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**Exploring Schema Theory and Music Semantics in Learning in the EFL Classroom at
a Private Primary School in León, Guanajuato**

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PRESENTA

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Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación explora el rol que tienen el esquema y la semántica en la música en las percepciones sobre el uso de música en el salón de inglés. Esta tesis siguió un paradigma cualitativo y fue conducido entre 36 estudiantes de sexto grado de primaria, cuyas edades rondaban los 11 y 12 años, en una escuela primaria en la ciudad de León, Guanajuato. Los datos se recolectaron a través de diarios con tarjetas donde los alumnos escribían su retroalimentación sobre las actividades y también a través de las notas de observación de la investigadora. Los datos fueron analizados usando descripción densa por cada tema que surgió. Los resultados indican que el contexto particular y conocimientos propios de cada participante impactan en la forma en que sus percepciones se forman, y en cómo entienden la música dentro del salón de clases. Lo anterior podría tener implicaciones pedagógicas relevantes, de las cuales, los educadores podrían beneficiarse al implementar el uso de la música en su docencia.

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Dedication

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I will explore the elements that shape the perceptions of students regarding the use of music in the EFL classroom. Throughout this chapter, I will introduce my motivation to conduct this research, the context of the study, and the organization of this thesis. In addition, the description of the problem and the potential contribution of this research are also discussed. Finally, a conclusion summarizing the general purpose of each chapter in this thesis will be provided.

1.2 Research motivation

The main reasons why I decided to conduct this research are related to my personal experiences, both as a language learner and as an English teacher. As I was growing up, languages always represented an interest to me; therefore, the way I acquired English is a clear example of intrinsic motivation. Since I never took lessons, my first approach to English was through music and movies. This incidental exposure helped me develop proficiency in the language. Music has been part of my interests as well; it is relevant to mention that, besides being an English teacher, I am also a musician.

Based on these personal experiences, I wanted to share with my students the strategies and materials that worked for me regarding language acquisition. However, it became evident that before exploring the use of music within the EFL classroom, it was necessary to learn how individuals experience and perceive music, and whether these perceptions influence positively or negatively on learning. This study seemed a great opportunity for me to explore the elements that build perceptions and meaning around music and to what extent music could be of use within the EFL classroom. In the following section the description of the problem will be introduced.

1.3 Description of the problem

As it has been suggested in a large body of literature (Domoney, 1993; Duff, 2001; Engh, 2013; Kao & Oxford, 2014; Medina, 1990; Murphey, 1992; Palacios & Chapetón,

2014), music is considered to be a motivational tool within the EFL classroom. Kao and Oxford (2014) suggest that when the learning material is not interesting, the passion of students for learning can fade away. Music seems to be, in theory, a good tool within the classroom. Even though authors suggest that music is always perceived as positive and is accepted by learners, the possible outcomes if they do not find music activities interesting or appealing are not yet considered.

Negative feedback regarding music in the EFL classroom seems not to be acknowledged or considered as much as positive feedback. Among the different articles regarding music in the classroom, most studies (Becerra & Muñoz, 2013; Domoney, 1993; Israel, 2013; Kao & Oxford, 2014; Murphey, 1992; Palacios & Chapetón, 2014) focus on the positive aspects and positive perceptions of learners. Such studies portray ideal teaching scenarios in which music is accepted and enjoyed by learners and teaching objectives are achieved.

In addition to the latter, it would seem that music in the EFL classroom has no room for improvement, simply because it is suggested to work and get positive reactions from students every time. Thus, for teachers who have encountered a different scenario or have received negative feedback, literature provides no clear or enough guidance on how to use music in a way that could potentially suit every student. Most of this literature does not discuss why nor how negative perceptions are formed. The background of this study will be explored in the following section.

1.4 Background of the study

The academic area which I researched is related to concepts such as *perception*, *schemata*, and *music semantics*. Concerning perceptions regarding music, a large body of research has been conducted (Domoney, 1993; Murphey, 1992; Lems, 2018; Neisa, 2008; Palacios & Chapetón, 2014; Schoepp, 2001; Toffoli & Sockett, 2014). Most of these authors focus on the positive perceptions and effectiveness regarding music in the classroom. Regarding the area of schemata, studies have been carried out by Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Boon (2005). More specifically, research about schema and music has been

conducted by Leman (1995). Regarding music and music semantics, contributions to the field have been provided by Antović (2004), Koelsch et al. (2004), Koelsch and Siebel (2005), and Schlenker (2017), to name a few.

