreover, Salcedo (2002) attests that some songs lend themselves to grammatical or verb tenses revision and constitute a huge help in memorizing phrase constructions. They are easier to learn and tend to be remembered longer than straightforward grammatical examples. Then, learners can be expected to use correct grammatical structures and use English more easily in real-life conversations. In other words, while students in a good mood will surely be willing to learn, assimilate or review grammar

through catchy songs using songs can facilitate the delivery of specific grammar lessons for teachers (Anton, 1990).

As learning grammar may sometimes be difficult, studying it through songs enhances the use of grammar rules in practice. We can imagine using songs to locate certain grammar points such as negative phrases, adjectives, phrasal verbs or direct object (Tizian, 2015; Akbary, Shahriari and Fatemi, 2016). Songs can also facilitate learning slang reductions, such as “wanna, gonna, gotta, gimme” (Rahal, 2018), and working on modals, auxiliary verbs and tenses. To give some examples, while *Yellow* by Coldplay (2000, annexe 28) could be used to review preterit and irregular verbs, *Longer* by Dan Fogelberg (1979, annexe 29) can be used to identify superlative, and studying *When I’m Sixty-Four* by the Beatles (1967, annexe 30) is a tremendous way to recap the future lesson. Once the grammar points are memorised, they can effectively be considered transferable skills that can be used in every other language activity.

## B. Vocabulary.

Tegge (2015, p.22) declares that the teaching of grammatical rules often took precedence in foreign language education in the past. In France, for a very long time, some English teachers wanted their pupils to learn grammar almost out of context. When I personally was a secondary school pupil in the 2010s, I had to learn never-ending lists of irregular verbs by heart. Most of these verbs could not even be heard in oral comprehension and we did not use them during role plays to remember them. Fortunately, this teaching method was proved to be inefficient, and it has thus become increasingly unpopular in EFL classrooms. On the other hand, it has recently been discovered that lexical knowledge is at least as important for language proficiency than grammatical knowledge. Tegge (2015) then suggests that lexical errors are more likely to disrupt communication than grammatical errors. Indeed, Nation (2006) proves that language learners need to acquire between 6,000 and 9,000-to-7,000-word families to deal with spoken discourse and a variety of written texts in the target language. Regarding this huge number of words required to master a foreign language, the teaching of vocabulary is now part of foreign languages curriculum.

Considering the CEFR, foreign language learners are supposed to develop a linguistic and vocabulary range from having “a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type” (CEFR, 2018, p.131) and “a basic vocabulary repertoire

of words and phrases related to particular concrete situations” (p.132), as beginners, to being capable of “exploit[ing] a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity [without] having to restrict what he/she wants to say” (p.131). Indeed, proficient users are expected to “[have] a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning” (p.132). The objective is that learners progressively use more complex language, take risks, and go beyond their comfort zone to progress.

In a nutshell, a short review of the pedagogical literature reveals that songs are frequently attributed a mnemonic effect, which is understood to benefit the memorisation of words. Furthermore, this potential effect of using songs in EFL teaching on vocabulary recall has been analysed in several classroom-based studies (Jolly, 1975; Murphey, 1990; Schun, 1999; Salcedo, 2002; Mori, 2011; Ludke, Ferreira, and Overy, 2013). Results show that song-based activities can provide a significant memory benefit for foreign language learning in short and long-term memory. Songs actually enhance vocabulary, phrases and idioms learning as these materials are presented with a melody. Indeed, when the lyrics are relevant and appealing, songs can be engaging for learners as they provide the opportunity for vocabulary practice (Nadera, 2015). Hence, they can be beneficial to review current classroom lessons on relevant themes and vocabulary.

To give an example, the song *What a wonderful world* by Louis Armstrong could be used with a class of Year 7 (*6ème*), for instance, to review colours and the methodology of descriptions, to write plurals and learn about the idiomatic structure “what a...” (e.g., What a surprise! What an old plane! What a pity!).

I see trees of green, red roses too  
I see them bloom for me and you  
And I think to myself  
What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue and clouds of white  
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night  
And I think to myself  
What a wonderful world

The colours of the rainbow so pretty in the sky  
Are also on the faces of people going by

I see friends shaking hands

Saying, "How do you do?"  
They're really saying, "I love you."

I hear babies cry, I watch them grow  
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know  
And I think to myself  
What a wonderful world

Lyrics of Louis Armstrong's *What a wonderful world*, 1967.

This optimistic song, in which the narrator describes all the beautiful things he can see, can be studied to write a glossary of new verbs and vocabulary (plural of tree, sky, colour, baby; verbs: to bloom, to go by, to grow, to shake hands; adjectives: bright, blessed, sacred).

Depending on the learners' proficiency, vocabulary development through songs may include identifying cognates and word-families, distinguishing slang from informal language, matching words from the lyrics with synonymous or antonyms, finding hidden meaning by clues in the song, and circling categories of words and lexical fields, as pupils are trained for poems and other literary texts. Some examples of practical applications will be given in chapter 4, section C.

Undeniably, building a personal musical repertoire for the sake of pleasure but also for one's overall culture is beneficial. As a matter of fact, listening to English songs out of EFL classroom can contribute to vocabulary uptake and should be recommended to all pupils and students. Nonetheless, inside the EFL classroom, it is of great importance for the teachers to select songs that are suitable both in terms of topic and target vocabulary. Indeed, Nadera (2015) highlights that some of the language used in popular English songs can cause difficulties for learners because of their use of low frequency and archaic words. Accordingly, a list of tips to select songs will be provided in Chapter 4, section B.

### C. Listening skills: songs offer an approach to English prosody.

Timuçin and Aryoubi (2016) suggest that listening is essential for learning pronunciation, vocabulary, word stress, and syntax and they assert that the necessity and importance of language listening skills for students to acquire English as a foreign language has been recognized and established. According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), listening accounts for 40-50 percent of the total time spent on daily communication, while speaking accounts for



25-30 percent, reading accounts for 11-16 percent, and writing accounts for 9 percent. Their study supports that listening is not a passive skill, but a complex process in which “learners attempt to understand a spoken discourse by decoding a number of sounds to form words, [...] which make up sentences” (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011, p.977). As a result, it is critical to promote language listening skills specifically and purposefully. School is by definition the best place to enhance listening since students are expected to listen between 50 and 90 percent of the time (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011, p.978), which is more than double the time they speak in the target foreign language.

As songs are meant to be listened to, they undeniably contribute to the development of students’ listening skills (Kanel, 1997). Timuçin and Aryoubi (2016) claim the most beneficial method in teaching listening comprehension, pronunciation and dictation is through teaching songs. Degrave (2019) evaluates that song-based tasks would be even more effective at improving listening comprehension than conventional listening tasks. He thus suggests that pupils better improve their listening skills if the stream is sung than if the stream is spoken. Other researchers, such as Azzam-Hannacht (2005), have mixed feelings regarding the previous statements, revealing that a limitation remains as their experiments are based on complex criteria also depending on learning situations that are difficult to compare and contrast. In my opinion, teaching songs can undeniably improve listening skills and the motivation brought by the study of songs is often determining in the learning of foreign language. Nonetheless, I tend to agree with Azzam-Hannacht (2005), since the results of teaching listening comprehension through songs may vary depending on the learners’ level, their age, and their interest in English. Indeed, researchers usually do experiments with sixth-form students and university students. However, even though secondary school pupils are generally really motivated when lesson comes to use playful material as songs, they are still beginners, who can only “pick out concrete information from short audio recordings on familiar everyday topics, provided they are delivered very slowly and clearly” (CEFR, 2018, p.59). Authentic songs with such qualities can be difficult to find. This is one of the reasons why, I could not use songs as much as I wanted with my Year 7 pupils. I would therefore keep a more balanced view than Degrave (2019), because conventional listening tasks are sometimes easier for students to understand, as spoken speech is what they are mainly used to listening to in class and in TV shows and movies.

Songs reflect the intonation pattern of the target language and offer a specific focus on phonological objectives. Nevertheless, studying songs with a phonological objective can be challenging. First, because learners have to segment speech into words. Everyone has to face such difficulties in the early stages of foreign language acquisition, when the target language appears to be an endless stream of meaningless sounds (Schön, Boyer, Moreno, Besson, Peretz and Kolinsky, 2008). Although this step can be difficult, it rapidly becomes beneficial as MacLeod maintains:

[chanter avec un but phonologique est] extrêmement bénéfique du point de vue de la prononciation et du débit et a eu un effet désinhibiteur sur des élèves timides. De plus, elle a permis aux élèves de découvrir une culture musicale variée qui leur est bien souvent inconnue.

(2011, p.14)

The CEFR descriptors (2018, pp.134, 135) consider that the phonology scale focuses on sounds articulation, pronunciation, prosodic features (intonation, stress and rhythm) and intelligibility of the speech. Indeed, intonation, rhythm and accentuation are part of prosody that are studied in EFL classrooms. Kjellin poetically defines prosody as a very fundamental instrument, the “skeleton or framework, on which to build not only pronunciation, but also vocabulary, morphology, word order, discourse rules, etc” adding that “prosody is also the lubricating oil for normal, spoken communication (2004, pp.3-4). White & Mattys (2007) and Plantinga & Trainor (2005) argue that the comprehension of non-native speakers’ speech is dependent on “quasi-musical,” prosodic features such as rhythm, stress, and intonation and that when learning a foreign language, mastery of such prosodic features (as opposed to individual sounds or syllables) is fundamental in order to be understood by native speakers. Therefore, students must be trained to the perception and comprehension of English prosody, which can be summed up in three steps: detection, identification, and interpretation (Kjellin, 2004, pp.3-4).

As already mentioned in chapter 1, Trehub (2013) suggests that young learners perceive and remember the rhythmic patterns of songs, which implies that their brains perceive the rhythm of speech even though they are not conscious that they have distinguished a contrast with their mother language. For instance, English is ascribed to the group of stress-timed rhythm languages as opposed to syllable-timed languages. Hence, certain stress-timed acoustic cues remain relevant to EFL learners and aid in the acquisition of the natural sound of English. Consequently, listening to songs is a strategy for improving language proficiency since once they are exposed to authentic phonology, they are led to easily reproduce it (Rahal, 2018).

Pamula (2008, p.133) captures this thought when writing “dans une première étape de l’éducation musicale, [...] on prend en considération une aptitude perceptive important pour les langues étrangères : la sensibilité phonétique”. This phonetic sensitivity can be intensified through the study of songs and can help language learners to learn proper pronunciation since “melodies and rhymes guide learners to speak in a native cadence” (Rahal, 2018).

It is therefore obvious that the instruction of phonetic sensitivity is an integral part of EFL acquisition process. Creative and alternative approaches should accordingly be used in EFL classrooms. Miras (2014) claims that we should start rethinking what kind of training tasks would enhance students’ mediation of perception and production of sounds in foreign languages.

Le but de notre perspective n’étant pas de « corriger », « remédier à » [...] mais d’accompagner l’apprenant, s’il le souhaite, vers une prononciation dans laquelle il se sentira plus à l’aise en production [tout en favorisant sa] perception/réception. (2015, p.74).

