

MUSIC IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: DIFFERENT TYPES OF APPROACHES

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Music is frequently used by teachers to help second language learners acquire a second language. It is clear that music can be thought of as a vehicle for first and second language acquisition. It helps second language learners acquire vocabulary and grammar, improve spelling and develop the linguistic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. When dealing with songs and other aspects of music, students feel at ease and relaxed and so their approach to the acquisition of a second language is more uninhibited and open. They are more attentive and more receptive to learning. Through songs and music, students are also exposed to “authentic” examples and situations.

The aim of this workshop is to emphasize the important role of music in the English class, to be aware that it can be approached in different ways and that different types of projects can be created with and from music. It is mainly based on two projects that were given a grant from the *Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres* of the *Departament d'Ensenyament*: “Full Swing” and “Imagine”. Finding lyrics and exercises for songs in the Internet is also part of this workshop as well as the developing of a short project from a given song. The contents are as follows:

- A) Writing reviews of the music the students listen to: CDs, DVDs, concerts, etc.
- B) Creation of a music magazine, a CD and an Audio CD.
- C) “Imagine”: developing a project (CD format) from a song.
- D) Looking for activities related to songs in the Internet.
- E) U2. *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*

The project that will be fully developed is the music magazine “Full Swing” which was carried out by a group of students of 1r Batxillerat. Most of these students like music very much and they enjoy reading music magazines, listening to their favourite groups and singers, going to concerts and some of them play an instrument too. The aim of this project is that, given the skills of many students and the music preferences of all of them, they are able to have an active position regarding music, that is, they can develop a critical point of view when listening to music or going to concerts and that they can express their opinion about it. For this purpose they created a music magazine that includes different sections in which they became reporters who were supposed to establish a communicative link with the reader. They not only wrote reviews and articles, but they had to make them attractive to the reader. Neatness in presentation was also taken into account.

Before producing a magazine the students learned about different music styles and to differentiate between a review as a descriptive text and a review as a critical text and how to write both types of texts. Negotiating, reaching conclusions, group work and forming teams is also an important aspect of this project since a lot of work had to be done to cover the different sections and eventually all this work had to fit together.

For the main article of the magazine, the music of the 20th century, the students worked in groups and each group was responsible of a decade. So as not to make the decades too long for the magazine, the representative musicians and singers or bands of each decade were only mentioned, but in the CD Rom that goes with the magazine, more extensive info is given with links to some of these musicians, singers and bands. For the rest of the magazine, students, in different groups, carried out interviews, surveys, wrote letters as a reader of a mag would do, wrote about their favourite groups, about German groups, looked for information about the top ten albums in

Spain, Great Britain and the USA, and wrote about the most important venues in Barcelona. More individually, some students wrote about the best 12 CDs of this millennium, about The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and about classical music. Also individually, students wrote reviews on CDs, DVDs, live concerts and lyrics of songs.

Different teams were created to cover the different formats in which the final task of this project was presented: a team to work with the PageMaker program to put all the information of the magazine together, a team for the DreamWeaver program to create a CD Rom with information about the music of the 20th century by decades, a team for playing and recording music of the 20th Century in An Audio CD and also a team of music “counsellors” who helped with their advice. The result of all this effort and enthusiasm was “Full Swing”, the music mag.

Objectives:

- To develop a critical point of view
- To develop a perspective and opinion about musical issues
- To be able to express own opinion
- To use English as means of communication
- To write texts that are clear and attractive to the reader
- To write different types of texts: articles, reviews, critical texts
- To discuss and describe issues and to express opinions using criteria
- To be aware that the music we listen to now is a result of a process
- To realise the importance of music in our society
- To develop a taste for music
- To be aware of the importance of English language in the world of music
- To be aware of the importance of American and British culture in the world of music
- To understand the importance of group work and team work
- To be able to organise and coordinate all the work in order to produce one or more final tasks (magazine, CD Rom, Audio CD)
- To explore the music of the 20th Century
- To look for specific information
- To synthesise information
- To negotiate
- To debate and give opinion
- To make quizzes
- To make surveys
- To write letters to a music magazine
- To make interviews
- To create a magazine
- To create a CD Rom
- To record a personal Audio CD
- To use ICT

The contents of this project can be divided into two clear parts: writing critical reviews of music and creation of a music magazine.

A) Writing reviews of the music the students listen to: CDs, DVDs, concerts, etc.:

Through different activities such as: warming up about favourite music, questionnaires about music preferences, music quiz, checking information, group formation, choosing nicknames, getting information about music styles, writing a commentary of a song, finding out the difference between a descriptive and a critical text, brainstorming, discussions, completion of exercises about vocabulary related to music, connectors, adjectives, adverbs and punctuation, watching a DVD of a famous singer, listening to several CDs, singing, dealing with descriptive and critical texts, students finally manage to write a critical text (review) of the lyrics of a song.

B) Creation of a music magazine, a CD and an Audio CD:

Once the students have written reviews of concerts, DVDs, CDs and lyrics, the teacher suggests they can create a music magazine. The activities developed are as follow: looking at English music mags to find out about the different sections, deciding the contents of the magazine and the main article (the music of the 20th century so that they learn where the music they listen to at present comes from) and decision of how many groups and teams are needed. Distribution of groups according to the different sections: interviews to groups, singers and bands, survey about music interests of teenagers, letters to magazines, quiz page, top ten, music halls and venues in Barcelona, present singers and groups, German singers and groups, classical music, the best CDs of this millennium, a special tribute to Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles. Some of the reviews previously written by the students will be added to the contents of the magazine. Creation of teams to deal with the PageMaker program to create the magazine, to deal with the DreamWeaver program to create a CD Rom, to play an instrument and record an Audio CD and a team of musical advisors who help all the groups. The result of all this is "Full Swing", the music mag.

C) "Imagine": developing a project (CD format) from a song:

This project was developed after the 11th September 2001 since the song *Imagine* has always been thought of as a hymn to peace.

The main objective is for the students to be aware of the real world in which they live and be able to contrast it with the message of John Lennon. They scan the lyrics of the song and widen each significant word to its whole concept. For example: *Imagine there's no heaven*: there is a link in the CD with the different types of religion. In this way they deal with art, religion, cultures and other cross-curricular topics. A group of students create a CD Rom with all the information and a student who plays the piano well records the song which can be heard all through the CD.

D) Looking for activities related to songs in the Internet.

Useful addresses:

<http://www.isabelperez.com/songs.htm>

Examples:

- Dream, dream, dream. Everly Brothers. Gaps, verbs, meanings
- I will survive. Gloria Gaynor. Verbs, phonetics, verbs & prepositions, translation
- Whenever, wherever. Shakira. Gaps, Phonetics, modal verbs, dictionary, writing, interactive exercise

<http://www.esl-lounge.com/songstop.shtml>

- Songs in alphabetical order. No exercises

<http://www.musicalenglishlessons.com/>

- List of singers. Different types of exercises. Tips for teachers.

<http://www.lyrics.com>

E) U2. I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For

Suggestions to develop a project from this song: religion, Ireland, Bono, NGOs, Irish music, idealistic mind, in definition in time, etc.