As mentioned, much literature regarding the use of music in the EFL classroom is available, as many studies have been carried out. Research has mainly focused on the positive outcomes of the use of music as a pedagogical tool. Since most of this body of work does not provide clear or explicit guidance on how perceptions are built, or what factors shape the perception of students, this study has focused on a theoretical approach. This research aims to explore the role of schema and music semantics in the way students' perceptions are shaped.

Throughout this study, concepts such as schema, schematic knowledge, music semantics, and tone will be used. In the following lines, each concept is introduced. Schema and schematic knowledge are concerned with the background knowledge of the individual. A simple example of this is how just by reading the title of a song, an individual's schemata is activated or triggered (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). This activation is undoubtedly based on the person's personal experiences and context, and in order to make sense of the information received and the self.

Music semantics refers to musical meaning in general. This term will be used to refer to how music, through semantic processing similar to the one we use for words, is capable of conveying meaning (Schlenker, 2017) and the listener can interpret a song according to his or her background, emotions, and context of the hearing. In the following section, I will introduce the context of this study.

1.4.1 Context of the study

This research was conducted among sixth-grade students, boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 12, at a private primary school in León, Guanajuato. This institution offers music as a subject throughout the different levels of education. Music, however, is hardly integrated into other content subjects. Since teachers are not often allowed to implement

many activities outside the school's curricula, and institutional expectations have to be met, time to include other activities is insufficient. This study served as an opportunity to introduce a different approach to activities and to understand students' likes and needs using music. In the following section I will present and explore the gaps identified among the areas of study of this research.

1.5 Identification of gaps in this body of knowledge

Based on the research previously conducted on music in the EFL classroom, I was able to identify areas that may be expanded upon the role of schema and music semantics have regarding perceptions. Among these areas, I considered there are potential gaps related to negative perceptions about the use of music in the EFL classroom and the factors that shape these negative perceptions.

The use of music in the classroom as a learning tool has been practiced, researched, and written about widely by different authors (Domoney, 1993; Murphey, 1992; Lems, 2018; Palacios & Chapetón, 2014; Toffoli & Sockett, 2014) who have largely addressed music and its positive effect, as well as its relationship with motivation and the benefits that it can provide in the classroom. However, negative effects on learners who do not necessarily perceive music as motivating, or as an appealing activity have not been researched as much. Little is known about how a personal experience such as listening to music can be either motivating or discouraging. Therefore, it is relevant to address the negative perceptions of students regarding the use of music in the classroom. The purpose and objectives of this research will be discussed in the next section.

1.6 Purpose of the study

The objective of this research is to explore how schema theory and music semantics impact students' perceptions regarding the use of music in the EFL classroom. This study aims to answer the following research question:

What is the role of schema and music semantics on students' perceptions regarding the use of music in the English classroom?

The motivation to answer this question relies on my approach to language, my practice as an English teacher, and my experience as a musician. As a teacher, it was evident that activities with music had an impact, but the factors that determined it needed to be explored to answer this question. The intention to carry out this research was that of understanding why and how individuals (in this case, my students) perceive the use of music in the classroom either positively or negatively. The results from this research were meant to provide insight on the use of schema, semantics, and perceptions to make educated decisions when using music in the EFL classroom.

Since perceptions were pivotal within this study, a qualitative paradigm was considered to answer the research question. Participants provided feedback through classroom bucket cards and the collected data was coded and analyzed. A journal with observation notes was also kept as activities were conducted to triangulate information and provide a thick description of the latter. Potential contributions of this study will be addressed next.

1.7 Potential contribution of the study

By exploring the role of schema and music semantics and the role they have on perceptions, this study can contribute to understanding what factors influence the way perceptions are built. This study could help raise awareness about the importance of acknowledging negative perceptions as a way of knowing the needs within the EFL classroom and among students. In addition, this study can potentially educate teachers on how the use of schema theory and music semantics can improve the opportunities to provide for most of the students' preferences and needs. Moreover, these implications might influence positively the design of tasks that meet these needs, which could potentially improve students' performance and learning. The structure of this thesis and a brief description of each chapter will be presented in the following section.