It would therefore be beneficial for foreign-language teachers to propose extensive listening and hearing exercises to cognitively train the learners’ brains (Kjellin, 2004, p.5) . To detect, identify and interpret the sounds of English, teachers must draw the students’ attention on all the salient details and peculiarities of the speeches. On that account, teachers may exploit songs because of the example of authentic pronunciation they offer (Asmaradhani, Evendi, Mursid, & Gani, 2018), but also because of the partial convergences between musical phenomena, such as rhythm and melody, and linguistic prosody, such as stress and intonation (Arleo, 2000, p.7). These similarities between spoken speech and sung speech mainly come from aural phenomena. However, there are still rough parallels between spoken speech (use of daily English words, canonical phrases, clauses, sentences, lower frequency level, the main objective is the intelligibility) and sung speech (variations in natural pitch and in articulation of vowels, different emphasis on words depending on the singer’s interpretation, covers a much wider frequency range, offers many more repetitions and prosodic structures, can more easily affect one’s emotions, intelligibility is often sacrificed for aesthetic reasons) (Sundberg, 1969; Arleo, 2000; Nix for the University of Texas at Sant Antonio n.d).

#### D. Is studying songs beneficial for pronunciation?

It seems that we have already started to answer this question. In fact, just like Pamula (2008) and Rahal (2018) suggest, Nadera (2015) affirms that most adults who learn a foreign language have an accent that is caused by phonological and phonetic differences between their native language and the target foreign language. In 2012, Till Gins, the Franco-British present Director of the Oxford Intensive School of English (OISE), gave an interview to French magazine *Le Point* in which he stated:

Le Français n'est pas mauvais en langues, comme on le dit bien souvent, mais il a peur du ridicule. Et ce blocage psychologique est tellement ancré dans la mentalité nationale qu'il a le plus grand mal à se lancer à l'oral, à prendre des risques, à se faire confiance. C'est comme s'il préférerait calculer à l'avance ce qu'il va dire, ou tout simplement se taire, pour éviter de faire une erreur. Résultat : il est complètement bloqué et ne parvient pas à communiquer spontanément dans une langue étrangère.

(*Le Point*, 2012)

The pronunciation of English words and sentences requires important skills and knowledge that are not innate for non-native speakers. It usually becomes a problem for some EFL learners, who sometimes cannot pronounce full sentences with correct phonetic rules. Some of them, who are aware of the problem, get frustrated, start feeling afraid of speaking in English because they do not want others to hear their faulty pronunciation and sometimes even give up their will to learn. Hence, foreign-language teachers must find methods and activities to help unblock their students' fear of making pronunciation mistakes. Furthermore, Le Féron writes:

Il nous faut 'internationaliser' les oreilles de nos élèves le plus tôt possible : développer l'écoute des phonèmes anglais et ainsi se libérer au maximum de cet accent français, jugé pourtant si "charmant" par les anglophones.

(2005, p.7)

Of course, students are not expected to be totally accent-free or to reach a perfect native-like pronunciation, but what is important is that they do not have such a strong accent that it makes their speech unintelligible and leads to misunderstandings. What makes a speech intelligible is its clarity and the fact that it is comprehensible to a listener. However, a speech does not need to be perfect for listeners to understand it. For instance, we can understand children even though they usually simplify words and make speech sound developmental errors due to their articulation learning. Hence, foreign accents can sometimes lead to phonetic deviations but if the speaker makes some efforts (articulation, speech sounds patterns, intonation and

pronunciation), a listener can recognise word and understand the conversation without disconnections. Indeed, Busà writes:

Today, language teachers and researchers generally agree that the ultimate goal of pronunciation teaching should not be to eradicate a foreign accent, but rather to promote pronunciation which is reasonably intelligible, as intelligible pronunciation is considered an essential component of communicative competence.

(2008, pp. 166-167)

To address this problem, Murphey (1990) suggests that a lot of listening practice later helps in learners' production and Tizian (2015, p.84) maintains that students have to "build a proper hearing-image of the words", which implies that listening to authentic material enhances memorisation of the pronunciation. Then, she claims that to get used to feel and produce English sounds, the most important thing is to train students' ears because when "they can hear correctly they are on the way to being able to speak correctly" (2015, p.98). Indeed, Miras (2014, p.95) writes "travailler sur la prononciation d'un individu, c'est avant tout lui faire prendre conscience de **son** utilisation de **son** appareil phonatoire et les liens entre **ses** perceptions et **ses** productions"

Working on pronunciation could be more naturally and effectively integrated in EFL classrooms through the use of authentic materials, such as TV or radio programs, movies, Youtube videos and songs (Yoshida Tritch, 2014). As already mentioned in chapter 1, section C.3., the particular value of studying song is that both left and right hemispheres are simultaneously engaged in this activity. Thus, working on semantic comprehension, controlled by the left side, with a focus on rhythm and pronunciation, controlled by the right side, enables to develop cognitive skills, linguistic skills, and pronunciation skills (Salcedo, 2002). However, Tizian (2015) proves that passive listening to songs in a foreign language is not efficient, so there must be active listening and works that activate the learners' minds and help them memorising and practicing pronunciation.

As an example, songs can be used to work on speech rhythm. Balčytytė-Kurtinienė (2018) demonstrates that once students learning English as a foreign language are exposed to selected sentence patterns through songs, they show a better proficiency in English speech rhythm, especially skills in recognition and stressing strong / weak syllable as well as vowel reduction. Quivy and Tardieu (2002) maintains that "le souvenir mélodique favoris[e] l'émergence du souvenir linguistique", which is also supported by Lukde, Ferreira and Overy (2013), who suggest that a basic listen-and-sing learning method can facilitate verbatim memory for spoken

foreign language phrases. Moreover, it is even possible to work on phonetics through music education with beginners, who will try to imitate the singer (Gatti-Taylor, 1980). Leith (1979) stated “there is probably not a better nor quicker way to teach phonetics than with songs” (cited by Salcedo, 2002, p.66). Salcedo (2002) continues by claiming that it is not difficult to find songs that contain phonemes the majority of students have trouble producing.

If I had to offer advice to French pupils learning English it is to listen to songs, sing the lyrics and keep practicing their pronunciation in and out of the class, because they will eventually manage to pronounce these “th” sounds (/θ/ and / ð/) and the English “r” of “squirrel”, which at first seemed so hard to deal with.

### E. The importance of repetitions.

The fact that songs can improve grammar practice and vocabulary acquisition also comes from the fact that they are repeated in songs. These repetitions either come from the lyrics (often in the choruses), either from the melody and sometimes in both (Rahal, 2018). Moreover, it is less constraining and more pleasant and usual to listen to songs more than once as opposed to texts, which are usually read once. All in all, these repetitions enhance memorisation. Arleo (2008, p.8) besides explains that “music has great value for the foreign language teacher as it affords enjoyable repetitive practice that is often boring in ordinary language practice”. Songs, unlike films or videos, can clearly be replayed as many times as needed, because they are brief and pleasant. Elliott (1977) in her music research states that:

Il est indéniable qu’un poème ou une chanson qu’on aura répété bien des fois et avec plaisir, implantera chez l’étudiant l’habitude d’utiliser automatiquement une structure correcte sans souffrance tout en maîtrisant le sens de ce qu’il dit

(1977, p. 400).

From a cognitive perspective, Mitchell (2013) states:

Pour apprendre-et enseigner-il est nécessaire de créer des schèmes structuraux solides entre les neurones. Plus les parties du cerveau sont stimulées pendant l’apprentissage, plus les schèmes structuraux sont forts. Et plus les schèmes structuraux sont utilisés, plus l’apprentissage sera durable et plus il sera facile de s’en souvenir.

Some studies about the practices of repetition and spaced practice linked to learning show that redundant information is easier to process (Schön, 2009; Wolf, 2008). Their data confirm that constant repetition at regular intervals favours the storage of information in the long run. Milton (2002) attests that when listened to repeatedly over an eight-week period, songs improve

students' lexical uptake. To put it bluntly, in order to remember vocabulary, grammar, and cultural points, the importance is to repeat and review the elements at stake. For example, a teacher might repeat a word hundreds of times during a lesson, pupils would not remember it the next day. However, if this same word can be heard only a few times in the lesson but for eight weeks, they would infer its meaning and remember it, despite far fewer repetitions. Moreover, Tizian (2015, p.87) suggests that "pauses may aid retention, as they allow echoic memory to process information with more depth and as they allow the words time to echo in one's mind". In other words, cramming and repetitions in bulk support comprehension in short-term memory, whereas "space retrieval practice" (Tizian, 2015, p.84) supports acquisition in long-term memory.

Repetitions are therefore necessary for learners to develop their auditory perception, to understand words and their meanings, to internalise grammatical structures, to memorise vocabulary and cultural elements and to practice their language skills. Songs are a beneficial medium since they offer repetitions and allow other repetitions. Hence, songs can be used for various objectives and activities, to anticipate, to listen and repeat or to work assiduously on a relevant item chose by the teacher.

#### F. Are song texts necessary?

As songs are primarily meant to be listened to, they do not strictly require pupils to read the lyrics. They can be studied with or without their lyrics printed. Nevertheless, listening comprehension can be checked with the song text distributed to the class (e.g., crossing out silent letters in words when working on pronunciation, practicing auditory discrimination or a fill in the gaps exercise for evaluation). Songs not only offer a unique means of reinforcing listening activities but also of improving reading and writing skills through specially designed activities. Indeed, music texts can be used to practice the four communication skills (Failoni, 1993). These four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) were part of the traditional model which was proved to be insufficient for capturing the complex reality of communication. In 2018, they were replaced by communicative language strategies and activities (reception, production, interaction and mediation) in the CEFR. The selection of a song for communication activities is influenced by the objectives of the lesson and the students' age and level of language development.

Songs can indeed be used for reading comprehension. Reading activities may include exercises to learn new vocabulary. Pupils are asked to read the song lyrics and look up any unknown words in a dictionary, which is particularly beneficial for young learners who nowadays are used to using online machines translation. As a matter of fact, Susanto (2017) explains that students usually use *Google Translate* – many teachers’ worst enemy – because of its convenience and rapidity that can be used inside and outside classroom. Students also admit they use *Google Translate* when they do not feel comfortable in their learning, to look for a translation, a meaning or a pronunciation (Susanto, 2017). Therefore, it can be helpful to teach beginners how to use a dictionary and enrich their language without any phone or computer. On the other hand, reading activities of songs can also improve pronunciation when pupils are encouraged to sing along the lyrics, following a sort of karaoke method. This method follows Tizian’s (2015) suggestion that using songs for reading activities may enable the learners to comprehend the correspondences between written and pronounced words/sounds and the correct articulation of sounds.

In lessons with advanced learners, the teacher can encourage learners to consider what the themes of the song might be and to discuss the lyrics with historical and cultural references. In the same way, one can encourage learners to think about the meaning and emotions of a song by analysing it, as a poem would be studied with a linear analysis in high school French classes. In addition, (Failoni, 1993, p.99) claims that

Along with reading, writing activities can incorporate music. Other activities [can be] personalising the song by changing names and places, or substituting words in the lines. Students may progress from writing summaries or expressing opinions of the song to writing their own song texts.

