



Warming up to music: incorporating audio texts in second-language teaching

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TOPIC

Drawing on current research on second-language acquisition, I discuss methodologically sound procedures for incorporating lyrical music as warmups to communicative vocabulary-building lessons.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Music is a delicate tool which, when used in a second language classroom, can either facilitate or strain the language-learning process.¹
- Careful consideration must be given to *how* music is incorporated in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES

- I outline SLT methodological principles³ that justify the incorporation of music for vocabulary building lessons.
- I explain a pedagogical procedure that turns lyrical songs into warm-up listening comprehension activities that **target auditory comprehension and recall of newly introduced vocabulary**.
- I then discuss how the music-based warm-up activity can be used as a thematic springboard of rich input³ from which to design follow-up task-supported vocabulary lessons.

THE INPUT HYPOTHESIS

- "We acquire language in one way: by understanding messages or by obtaining comprehensible input."²
- Pictures, music and other realia provide context, background information that helps make input comprehensible and meaningful.
- Appropriately selected songs can serve (like pictures) as a type of comprehensible input that packages language components into extra-linguistic context for students.²
- This allows students to engage in implicit learning³

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

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- ² Krashen, Stephen D. (1989). *Language Acquisition and Language Education*. 2nd ed. Language Teaching Methodology Ser. New York: Prentice.
- ³ Long, M. H. (2009). *Methodological principles for language teaching*. The Handbook of Language Teaching, 371–394. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444315783.ch21>
- ⁴ VanPatten, B. (2012). Input processing. The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203808184.ch16>

Targeting auditory comprehension and recall of new vocabulary through lyrical music

- Select a song that matches the theme of the vocabulary lesson.
- Ensure that the input (lyrical content) is accessible and comprehensible to the target audience by providing a glossary of key terms.
- Target newly introduced vocabulary by turning lyrics that match new vocabulary into a **fill-in-the-blanks** activity for students to complete as they listen to the auditory input.
- Use the theme of the song as springboard to engage students in pedagogical tasks that incorporate the newly acquired vocabulary .

From input to output

- Prep students to engage with the rich input by introducing the theme of the song and reviewing key vocabulary.
- After listening, guide students in a discussion about the theme of the song.

Hoyos en la Bolsa

El Tri

Año con año, _____ vale menos

Año con año, todo vale

Año con año, _____ va avanzando

Y aumentan los _____ del gobierno

Y ahora nos dicen que hay que solidarizarnos

Y que hay que apretarnos (*tighten*) el _____

Lo malo es que este cinto ya no tiene _____

Los hoyos están en la bolsa de nuestro _____

Año con año, nuestros hijos van creciendo



Antes de escuchar/Before listening:

- "Esta canción es una crítica (*critique*) de los **abusos** (*abuses*) del gobierno. Es una canción sobre las **injusticias** económicas en México."
- (This song is a critique of the Mexican government and its abuse of power. It is about economic injustices in Mexico.)

Después de escuchar/After listening:

- "¿Tú piensas que la sociedad estadounidense es **justa** (*fair*) económicamente? Explica tu respuesta.
- (Do you think US society is fair economically speaking? Explain your answer.)

Theme-based pedagogic task

- You are the governor of California and must respond to the issues raised by your constituents about the economy.
- One student will be the governor, another a working citizen, another an entrepreneur, and another an advocate for the unemployed

At a glance:

QUESTION

- What does current research say about incorporating music for second-language vocabulary building?
- How can research on second language teaching guide the incorporation of music for vocabulary building lessons?

SAMPLE

I use the song "Hoyos en la bolsa" by the Mexican rock band *El tri*. The theme of the song aligns with chapter vocabulary theme "the economy and the workforce."

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING³

- MP2: Promote learning by doing
- MP3: Elaborate input (do not rely solely on "authentic texts"
- MP4: Provide rich (not impoverished) input
- MP8: Respect "learner syllabuses"/developmental processes.
- MP10: Individualize instruction (psycholinguistically, and according to communicative needs)

CONCLUSIONS

- The song-based lesson must match learner's developmental readiness if it is to contribute to a relaxed, non-threatening and enjoyable atmosphere.
- Research on SLA supports the incorporation of lyrical songs for language teaching because it functions as a source of "rich" input that can lead to implicit learning.
- The song-based approach addresses the historical divide between language and cultural studies since it connects language acquisition to cultural literacy.¹

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