1.8 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. I will now introduce and describe each one of them briefly. In Chapter 1, I presented the aims and objectives of this research. I also

discussed the motivation that led me to carry out this research, as well as the importance of the study, the potential contributions to the area, and the organization of this thesis.

In Chapter 2, the most relevant literature regarding this study and the areas that are related to it will be mentioned. This chapter also includes key concepts, such as music and tone semantics, music signification, culture and pop culture, music and pop music in the classroom, discourse in lyrics, and schema.

Regarding Chapter 3, the methodology I used to carry out this research will be introduced. The justification for the qualitative approach I decided to follow for this study will be discussed, as well as phenomenology. I will also describe each of the data collection techniques used for this research: classroom bucket cards and a field journal with observations. Ethics and my positionality within the study will be also addressed.

In Chapter 4, I will present the data I collected and the findings that emerged from it. I will also analyze the collected data through the thick description as mentioned in Chapter 3. This section will feature different subheadings obtained from metaphors found while analyzing the data. Each metaphor refers to the different themes that are repeated throughout the analysis of the data. Each one of these themes will feature excerpts from the data, as well as the analysis of it.

Finally, in Chapter 5, a summary of the discussion of the findings will be included. I will also explore the pedagogical implications or possible contributions of this study, as well as the limitations and future research that could follow this research. In the following chapter, some of the main concepts that will be looked at for this research will be presented.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the literature behind the concepts of semantics and semiotics of music, culture and music, and music discourse that are relevant within this study. These concepts will be presented and explored through the different perspectives of the authors. A discussion and analysis of the literature and the stances of the authors will also be provided.

2.2 Semantics and semiotics in music

To understand music and its effects on individuals, it is important to understand how people experience music and what it means to them. Therefore, to have a better comprehension of how music is perceived and interpreted by the participants in this research, and people in general, it is key to talk about semantics in music.

It is argued whether music has an intrinsic meaning or just the meaning people assign to it (Antović, 2009). Some authors (Antović, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2004; Koelsch & Siebel, 2005; Schlenker, 2017) have studied semantics in music in the past century. According to Schlenker (2017), “music semantics is concerned with musical meaning in general” (p. 3), whether or not the term semantics can be applied to music the same way is applied on linguistics, because music is not a language *per se*, it can be claimed it does convey meaning. In this regard, Koelsch et al. (2005) affirm that:

Music can have a systematic influence on the semantic processing of words and this indicates that music is capable of conveying meaning information, and that the priming effects on the semantic processing of words can be identical for music and language. (p. 581)

According to the author, music’s capability of conveying meaning suggests that semantics can be applied to music the same way it is applied to language since the processing of words is identical in both instances. Music is considered to convey meaning but this is perceived and signified by the individuals which play a major role in music selection, and

ultimately, on the listener's preferences. Music has a meaning on its own, but individuals ultimately assign it to it.

Regardless of the debate on whether music has meaning on its own or not at all, it is well known that even if music lacks a clear reference, in general, it does provoke psychological reactions (Antović, 2009). These reactions are linked to emotions and associations, which suggests that the conceptualization we have of music is a reflection of our conceptual system in general. Thus, this process could provide a basis for the foundation of true musical semantics (Antović, 2009), since this suggests that music does have a meaning but it is assigned by the individual and based on emotions and previous experiences stored in our minds.

In addition, Margolis (1987) proposes that we perceive and understand everything around us by matching patterns to the patterns we have already stored in our memory. This would align with how individuals signify music and its elements, just as the lyrics in a song according to their *mental stored* patterns, among which *music metaphorical schemas* (Brower, 2000) can also be found. However, to approach semantics in music, one needs to take into consideration some of its technical aspects and not only the meaning in its lyrics. In the following sections, some elements in music like tone, perception, and signification are introduced and discussed.

2.2.1 Tone semantics

As part of music semantics, the semantic level of music on its own (without words or what some people call “instrumental music”) needs to be addressed. Tone semantics refers to isolating music, leaving verbal or metaphoric concepts aside to focus on the sound alone. In this sense, music is considered to already hold meaning before any text is added or even if there is no text at all; meaning be assigned to music by the listener regardless of any metaphors they could find through lyrics. In other words, sounds can be signified without the need for lyrics.