In other words, a printed song text may be helpful for all receptive skills, and they can eventually enhance productive skills.



## Chapter IV. Experiment of Practical Application and Guidelines.

### A. Experiment during internship and results.

During my first year as an English teacher, I carried out a project with a class of Year 7 pupils. Here is a recap chart of what is covered in the Unit “Come to my party” inspired by the textbook *I Really Bet You Can 6ème* (André, Denoix-Smart, Doublet & Ogier, 2021).

Class / English proficiency	Year 7 pupils / Beginner level : A1
Topic	Celebrations and birthday parties
Frameworks (of the French curriculum)	La personne et la vie quotidienne / repères culturels
Problematic	Are you ready to organise your birthday party?
First Task	Write an invitation to your birthday party.
Final Task	Escape game
Main learning objectives	Getting ready to ask for a price and ask for a date. Memorising the vocabulary and the different steps for organising a birthday party. Write an invitation.
Pupils profil	French Secondary school pupils (male and female), aged 11-12. All of them are studying English as a foreign language at Mario Meunier Secondary School. Two-thirds of the pupils have drama lessons. This class is dynamic and pleasant to work with.

I imagined this lesson for one of my classes with the objectives that, by the end of this lesson, students would be able to express their emotions and opinions about English music. The planned procedure will now be detailed.

On Tuesday, at the end of the previous lesson, I asked my students to learn the vocabulary they wrote on their *Workbooks I Really Bet You Can* page 89 (i.e., organise a party, invite friends, write cards, choose decorations, choose music, buy food [...], reassure parents, play loud music, etc.) and send me their favourite song via *Pronote*.








On Friday, at the beginning of the following lesson, the class began with an oral test to check the pupils’ knowledge of the new vocabulary and to contextualize the lesson. One by one, pupils had to tell the action appearing on the board (e.g., I organise a party). From this

moment, I thought it better to let them know that this lesson was going to focus on two actions: “select music” and “play loud music”. Then a worksheet was distributed to come over the various activities.

The lesson continued with the study of various musical genres, among which classical, rap, disco, rock, reggae, pop, country music. To be sure all of them knew what each musical genre was, we listened to several excerpts and matched them with the corresponding genre. For this activity, I decided not to propose only music they all already knew but some music released before they were born in order to expand their musical and cultural knowledge (i.e. *Stayin’ Alive*, Bee Gees, 1977; *Take Me Home, Country Roads*, John Denver, 1971; *Could you be loved*, Bob Marley, 1980; *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, Nirvana, 1991).

AP 2: What about your birthday party playlist?

1) There are different music genres:

	Pop music	●	●	<i>Vivaldi's The Four seasons recomposed by Max Richter, 2012.</i>
	Rap	●	●	<i>Can't hold us by Macklemore, 2013.</i>
	Disco	●	●	<i>Could you be loved by Bob Marley, 1980.</i>
	Rock	●	●	<i>Smells Like Teen Spirit by Nirvana, 1991.</i>
	Country music	●	●	<i>Take Me Home, Country Roads by John Denver, 1971.</i>
	Reggae	●	●	<i>Stayin' Alive by the Bee Gees, 1977.</i>
	Classical music	●	●	<i>Happy by Pharrell Williams, 2014.</i>

Worksheet, Annexe 32.

Then, pupils were asked about their personal musical tastes. It was a way to review the expression of tastes. Some of the productions were “my favourite music genre is pop music”, “I prefer rock and roll”, “I love rap, but I don’t like classical music”. As already mentioned in

this paper, it is essential to involve learners and ask them about their feelings, especially when this is what they can mainly speak about. For instance, Year 7 pupils with their A1 level are expected to “produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places” (CEFR, 2018, p.69), “describe simple aspects of [their] everyday life in a series of simple sentences, using simple words and basic phrases” (p.70) and “exchange likes and dislikes for sports, foods, etc., using a limited repertoire of expressions, when addressed clearly, slowly and directly” (p.86).

The following activity was meant to describe pictures of children doing activities at a birthday party. The purpose was clearly to review the present continuous. Pupils were thus expected to say: The children are playing board games / The children are playing musical chairs/ They are dancing/ They are singing (karaoke). Then again, they were asked about their favourite activities at a birthday party.

From my personal experience as a student who did theatre, I remember how much I loved playing with emotions and, as my pupils like theatre too, I wanted them to have the opportunity to work on music and drama at the same time. O’Gara (2008) besides reported that teaching through drama and music motivate students emotionally and cognitively in class, which thus increase enthusiasm in learning a foreign language. Therefore, we played to the Mood Music Game. This game is an excellent way to introduce the kids to different genres of music and the different emotions linked to them, by connecting music to actions, emotions and words. After having listened to the extracts, pupils were questioned to know what they felt. To help them making complete sentences, there was a visual prompt on the *Slideshow* “When I listen to this song, I can feel ...” and some given adjectives to set boundaries and help them communicating (e.g., sad, scared, nostalgic, excited, motivated, cf. slide 8, Appendix 28). Naturally, this game required a collection of songs depicting different emotions – anger, happiness, sadness and fear, for instance – and some space to move. Moreover, this game needed to be clearly explained. Therefore, I prepared an example and got ready to show them my best sulky-sad face on Adele’s *Hello* (2015). For a happy song, the kids could jump and move energetically with big smiles, whereas for a sad song they might simply sway with a sad face. In short, whatever the mood of the song was, the kids had to act it. Drama helps them express their feeling through the expected sentence “When I listen to this song, I can feel...”, and others had to agree or disagree and answer to their classmates. As they were 11 years old, I chose children’s music (*Peppa Pig* and *Bob Sponge Square pants* themes) so that they could feel nostalgic. In addition, listening to these soundtracks they all knew in French was a beneficial way to compare their cultural knowledge with the target language’s.

The last activity consisted in listening to the songs they sent me. One by one, all their favourite songs were listened to. The instructions were: “if it’s your song, stand up at the end of the recording and say what the title of the song is. Then, explain why you like it”. On the board, they can see a visual prompt “This song is « [Title] » by [singer]. I like this song because ...”. For instance, after having been corrected, Celia managed to say “This song is *Shake It Off* by Taylor Swift, I like it because it makes excited and it makes me want to dance”.

At the end of the class, pupils had to complete missing words of the anticipated lesson projected on the board. We first did it orally and they then wrote in on their worksheet:

“Music makes us feel **emotions**.

When I listen to a song, I can feel **happy, excited, motivated, sad, nostalgic** or **scared**.

My favourite music genre is **pop music**.

My favourite English song is *As It Was* by **Harry Styles** because **it makes me nostalgic and happy**.”

(green colour = new vocabulary/ new notions; orange colour = personal).

I also imagined a backup plan in case there would have been time left. We could have played pass the parcel game. This British party game is super funny, and it requires children to pass a parcel around as the music goes on. When the music stops, the child holding the parcel is allowed to unwrap a layer. The game continues until the last kid gets the present inside. We could imagine a version in which the pupil who unwraps a layer must speak about their favourite singer and justify (e.g., Ed Sheeran was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1991. He is my favourite singer because he’s got a beautiful voice and his songs make me happy). This version of the game would therefore require them to write the date of birth of their favourite singer. This could be asked as a homework. The aim of this game is obviously more cultural than linguistic, but it can also help learners justify their tastes, which is great for beginners. However, in a 55-minute lesson we did not have time enough to play this game.

At the end of the class, I wrote my impressions from the lesson, and it helped me write the following post-assessment, so as to evaluate myself and the lesson, to improve it and to establish a guide that gives advice about practical applications of teaching English songs. The slideshow and the worksheet I prepared are available in the appendix (Annexes 31 and 32).

## Post-assessment

Date	Friday, May 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2022
Class	Semigroup of 6 <sup>e</sup> 10 ( AP lesson)
Topic	What about your birthday party playlist?
Objectives	By the end of this lesson, students will have had the opportunity to discover various musical genres, listen to songs they had probably never heard before, understand that music can convey emotions, learn new vocabulary and talk about their musical tastes.
Skills	Listening and speaking
Ressources	-Laptop                      -Speakers -PowerPoint                -Worksheets

### Observations

This lesson was successful. It was enjoyable for the pupils and for me, as a teacher. Pupils were particularly excited to share their favourite English song with the rest of the class. Some pupils shared pop music (e.g., Ed Sheeran's *Shape of You*, Omi's *Cheerleader*, Maroon Five's *Girls like you*, Taylor Swift's *Shake It Off*, Adele's *Oh My God*, Bruno Mars' *Uptown Funk*, Imagine Dragons' *Enemy*) but also rap (Whiz Kalifa's *When I see you again*), rock (Queen's *We Will Rock You*) and more surprisingly Rick Astley's hit of the 1980s, *Never Gonna Give You Up*. This moment of sharing and discovering made us all in a great mood. Moreover, since this class is disciplined, I let them free to react to the songs as they wanted: some shook their heads, other danced, sang and laughed. We worked in a room in which higher levels of noise were tolerated at this moment and in which physical movements were possible. I was however pleasantly surprised that they all play the game respectfully and as soon as I asked them to keep their voices down or stop tapping their hands to follow Queen's *We Will Rock You* drum beat, they did it.

I am glad that the content of this lesson seemed to be clear and interesting for all of them. This experiment typically proves that French 11 year-old-pupil know some English songs and they are deeply motivated to discover new ones.

### Self-evaluation

Concerning the managing of the class, I tried to bring energy in the first few minutes to begin the lesson in a joyful atmosphere. The pupils were receptive and excited to work on music. This lesson represents a lot of work as you need to download all of their songs, cut the records and classify them for the semigroups, but it was worth it.

I would say that the strength of this lesson is its creativity and the fact that all pupils were involved. I am particularly glad that all of them were receptive and active, even pupils who usually struggle with English. Furthermore, it seems that I properly anticipated linguistic and organisational problems as everything went well. For instance, some pupils did not know what “nostalgic” meant, so I told them “When I listen to a song, I can feel nostalgic because I remember the past. I can remember when I was a kid...”, making a gesture at the back of my head as to symbolise a back in time.

At the end of the class, before they left, I asked the two semigroups “Did you enjoy this lesson?”. They all seemed delighted as they answered “yes”. Their opinions help me make this review.

In brief, I tried my best to make them want to listen more to English music and expand their cultural and musical knowledge. To me, this experiment is a compelling argument showing that English as a Foreign Language can be approached through diverse fields of education that are valuable for the learners and do not only cover pure grammar and vocabulary.

### How could this lesson be improved?

This lesson was mainly based on teacher-students interactions. It could be interesting to maintain a balance between Teacher-talk and Students-talk, by giving them opportunities to work in groups. Therefore, we could imagine a short pair work or group work to vary the interactions. Ideally, this lesson could be prolonged on a double period class. Hence, it could be possible to make groups and give them instructions to work on songs. The objective would be to create information deficit so that the groups can be mixed, and pupils would communicate more effectively while the teacher would simply be monitoring.

Moreover, this lesson particularly focused on the cultural objective, perhaps slightly to the detriment of the linguistic objective. If the lesson had lasted on a double period, it could have been interesting to use drama and songs for pupils to speak more. For example, pupils

could be asked to imagine an interview between a journalist and their favourite singer to speak about their new album released. It could be a way to work on their spoken interactions, to practice their intonation (e.g., falling and rising intonation for questions), to practice the emotions vocabulary they have just learnt (i.e., sad, nostalgic, excited, motivated, scared) and to review all the grammar and vocabulary covered in the unit.

Also, if I were to teach this lesson one more time in the future, I would probably try to add engaging homework related to the lesson topic to enhance their skills and improve their knowledge of English songs at home.

## B. How to select a song?

The selection of a song depends on the activities the teacher is organising Are you planning to use background music (music without lyrics)? Songs to work on culture, grammar and/or vocabulary? With which objectives? Through which language activity? Or are you planning to do rhythmical activities, as suggested by Degraeve (2019)? Once you know the sort of activity you want to realise, several song selection criteria for EFL lessons are summarized below (Arleo, 2000; Salcedo, 2002; Nadera, 2015; Pardede, 2018; Rahal, 2018):

1. Teachers should use songs they like in agreement with their musical knowledge.
2. Songs should be appropriate (beware of explicit, violent, and sexual contents).
3. Songs should be interesting enough to maintain students' attention and motivation.
4. Songs should contain lyrics that are understandable and intelligible. The lyrics should be language-level appropriate, heard clearly above the music, sung at a reasonable pace and a natural speech, with proper diction.
5. Songs should contain idiomatic vocabulary related to the topic covered in the unit. They can also expose to new concepts that are going to be tackled in further lessons.
6. Songs should offer enough repetitions to highlight key words or phrases that can be memorised by the listeners.
7. Songs should contain relevant cultural topic.
8. Songs should stress a particular grammar point.
9. Songs must come from a variety of musical genres in order to reach the broadest possible audience and expose the students to new styles. Considering the vast amount

of musical material available, teachers can choose among popular and traditional songs, ethnic music, jazz, hip-hop, reggae, rock, classical music, rap, film music, etc.

10. It is even better if the selected songs tell a story.

On the other hand, I have made a short inventory of two practices that are unfavourable:

1. Teachers should not only use one type of outdated music because it may confirm some students' stereotypes on a foreign culture.
2. Songs used in EFL classrooms should not be borrowed songs or translated songs from the native spoken language since it would imply that other cultures have nothing to offer and only imitate.

Here are other guidelines depending on the level and age of your students (Arleo, 2000; MacLeod, 2011; Brown and Heekyeong, 2015, CEFR, 2018).

-For teaching children and starters (A1 -A2), the focus should be put on attention span and sensory inputs. Indeed, activities need to be designed to capture their immediate interest. Moreover, children are extremely sensitive to their peers so song-based activities must be designed to lower their inhibition about risk-taking. Therefore, songs should not be too long or too fast, and should be clear and catchy. They should also use everyday English to be understandable and motivating.

-For intermediate and independent learners (B1-B2), usually teenagers, the importance is to imagine lessons that are not boring, which means song-based activities should be innovative and fun to make the learning process enjoyable. One of the best ways to keep the students motivated is to choose familiar songs that can be selected by the learners themselves.

-For advanced and proficient learners (C1-C2), there are fewer limitations to what you can imagine and do with them. Challenging topics can be tackled through songs, as they engage the learners' curiosity and increase their motivation as they are now able to deal with a variety of real-life issues. What is particularly interesting is that while improving their linguistic skills in reception (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing), advanced learners can focus more carefully on all the sociolinguistic nuances of language. Therefore, song-based



activities can be used to analyse author's intent and to start debates, they can result in complex role-plays or writing essays.

In a nutshell, and as already mentioned in the literature review, Bruner (1960) considers learners of very young ages to be capable of learning any material if the instructions are appropriate. In other words, every song can be used, even the most challenging, as long as it is made accessible. Teachers therefore have to anticipate their students' needs, imagine clear instructions and objectives, but they also have to choose the right moment to use a song. Naturally, there are various stages in which teachers may use songs for different intentions. A song can introduce a topic at the beginning of a unit, but if the vocabulary and the notion tackled in the song are made too abstract and elusive for the students' level, it is preferable to use it later on to exercise these points (MacLeod, 2011).

### C. How to make the most of songs in EFL classrooms?

#### Which activities to propose?

This section constitutes guidelines of possible activities to help teachers explore and exploit songs in EFL classrooms. The following ideas should be adapted to the proficiency level and interest of their class. Songs can be used for:

- Topic anticipation (word clouds, brainstorming, discovering idioms, promotes cultural awareness)

- Listening activities (extensive listening, blank filling as an evaluation)

- Vocabulary activities (match the nouns with their synonyms/antonyms, slang practice, imagine the meaning of the idioms)

- Grammar activities (find the correct tense / aspect, concordance analysis, grammar patterns relation analysis)

- Reading activities (written comprehension, first study a poem and then study its sung cover version)

- Speaking activities (song as an "icebreaker" to encourage students to get to know each other at the beginning of the school year, discuss the topic in group, open discussion with the teacher, debates about a statement of the song, play roles)

-Playful games (mimic the lyrics, riddles, karaoke, paint a picture inspired by the song and justify, musical warm ups)

-Writing activities (write a critical review of the song, imagine what comes next and write another verse of the lyrics, put yourself into the narrator's shoes and write a letter or a diary about their experience and feelings, write a reply to the song, imagine a solution to the problem mentioned in the song).

-Phonetics and phonology activities (sing along, rewrite the lyrics and record yourself singing your own version of the song, look at the phonetic transcriptions and try to guess the words).

Here are three examples of what can be done in EFL class with different learners, themes and learning objectives:

Class & level	Year 7 (6ème) / A1
Framework and problematic	<i>La personne et la vie quotidienne / repères géographiques et culturels.</i> Who are you?
Key objectives	<p>Discovering new places, a new language, and new people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the notion of identity</li> <li>• Memorise different English-speaking countries and their nationalities.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Linguistic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BE in present</li> <li>• Personal pronouns.</li> <li>• Transparents words.</li> <li>• Lexical field of identity (first name, family name, nickname, age, city, date of birth).</li> <li>• Adjectives of nationality.</li> <li>• Adjectives of personality.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pragmatical:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are able to introduce themselves in English.</li> <li>• Pupils are able to describe their personality and someone else's personality.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phonological:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling intonation of the WH- questions, rising intonation of the Yes/no questions.</li> <li>• Pronunciation of English vowels /æ/ /ɑ:/ /ɔ:/ /θ/ /ɪ/ /i:/.</li> </ul>

Topic of the lesson	English-speaking friends all around the world.
Song used	<p><i>Like Me and You</i>, Raffi (1985). Children's song.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lyrics:</u></p> <p>Janet lives in England, Pierre lives in France  Bonnie lives in Canada  Ahmed lives in Egypt, Moshe lives in Israel  Bruce lives in Australia</p> <p>Ching lives in China, Olga lives in Russia  Ingrid lives in Germany  Gita lives in India, Pablo lives in Spain  José lives in Colombia</p> <p>And each one is much like another  A child of a mother and a father  A very special son or daughter  A lot like me and you</p> <p>Koji lives in Japan, Nina lives in Chile  Farida lives in Pakistan  Zosia lives in Poland, Manuel lives in Brazil  Maria lives in Italy</p> <p>Kofi lives in Ghana, Rahim lives in Iran,  Rosa lives in Paraguay  Meja lives in Kenya, Demetri lives in Greece,  Sue lives in America</p> <p>And each one is much like another  A child of a mother and a father  A very special son or daughter  A lot like me and you  Mmm...</p>
When?	At the beginning of the unit.
Timing	55-minute lesson
Learning skills and objectives	<p>Listening/ Speaking</p> <p>Vocabulary (identity), grammar (BE, present, personal pronouns) and culture (English-speaking countries, nationalities) and phonology (pronunciation and stressed syllables)</p>
Resources needed	Laptop, speakers, slideshow.

Possible procedure

Activity	Teacher's instructions	Possible productions
<p>1) <u>Pre-listening:</u> On the board, show the title "Like You and Me". Together, make a word cloud out of the pupils' ideas.</p> <p>2) <u>While-Listening:</u> Prepare lists of 3 different names, so that all 24 characters will be remembered by the class.</p> <p>3) <u>After-listening:</u> Prepare a magnetised paper for every character mentioned in the song (24). Display a world map on the board. Ask other pupils react to their classmates' productions with their thumbs up or down "I agree / I don't agree".  Display the lyrics on a slideshow. Explain what an English-speaking country is.  Help them find nationalities and pronounce them properly. Have them repeat several times.  Display the world map. Help them find nationalities and pronounce them properly. Have them repeat several times.</p>	<p>What can you say? What words come to your mind?</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> listening: Listen carefully to the song and check your hypotheses. What can you say?</p> <p>2nd listening: You are given a list of 3 names. Listen carefully to the song and memorise where these pupils live.</p> <p>Pick a card of one of the three characters you remember about. Put the character where he or she lives on the map. Justify.</p> <p>Now, look at the lyrics. How many pupils mentioned in the song live in English-speaking countries? Can you name them?</p> <p>Good. Now, can you guess the nationalities of all these pupils?</p> <p>Do you know other English-speaking countries?</p> <p>Listen and repeat. Can you help me underline the stressed syllable?</p>	<p>E.g. humans, French, pupils, teacher, etc.</p> <p>The song is not about school. The song is about countries / identities.</p> <p>Pierre lives in France. Moshe lives in Israel. Olga lives in Russia, etc.</p> <p>Five pupils live in English-speaking countries. Janet lives in England. She speaks English. Bonnie lives in Canada. She speaks English. Bruce lives in Australia. He speaks English, etc.</p> <p>Sue lives in America, she is American. Janes lives in England, she is English, etc.</p> <p>Scotland, Wales (= British), Ireland, Jamaica, South Africa</p> <p><u>E.g. American, Australian, Irish,</u> etc.</p>

<p>Distribute a mind map to write their lesson.</p> <p>Pair work activity: Guess who I am!</p>	<p>Write all the English-speaking countries and nationalities on your map. Don't forget to draw their flags.</p>	<p>Pupil A – “My flag is white and red.”</p> <p>Pupil B – “So, you're from Australia.”</p> <p>Pupil A – “No, you're wrong I'm not Australian.”</p> <p>Pupil B – “Are you Canadian?”</p> <p>Pupil A – “Yes, you're right.”</p>
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This lesson was inspired by English textbook *I Really Bet You Can* 6<sup>ème</sup> and MacLeod's *La chanson en classe d'anglais* (2011).

Class & level	Year 10 (3 <sup>ème</sup> , cycle 4) / A2 - B1
Framework and problematic	<p><i>Rencontres avec d'autres cultures</i></p> <p>Never forget 9/11</p>
Key objectives	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being aware of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011.</li> <li>• American monuments</li> <li>• American history</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Linguistic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preterit / past continuous</li> <li>• Verbs of actions</li> <li>• Comparative</li> <li>• Terrorist attacks, New York, Manhattan, World Trade Center, rescue operation, duty of remembrance.</li> <li>• Lexical fields of emotions</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pragmatical:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are able to write about an event in the past and describe their feelings about it.</li> <li>• Students are able to speak about an American tragedy, express their opinions and pay tribute to all the victims.</li> </ul>

	<b>Phonological:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pronunciation of -ED and -ing</li> </ul>
Possible Final Task	In pair work, record a podcast about the 11th of September 2001.

Topic of the lesson	A song of remembrance
Song used	<p><i>Far Away</i>, Sleater Kinney (2002) (alternative rock)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Extract lyrics:</u></p> <p>7:30am  <b>Nurse</b> the baby on the <b>couch</b>  Then the phone rings  "Turn on the TV"  Watch the world explode in flames  And don't leave the house</p> <p>And the sky <b>overhead</b>  Is silent, waiting  Clear blue holds its breath  And the <b>heart is hit</b>  In a city far away  But it feels so close</p> <p>Don't breathe the air today  Don't speak of why you're afraid  (Standing here on a one way road  And I fall down, and I fall down  No other direction for this to go  And we fall down, and we fall down)</p> <p>Why can't I get along  Why can't I get along  Why can't I <b>get along with</b> you?</p> <p>And the president hides  While working men rush in  And give their lives  I look to the sky  And ask it not to rain  On my family tonight</p> <p>Don't breathe the air today  Don't speak of why you're afraid  (Standing here on a one way road  And I fall down, and I fall down  No other direction for this to go  And we fall down, and we fall down)</p>

	[...] Chorus
When?	In the middle of the unit.
Timing	55-minute lesson
Learning objectives and skills	Listening, speaking and writing.  Teach culture through a new type of testimony. Work on the explicit and the implicit.
Resources needed	Laptop, speakers, slideshow

Possible procedure

After having studied some American monuments and having worked on a listening comprehension of a testimony recorded by ABC7 NEWS entitled “Survivor of 9/11 attacks describes his harrowing escape from 105<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Center” (2020), students will be given the opportunity to work on a new testimony.

Activity	Teacher’s instructions	Possible productions
<p><u>1) Pre-listening:</u> Have the students anticipate the song and make hypotheses about its theme.</p> <p><u>2) While-listening:</u> Distribute the lyrics for the 2<sup>nd</sup> listening.</p> <p><u>3) After-listening:</u> Help the students analyse the implicit of the song by guiding them with questions/suggestions. If all of them feel comfortable enough, there is no need to ask questions. The group discussions are meant to help them communicating and developing their hypotheses.</p>	<p>What can you say?</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> listening: Listen and say as much as you can. How do you feel about this song?</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> listening: Listen and read the lyrics along.</p> <p>Match the words in bold with their synonyms.</p>	<p>This document looks like a painting. It is a sleeve. On the sleeve, I can see a jellyfish / I can see blood / a red golf club. We are probably going to listen to a song. The song may be about violence.</p> <p>This song sounds like a complaint. The singer seems to be angry or sad.</p> <p>Nurse = take care of / look after Couch = sofa Overhead = above us The heart is hit = the heart is heavy Get along with someone = tolerate and even appreciate an other person / be in friendly terms with an other person.</p>





Class & level	Year 13 ( <i>Terminale</i> ) / B2
Framework and problematic	<i>Espace public / Espace privé</i> How far left to go before reaching gender equality?
Key objectives	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a general overview of the evolution of women's condition and role in private and public space.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Linguistic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing Present simple / preterit / present perfect / simple past passive</li> <li>• Practising the comparative form and 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional</li> <li>• household tasks, glass ceiling, right to vote, girls at school, women at work, social pressure, empowerment, leadership, successful, inspiring, gender stereotypes, preconceptions, harmful, oppressing, launch a campaign for equality.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pragmatical:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to write and deliver a persuasive speech</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sociolinguistic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt one's language to the aim: a speech to promote women's equality</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phonological:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pronunciation, word stress, intonation, rhythm</li> </ul>
Possible Final Task	Prepare and present your campaign for gender equality.

Topic of the lesson	Gender stereotypes
Song used	<p>Chorus of <i>If I Were a Boy</i>, Beyonce (2009)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Chorus:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">If I were a boy I think I could understand How it feels to love a girl I swear I'd be a better man I'd listen to her 'Cause I know how it hurts When you lose the one you wanted 'Cause he's taken you for granted And everything you had got destroyed</p>

When?	In the middle of the unit.
Timing	55-minute lesson
Learning objectives and skills	Listening and speaking.  By the end of this lesson, students will be able to discuss gender stereotypes and express opinions. Moreover, they will have the opportunity to use the 2nd conditional to speak about unreal situations.
Resources needed	Laptop, speakers, slideshow, and statement cards for debate.
Anticipated problems	Students may make mistakes because of the exception ‘were’ instead of ‘was’ in the grammatical structure of 2 <sup>nd</sup> conditional, (E.g., If I were you). Explanations will be as much complete and clear as possible to make their productions effective.  Some students may find difficult or feel uncomfortable to discuss the topic. To avoid that some of them are not committed, there will be cards with claims about gender inequality as a support to pave the way to the discussion. Thus, it will be easier to further develop the idea and explain the argument.

Possible procedure

Activity	Teacher’s instructions	Possible productions
<p><u>1) Pre-listening:</u> Have the students remember what you have done until now, key concepts and definitions of gender stereotypes.</p> <p><u>2) While-listening:</u> Listening of the chorus of “If I were a boy” (Beyonce, 2009).  Distribute and display the lyrics with gaps for the 2nd listening (annexe 33).</p>	<p>Can anyone remind me what gender stereotypes are?</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> listening: Listen and get ready to recap what you understand.</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> listening: Listen one more time and pay attention to the grammar construction to fill the missing verbs.</p>	<p>Gender stereotypes are sexist <b>preconceptions</b> about how women and men should look like and behave in society. Gender stereotypes can be <b>harmful</b> and <b>oppressing</b> since they limit women’s and men’s capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives. “Blue is for boys, pink is for girls” is a gender stereotype. “Perfect wives must stay at home and cook all day” is a gender stereotype.</p> <p>This is a song by Beyonce. I think the title is “If I Were a Boy”. She seems to complain about men’s attitudes towards women. If I <b>were</b> a boy I think I could <b>understand</b> How it feels to love a girl I swear I’d be a better man. I’d listen to her</p>

<p>(Differentiated instruction= auditory discrimination for students with particular needs)</p> <p>1) <u>After-listening:</u>  Ask learners to report the correct answers as you fill in the endings on the board for them to note down. Complete the students' answers by explaining the grammar point explicitly, using the examples found in the song lyrics to illustrate how the structure works.  Have the pupil practise the grammar point in a written exercise.</p> <p>Task: small group extension activity with cards (annexe 34). Students get into group work and debate on gender stereotypes.  Recap all together.</p>	<p>3rd listening: Check your answers.</p> <p>How does Beyonce feel?</p> <p>Now, let's practice with a grammar exercise.</p> <p>Draw a card, debate on it. Defend your opinions, express agreement/disagreement with the statements <u>and</u> with your classmates. Try to use 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional and the argumentative vocabulary you've learnt.</p>	<p>'Cause I know how it <b>hurts</b>  When you lose the one you <b>wanted</b>  Cause he's <b>taking</b> you for granted  And everything you had got <b>destroyed</b>.</p> <p>She feels sad and disappointed about her relationship with men.</p> <p>E.g., I got "Tough boys as opposed to good-looking girls", which are gender stereotypes. I don't agree with that. In my opinion, men don't need to be tough or strong to be men. In the same way, women don't need to be good-looking to be who they are. Women can be tough, and men can be good-looking. These toxic gender stereotypes are dangerous. If I were a man, I would wear suits and have my hair cut, so I'd be good looking which is not a woman's characteristic.  E.g., I got "Boys don't cry". This gender stereotype is extremely controversial and harmful to me. As a boy, I cried and still now when I'm exhausted or really moved I can cry. I don't want my masculinity to be attacked by stupid preconceptions. If I were a father, I would teach my son not to feel guilty of crying.  E.g., If I had a baby boy, I would not paint his bedroom in blue. If I were a girl, I would play football to prove that women can be as good as men at sports.</p>
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This lesson was inspired by Ludke's *Teaching foreign languages through songs* (2009), Harmer's *The practice of English Language Teaching* (2015), Norris's "How Do We Overcome the Difficulties of Teaching" (2003) and by a lesson plan I wrote at the University of Kent in 2019.

#### D. Personal reflection and research limitations

From this research have emerged some challenges to use songs in EFL classrooms. As already stated, some teachers may lack training and theoretical grounding to support the study of music. Moreover, songs can be difficult to choose, to adapt and to put in practice with learners. There are also several important criteria to select and teach a song efficiently, which can be more complex than using conventional listening activities.

Although some textbooks suggest songs to work on, it is still difficult to find complete educational lessons with motivating activities. Therefore, the survey revealed a general trend towards improvement and new challenges in French teachers' methods, their willingness is probably reduced by the lack of teaching templates and didactic recommendations.

This document does not pretend to answer all teachers' interrogations, but it highlights the benefits of using innovative materials in EFL classrooms and tries to provide support for those who would like to make the most of songs. Nevertheless, over such a short period of time that a year is, it was obviously difficult for me to check more effectively the reliability of all the scientists and specialists of didactics' assumptions by doing my own experiments. Thus, in the future, further experiments could be conducted on songs to analyse new results, to draw more conclusions and provide other recommendations.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to question the effectiveness of using English songs to improve English language skills, with a focus on French students learning English as a foreign language, in order to complete the didactics tools of ELF teachers. We have thus examined the contributions and assets of songs, revealing that they can be considered as a beneficial learning material.

To write this paper, I first tried to take a step back from my job as an English teacher and tried to remember what I really enjoyed learning when I was a school pupil. Then, my EFL studies and the training programme delivered by INSPEs (*Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Education*) allowed me to learn a lot about language sciences and especially the didactics of English language teaching. Moreover, in spite of my passion for music, I tried to remain objective while doing research and experiments.

As demonstrated above, learners have many reasons for expressing an interest in listening to music, singing, and learning a foreign language through songs. From a neurocognitive perspective, comparison and correlation have been established between music and speech, songs and learning, to evaluate the impact of songs on foreign language skills. In fact, songs have been proved to be a way of integrating emotions into learning, social and cognitive processes occurring and developing within the classroom. Indeed, it has been shown that music can be beneficial to relax, motivate and have a cohesive effect on the class as a whole. In addition, the fact that it can serve as a playful phonological model can help learners to manage their fears of making mistakes, which has been proved to inhibit their language productions.

In addition, the statement that songs are a powerful motivator for learners, also very positive for memorisation, has allowed us to demonstrate that songs enable students to learn in a pleasing way, and as Alfred Mercier wrote “What we learn with pleasure, we never forget”. I therefore regret that songs do not have a more prominent role in EFL classrooms and in the CEFR of 2018.

Then, it has been proved that songs can help promote cultural awareness and develop communication skills. Songs can also simplify the study of grammar, new vocabulary, as well as offering an authentic approach to English prosody, which is beneficial for pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. As they are authentic and help learners reach close to real

communication situations, by enhancing reception (listening, reading) as well as production (speaking, writing), songs can be adapted to the learners' needs and to the requirements of the action-oriented approach. It was therefore possible to evaluate pedagogical and didactic possible procedures to do recommendations.

Among the interesting observations made, the experimentation conducted with my class of Year 7 pupils was successful. It not only showed that the use of songs with beginners was possible, but also that it allowed them to work and learn with pleasure, while transmitting cultural and linguistic knowledge in an active process. Suggestions have been established to improve this lesson. In the end, the challenges of using songs in EFL classrooms are not insurmountable and should not prevent teachers from incorporating such materials into their teaching practices. I consider that teachers' ability to believe in what they do, their ability to put themselves in their students' shoes, and their ability to put their methods into perspective are critical to the success of an instructional and educational approach.

To conclude, it has been demonstrated that songs can serve as a beneficial material for effective learning of English as a foreign language. What I learnt in writing this paper has helped me improve my teaching practices and I hope it will serve other curious teachers who will be willing to use this authentic and playful resource.

Finally, my wish would be to foster other experiments on songs as a didactic tool. Therefore, more research in the area of music in EFL learning is necessary. It would be worthwhile to conduct an experiment with older learners, such as sixth-form students, in order to testify if songs can develop language skills and to what extent their use can improve their English proficiency. I would also recommend researchers to ask students to complete a survey after a period of studying songs, to know what they like and dislike, but also to encourage them to reflect on their own practices of listening to music in English and share their ideas on the possibilities of using songs in EFL classroom. It would also be interesting to determine how to efficiently develop the EFL learners' language, with the help of specialists of foreign didactics, musicians, and cognitive psychologists, to recommend optimal teaching methods for this purpose.



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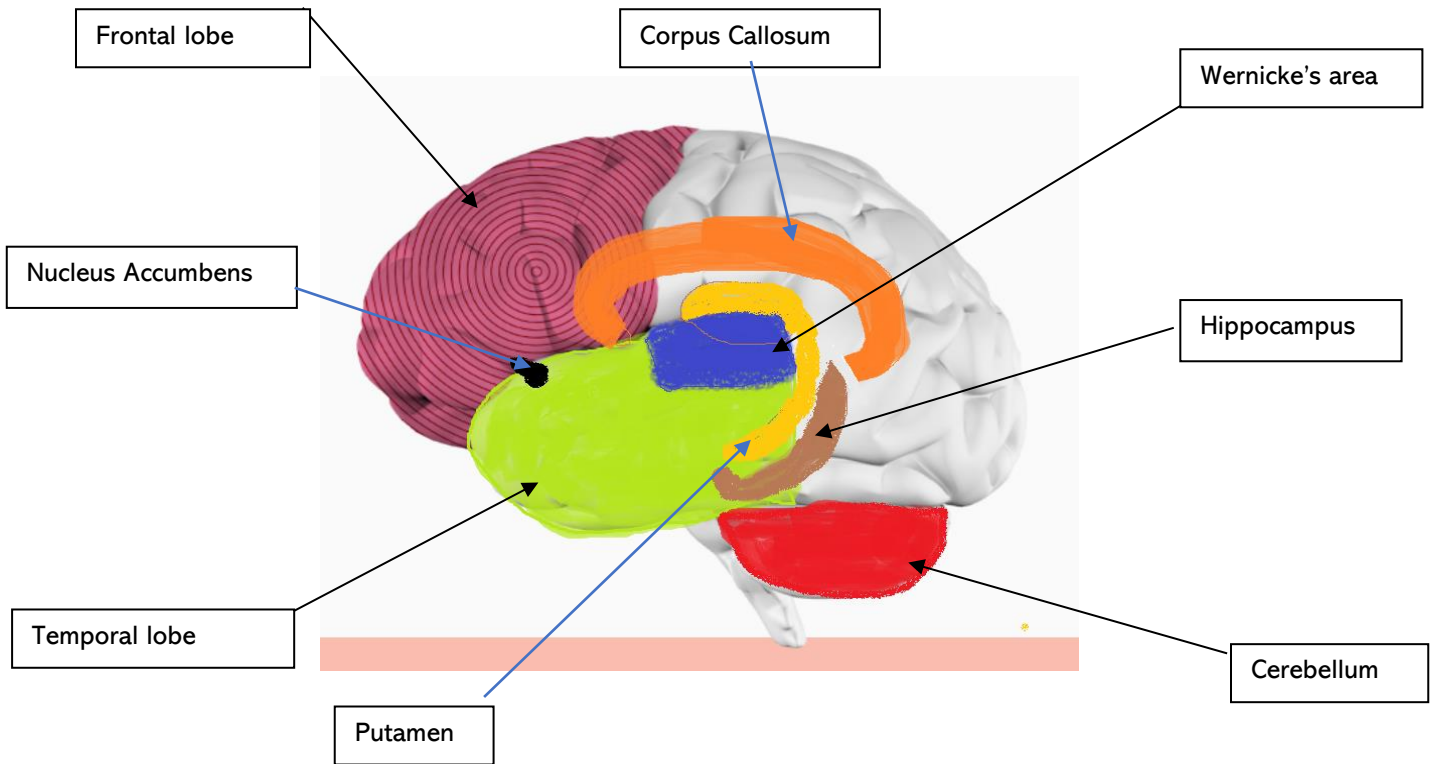
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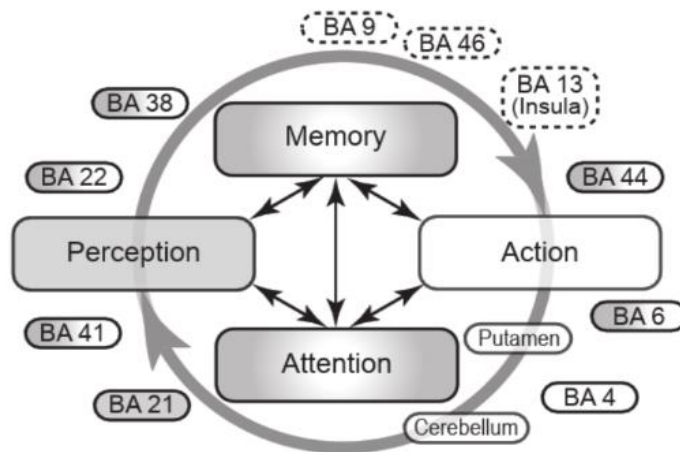
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# Appendix



Annexe 1.

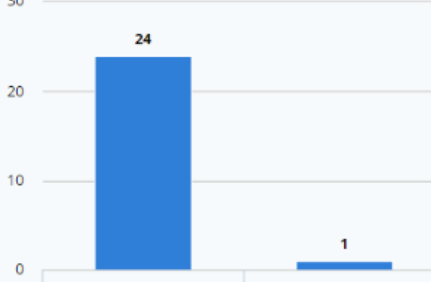


Annexe 2. Figure 13.1, Parson and Janata (2013, p. 309).



### 1) Est-ce que la musique fait partie de vos centres d'intérêts personnels ?

[Chart options »](#)

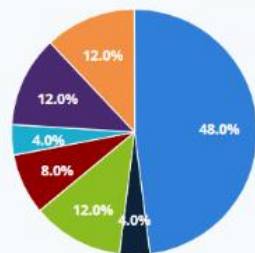


Oui.	24
Non.	1

Annexe 4.

### 2) Quel style musical écoutez-vous principalement ?

[Chart options »](#)

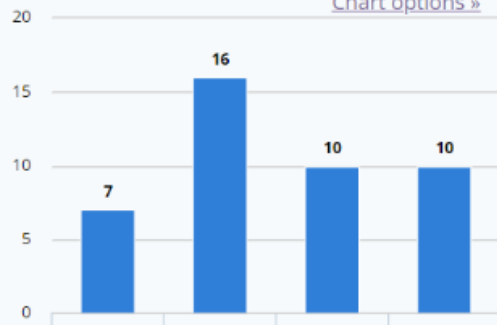


Rock.	12
Jazz.	1
Pop.	3
Variété.	2
Classique.	1
Tout ce qui passe à la radio.	3
Pas de préférence.	3

Annexe 5.

### 3) A quel niveau enseignez-vous ?

[Chart options »](#)

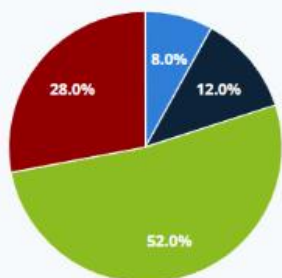


Cycle 3.	7
Cycle 4.	16
Seconde.	10
Cycle Terminal.	10

Annexe 6.

### 4) Depuis combien d'années enseignez-vous ?

[Chart options »](#)



Moins de 5 ans.	2
Plus de 5 ans.	3
Plus de 10 ans.	13
Plus de 20 ans.	7

Annexe 7.

### 5) Avez-vous déjà ressenti un manque de connaissances musicales et/ou des difficultés à adapter une chanson dans votre enseignement ?

[Chart options »](#)

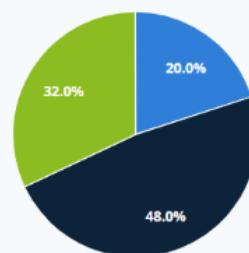


Un manque de connaissances musicales.	1
Des difficultés à adapter une chanson.	11
Non, je suis plutôt à l'aise avec ce support.	12

Annexe 8.

### 6) A quelle fréquence utilisez-vous des chansons en classe ?

[Chart options »](#)



Souvent.	5
Parfois.	12
Rarement.	8

Annexe 9.

7) Si rarement, pourquoi ?

**Anonyme** Je ne vois pas toujours l'inclure dans mes séquences ; je ne sais pas toujours trouver des chansons en lien avec les thématiques de mes séquences

**Anonyme** Je ne sais pas trop comment travailler une chanson à part des exercices à trous

**Anonyme** Je suis frustrée quand je vois le manque d'effort de réflexion et d'analyse de mes élèves + ils ne semblent pas aimer les chansons proposées. Rap français forever!

**Anonyme** Pas toujours simple d'avoir la culture musicale nécessaire pour avoir facilement accès à des chansons en lien avec les axes et thématiques.  
Difficile de didactiser sans tomber dans le texte à trous stérile

**Anonyme** Ils préfèrent des musiques avec des paroles en français souvent

**Anonyme** Parce que j'ai souvent l'impression de ne pas avoir le temps pour ça... il y a énormément de ressources exploitables en langues et spontanément je ne me dirige pas vers les chansons mais plutôt vers les extraits vidéos, jeux... j'ai aussi souvent peur que les élèves n'accrochent pas où trouvent la chanson « ringarde » et je ne suis pas assez au fait des chansons actuelles qu'ils écoutent pour les exploiter en classe.

**Anonyme** Difficultés à trouver de la pertinence en lien avec le programme

**Anonyme** Support pas forcément motivant

Annexe 10.

8) Si assez régulièrement, pour quelles raisons utilisez-vous un tel support ?



C'est un document authentique.	6
C'est ludique et motivant.	6
Pour la répétition des éléments importants qui facilite la mémorisation.	4
C'est un moyen de varier les méthodes d'apprentissages (auditif, visuel, kinesthésique*) et de parler au plus grand nombre.	4
Pour toutes les raisons ci-dessus.	10

Annexe 11.

9) Quel style musical proposez-vous habituellement à vos élèves ?

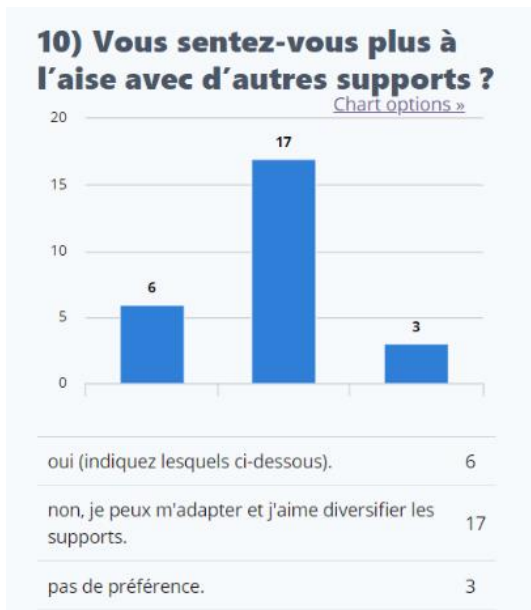
- Anonyme** Populaire.
- Anonyme** Variété, des choses qu'ils connaissent et qui leur plaisent.
- Anonyme** Variété populaire.
- Anonyme** Pop, rock, rap.
- Anonyme** Un peu de tout.
- Anonyme** Rock, rap mais surtout en fonction du contenu culturel.
- Anonyme** Pop/ Rock.
- Anonyme** Pop/r'n'b si je trouve
- Anonyme** Rock, Reggae, rap
- Anonyme** Pas de réponse.
- Anonyme** Variété et Pop Rock.
- Anonyme** Pop/Rock.
- Anonyme** Pop.
- Anonyme** Un peu de tout.
- Anonyme** Rock, indie.
- Anonyme** Pas de style en particulier mais plutôt une chanson en lien avec le fait culturel enseigné sur le moment (onomatopées pour animaux, paroles associées au clip...)
- Anonyme** Tout ce qui peut être cohérent dans la séquence.
- Anonyme** Un peu de tout. Je choisis en fonction des paroles, du contexte que nous travaillons (culturel comme linguistique).
- Anonyme** Rock.
- Anonyme** En lien avec la séquence.
- Anonyme** Rock, folk.
- Anonyme** Le style n'est pas important.
- Anonyme** Variété.
- Anonyme** Pop.

J'ai choisi « autre » à la question 8, parce que...

**Anonyme** Thèmes culturels abordés et aussi parce que les élèves apprécient.

Annexe 12.

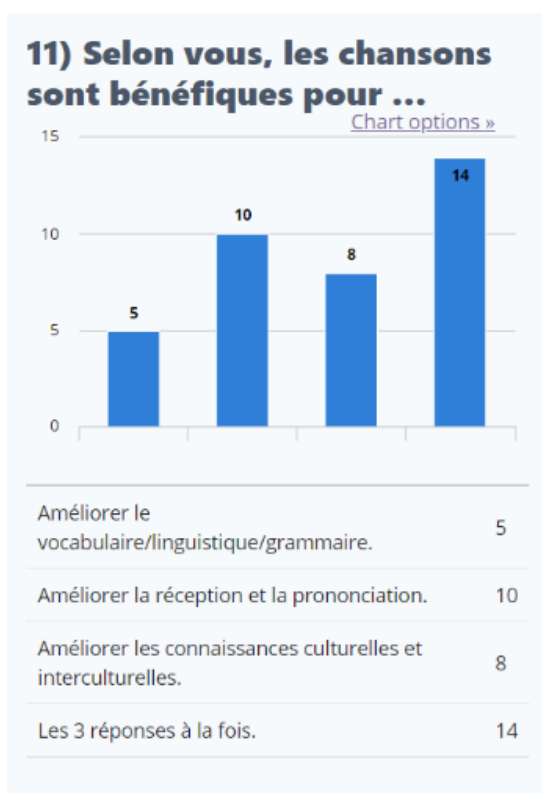
Annexe 13.



Annexe 14.

J'ai répondu « oui » à la question 10, car je préfère...	
<b>Anonyme</b>	Bande-annonce ou extraits de films, extrait de romans, articles de presse.
<b>Anonyme</b>	Vidéos
<b>Anonyme</b>	Support écrits en général.
<b>Anonyme</b>	Plus facile d'exploiter un extrait de film avec du visuel notamment.
<b>Anonyme</b>	Vidéos, jeux.

Annexe 15.



Annexe 16.

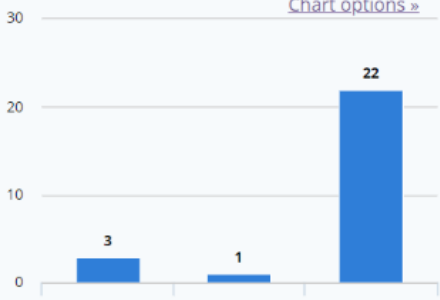


Annexe 17.

J'ai répondu autre à la question 12, car mes critères pour choisir une chanson sont ...
Aucune réponse.

Annexe 18.

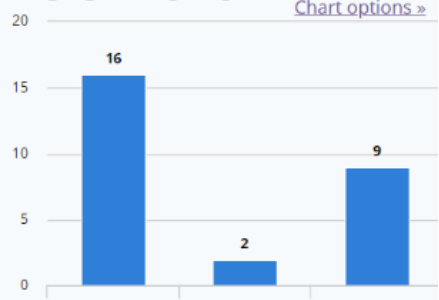
**13) Une fois votre chanson choisie, de préférence quand l'introduisez-vous dans votre séquence ?**



Dans la phase introductive.	3
En conclusion de la séquence.	1
Cela dépend des besoins et autres activités prévues.	22

Annexe 19.

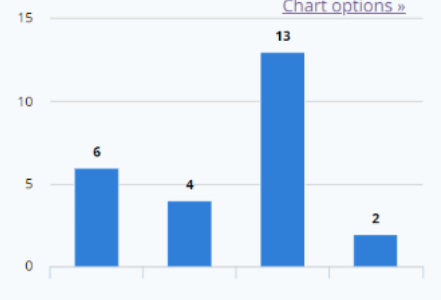
**14) Généralement quand vous utilisez une chanson dans votre séquence quelle activité langagière proposez-vous ?**



Compréhension orale.	16
Compréhension écrite.	2
Cela dépend de l'objectif de la séance.	9

Annexe 20.

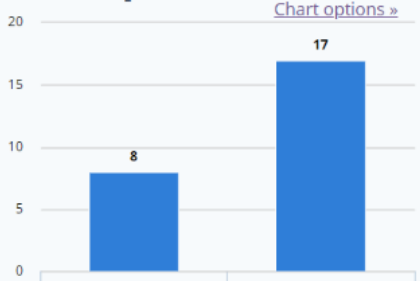
**15) Si vous proposez une CO, vous arrive-t-il de projeter les paroles ou le clip à la fin de votre activité ?**



Paroles.	6
Clip.	4
Les deux.	13
Ni l'un, ni l'autre.	2

Annexe 21.

**16) Avez-vous déjà proposé une tâche finale à vos élèves dans laquelle ils devaient écrire une chanson/mettre en voix des paroles ?**



Oui.	8
Non.	17

Annexe 22.

**17) Si oui, à quel niveau ?**

**Anonyme** Au collège et au lycée avec une classe de seconde.

**Anonyme** En classe de seconde et de première.

**Anonyme** En première.

**Anonyme** 3ème. Activité basée sur le slam/rap. Donc focalisation sur le PE

**Anonyme** 3ème.

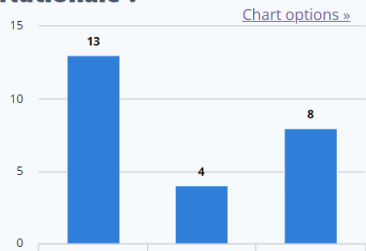
**Anonyme** 1er STMG en lycée.

**Anonyme** Classe de première

**Anonyme** Seconde

Annexe 23.

**18) Vous sentiriez-vous prêt à intégrer une chanson par séquence si cela était requis par le BO de l'Éducation Nationale ?**

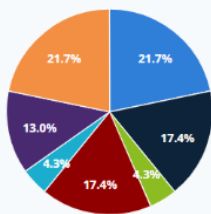


Oui, avec plaisir.	13
Non, ça me semble trop complexe et inadapté.	4
Pourquoi pas, avec des conseils et des exemples partagés entre collègues.	8

Annexe 24.

**19) Quelles sont vos pistes pédagogiques pour enseigner une chanson dans une démarche actionnelle ?**

[Chart options »](#)



Faire des îlots où l'on répartit les ateliers (1 îlot = 1 couplet).	5
Distribuer un texte à trous (compléter les paroles).	4
Proposer aux élèves de lister les verbes d'action de la chanson et les mimer, pour comprendre l'histoire racontée.	1
D'abord analyser les paroles, ensuite écouter la chanson.	4
Faire écouter la version instrumentale (sans paroles) et laisser les élèves imaginer le thème de la chanson.	1
Analyser ensemble un fait de langue en rapport aux paroles.	3
Autre.	5

Annexe 25.

J'ai choisi « autre » à la question 19, parce que mes pistes pédagogiques sont...

**Anonyme** Cela peut être un mélange des différentes propositions.

**Anonyme** Plusieurs éléments de la liste proposée, en fonction des thèmes, niveaux, etc.

**Anonyme** - De s'appuyer sur le rythme ou les variations éventuelles pour anticiper ou confirmer des hypothèses avant ou après être entre dans le sujet.

- De rechercher les mots-clefs (avec ou sans fiche d'aide) pour accéder au sens et par la suite, de travailler sur un texte à trous pour une réutilisation de support et pour de nouveaux objectifs (intonation, prononciation)

- D'associer l'éventuel clip avec les paroles pour vérifier, justifier ou appuyer la compréhension.

Chaque scénario dépendra de l'entrée souhaitée, des objectifs et du support.

**Anonyme** Démarche culturelle.

**Anonyme** Au British Council, lors d'une formation, on nous proposait de mettre des mots, extraits de la chanson, éparpillés au tableau. Les élèves pouvaient essayer d'imaginer le thème de la chanson à partir de ces mots, les classer par catégorie (grammaticales, lexicales etc. ce sont les élèves qui proposent) puis ils utilisent les mots pour former des phrases et imaginer les paroles. En écoutant, ils peuvent repérer les mots plus facilement suite à ce travail. Les élèves aiment bien cette démarche ! A la fin, ils retrouvent par mal de phrases et à la fin, ils ont des paroles avec des mots manquant (ceux qui étaient au tableau) et sont souvent content de les retrouver de tête, ne me laissant pas le temps de lancer une écoute supplémentaire.

Annexe 26.

20) Enfin, si vous deviez conseiller à vos collègues une chanson à introduire dans une séquence, quelle serait-elle ?

**Anonyme** *Dance Monkey*

**Anonyme** *Dancing in the dark* by Bruce Springsteen.

**Anonyme** *Ney-York* ( JayZ-Alicia Keys) Séquence sur New-York.

**Anonyme** *As the snow flies*, Elvis Presley, en 1ère spécialité Axe Art et Débat d'idées, Art and Protest.

**Anonyme** *Zombie* cranberries, Axes identities and exchanges.

**Anonyme** *Skibbereen* / territoire et mémoire.

**Anonyme** *Bang Bang Bang* -Tracy Chapman/ *Sunday Bloody Sunday*-U2/ *Blowin' in the wind*-Dylan. Y'en a trop !

**Anonyme** Je ne sais pas, vu que mes choix ne semblent pas être les bons !

**Anonyme** *New-York*, Alicia Keys. Rencontre avec d'autre culture.

**Anonyme** Il y en a beaucoup trop, désolée, je n'arrive pas à faire un choix.

**Anonyme** Je ne sais pas.

**Anonyme** *Earth song*, Michael Jackson / *Lemon Tree*/ *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, U2/ *Feeling good*, Nina Simon/ *Welcome to my life*/ *The lion sleeps tonight*/ *All I want for Xmas is you*/ *Merry Christmas everyone*/ *Let it be*, *Yesterday*, *Help ...*/ *English man in New York*/ *New York New York*/ *California dreamin'*/ *San Francisco*.

**Anonyme** Les chansons des Beatles, ça marche toujours même après tant d'années... sinon Bob Marley pour les textes engagés, Bruno Mars...

**Anonyme** Dunno?

**Anonyme** *I'm a knight* (version parodiée de Lily Allen, Saturday night, sur YouTube), pour travailler sur le moyen âge (séquence King Arthur) en 5ème

**Anonyme** *Should I stay or should I go*. Modalité, opinions, émotions, culture pop punk ...

**Anonyme** "*Old Mac Donald had a farm*" (cycle 3): la personne et la vie quotidienne ; "*An Englishman in New York*" (Sting) au cycle 4 (dimension géographique et historique en s'appuyant sur le clip (la ville, les lieux dont le World Trade Center) dans voyages et migrations (exil, stéréotypes, tolérance et ignorance).

**Anonyme** No idea. Ça va dépendre des séquences, y'en a bcp

**Anonyme** J'aime beaucoup "*Sunday Bloody Sunday*" U2 pour mon unité sur l'Irlande.

**Anonyme** Une séquence autour des Protest songs par exemple

**Anonyme** *Strange Fruit*.

**Anonyme** "You had time", Ani Difrancò. LLCE Première. Thème : Rencontres, Axe : Amour et amitiés

**Anonyme** *Indian Red* - diversité et inclusion

**Anonyme** "*Magic*" de Coldplay (En sixième, elle passe à merveille... Pas toujours évident de trouver des chansons pour ce niveau-ci. Celle-ci est, me semble-t-il, tout à fait pertinente).

**Anonyme** *Sunday Bloody Sunday*



Look at the stars  
Look how they shine for you  
And everything you do  
Yeah, they were all yellow

I came along  
I wrote a song for you  
And all the things you do  
And it was called "Yellow"

So then I took my turn  
Oh, what a thing to have done  
And it was all yellow

your skin, oh yeah, your skin and bones  
(Ooh) turn into something beautiful  
(Ah) and you know, you know I love you so  
You know I love you so

I swam across  
I jumped across for you  
Oh, what a thing to do  
'Cause you were all yellow

I drew a line  
I drew a line for you  
Oh, what a thing to do  
And it was all yellow

and your skin, oh yeah, your skin and bones  
(Ooh) turn into something beautiful  
(Ah) and you know, for you, I'd bleed myself dry  
For you, I'd bleed myself dry

It's true  
Look how they shine for you  
Look how they shine for you  
Look how they shine for...  
Look how they shine for you  
Look how they shine for you  
Look how they shine

Look at the stars  
Look how they shine for you  
And all the things that you do

Annexe 28. *Yellow* lyrics, Coldplay (2000).

Longer than there've been fishes in the ocean  
Higher than any bird ever flew  
Longer than there've been stars up in the heavens  
I've been in love with you

Stronger than any mountain cathedral  
Truer than any tree ever grew  
Deeper than any forest primeval  
I am in love with you

I'll bring fire in the winters  
You'll send showers in the springs  
We'll fly through the falls and summers  
With love on our wings

Through the years as the fire starts to mellow  
Burning lines in the book of our lives  
Though the binding cracks and the pages start to yellow  
I'll be in love with you  
I'll be in love with you

Longer than there've been fishes in the ocean  
Higher than any bird ever flew  
Longer than there've been stars up in the heavens  
I've been in love with you  
I am in love with you

Annexe 29. *Longer* lyrics, Dan Fogelberg (1979).

When I get older losing my hair  
Many years from now  
Will you still be sending me a Valentine  
Birthday greetings bottle of wine

If I'd been out till quarter to three  
Would you lock the door  
Will you still need me, will you still feed me  
When I'm sixty-four

You'll be older too  
And if you say the word  
I could stay with you

I could be handy, mending a fuse  
When your lights have gone  
You can knit a sweater by the fireside  
Sunday mornings go for a ride  
Doing the garden, digging the weeds  
Who could ask for more

Will you still need me, will you still feed me  
When I'm sixty-four

Every summer we can rent a cottage  
In the Isle of Wight, if it's not too dear  
We shall scrimp and save  
Grandchildren on your knee  
Vera, Chuck and Dave

Send me a postcard, drop me a line  
Stating point of view  
Indicate precisely what you mean to say  
Yours sincerely, wasting away

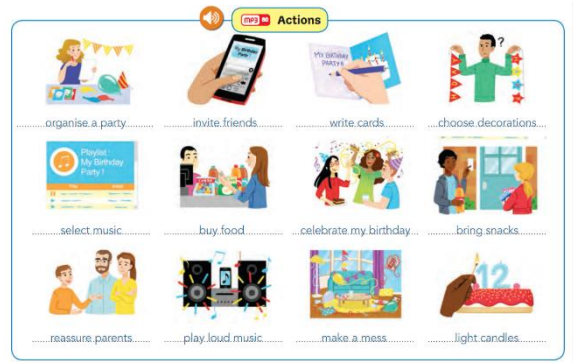
Give me your answer, fill in a form  
Mine for evermore  
Will you still need me, will you still feed me  
When I'm sixty-four

Annexe 30. *When I'm Sixty-Four* lyrics, the Beatles (1967).



Slide 1.

Do you remember?



Slide 2.

Look at the pictures.  
What genre of music do they represent?



Picture n° \_\_\_ represents ...

Slide 3.



What about your birthday party playlist?



Slide 4.

Listen and match the music with the correct style

- Vivaldi The Four seasons recomposed*, Max Richter, 2012. • Disco
- Can't hold us*, Macklemore, 2013. • Country music
- Could you be loved*, Bob Marley, 1980. • Classical
- Smells Like Teen Spirit*, Nirvana, 1991. • Rap
- Take Me Home, Country Roads*, John Denver, 1971. • Reggae
- Stayin' Alive*, Bee Gees, 1977. • Rock
- Happy*, Pharrell Williams, 2014. • Pop music

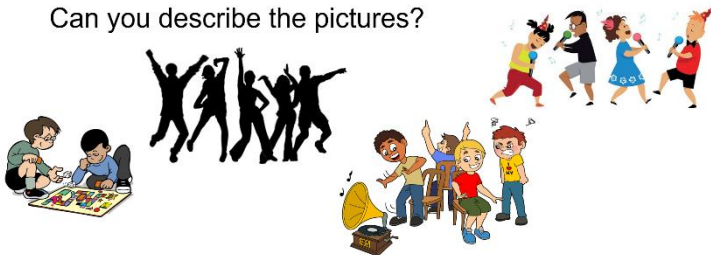
Slide 5.

Which style do you prefer?  
Which style do you choose for your birthday party?



Slide 6.

Can you describe the pictures?



What do you like doing at a birthday party?

Let's play music mood game




We are going to listen to new songs. React to the songs with the emotions they convey.

Sad Scared Nostalgic

Excited Motivated

When I listen to this song, I feel ...

Listen to the song. 

If it's your song, stand up and say the title of the song. Then, explain why you like it.



This song is  
« *I love English* » by  
Ms Leriche.  
I like this song because  
...



Slide 9.



It's time to write the lesson!



Music makes us feel \_\_\_\_\_.

When I listen to a song, I can feel ...

My favourite music genre is ...

My favourite English song is ... by ... because ...

Slide 10.

### Sources

*Cleanpng / Stickpng/ Pinclipart/ Dreamstime / images libres de droit  
provenants de Google*

*Youtube (songs and videos)*

*Workbook I Really Bet You Can Gema (2021) p.89*

Slide 11.


Annexe 31. Slideshow used in the lesson.


AP 2: What about your birthday party playlist?


1) There are different music genres:


	_____ ●	● <i>Vivaldi's The Four seasons recomposed</i> by Max Richter, 2012.
	_____ ●	● <i>Can't hold us</i> by Macklemore, 2013.
	_____ ●	● <i>Could you be loved</i> by Bob Marley, 1980.
	_____ ●	● <i>Smells Like Teen Spirit</i> by Nirvana, 1991.
	_____ ●	● <i>Take Me Home, Country Roads</i> by John Denver, 1971.
	_____ ●	● <i>Stayin' Alive</i> by the Bee Gees, 1977.
	_____ ●	● <i>Happy</i> by Pharrell Williams, 2014.

2) What are the children doing at their birthday party?

 The children are \_\_\_\_\_ boardgames.

 \_\_\_\_\_.

 \_\_\_\_\_.

 \_\_\_\_\_.

Lesson:

Music makes us feel \_\_\_\_\_ .

When I listen to a song, I can feel

My favourite music genre is \_\_\_\_\_.

My favourite English song is \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ because

**Chorus:**

If I \_\_\_\_\_ a boy  
I think I could \_\_\_\_\_  
How it feels to love a girl  
I swear I \_\_\_\_\_ be a better man  
I \_\_\_\_\_ listen to her  
Cause I know how it \_\_\_\_\_  
When you lose the one you \_\_\_\_\_  
Cause he \_\_\_\_\_ you for granted  
And everything you had got \_\_\_\_\_

If I were a boy, Beyonce, (2009)



Annexe 33. Fill in the missing verbs of *If I Were a Boy*

Tough boys as opposed to good-looking girls.	Teachers and nurses are women's jobs.	Doctors and engineers are men's jobs.	Women are the best cooks.	Football and rugby are men's sports.
Boys don't cry.	Pink is for girls whereas blue is for boys.	Women must be submissive.	Women need protection.	Men are all bold leaders.

Annexe 34. Cards for debate