Although Antović (2009) suggests that “music is an abstraction, and the only way to approach it is to metaphorise” (p. 125), research on the effect sound itself has on people has been discussed. The role of semantics in music provides information about the effect music

has on listeners. According to Leman (1995), “tone semantics points to the way in which the human mind identifies tones and assigns them a functional relationship” (p. 3), which suggests that the meaning of music is created within humans’ minds and the way people order and relate music tones. The author also states that “tone semantics refers to the more specific problem of how tones, in a context of other tones, relate to each other and “behave” in a quite orderly and meaningful way” (p. 3). This claim suggests that this process is natural and performed either consciously or unconsciously by individuals when listening to music.

Semantics in music is not only concerned or dependent on words or verbal content, even at a wordless level, but music can also mean something to the listener. As proposed by Monelle (2001), “there are two semantic levels, regardless if it is music with words or music without words. The wordless level is present in all music, of course” (p. 9) and since this level is present in all music, even wordless music hold meaning. The music itself, being a group of sounds and harmonies, holds meaning on its own. Tone semantics can help us understand the effect sounds have on human minds and how even if individuals do not signify music or its elements consciously, they do it implicitly every time they listen to a piece. Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is a clear example of how even the piece is wordless, it immediately suggests a feeling of strength, as the listener receives the impression of a forceful statement being made (Copland, 2011) and yet this requires no mental effort as it is done instinctively.

This process, either conscious or unconsciously, implies that tone semantics is an unconscious formation of meaning. Regarding meaning formation in music, as previously mentioned, it implies automatic and direct signification, without explicit conscious processing. However, these associations respond to specific elements, such as the object, the context, and the schema structure that controls the perception of the listener (Leman, 1995). All these elements are implied among metacognitive processes, that whether people can identify them or not, are used to listen and understand music. In this sense, the individual responds to the stimuli of a sound, a note, a silence, and different elements of music, whether or not intending to. It is assumed that, explicitly or implicitly, individuals interpret music and this determines the categorization of their preferences: like or dislike.

Since musical tones carry no overt linguistic content, to deal with formal relations is appropriate, such as higher and lower order elements in music (Antović, 2009). All the elements involved in music like harmony, cadences, tone, melody, notes, instruments, to name a few, play an important role that will shape the perception of the listener. From the moment a sound or a music piece exists, meaning on its own is already present. However, until the piece or sound is heard it will mean something to someone. Music is heard and understood differently every time by every individual and its meaning will not always be the same for everyone, as it relies on interpretation. To understand the relevance of meaning in music, in the next section, meaning formation and context will be explored.

2.2.2 Meaning formation and context-sensitive meaning

According to Leman (2008), we give significance to experienced music with reference to context. A proper interpretation of music and associated description should be based on a well-informed cultural and historical background.

Now that the role of music semantics and tone semantics on perceptions has been discussed, to talk about the other elements that have a role shaping the perception and meaning music has for individuals is essential. One of these other elements is context and its influence is meaning formation. It is significant to discuss context meaning because, as I briefly explained in the previous section, it is part of our experiences with music.

The perceptual meaning formation is not only influenced by the cultural background and the individual experiences people have but also by the properties of the context in which the former occurs (Leman, 1995). This claim supports the idea that the interpretation individuals give to things -in this case, music- depends on the context. Musical meaning is closely related to a variety of aspects of music perception that not only involve metacognitive processes but also external ones. For example, music might mean something valuable or negative to people because of the context (either the setting or emotional state) in which they listened to a music piece for the first time. Thus, individuals relate music not only to random emotions or memories but also to places, people, and events that affected their musical experience.

Musical meaning comprises musical sound patterns (which may resemble gestures, objects, prosodic features), influenced by a particular mood, extra-musical associations, etc. (Koelsch & Siebel, 2005). In that way, music has plenty of different meanings, as its interpretation differs from one individual to another, and it is never experienced or perceived the same way for everybody. As suggested by Antović (2004) “individuals rarely offer the same interpretation, even if they belong to the same age, gender, culture, social class, type of taste...music simply has no truth conditions to resort to. It cannot be true or false” (p. 6), and hence its meaning is open for interpretation. Each individual will assign a particular meaning to a piece of music (even within a more general collective accepted meaning), and this will be different than the meaning somebody else gives to it. In that sense, music can be seen as a *meaning template* that each listener can customize according to their particular background, experiences, needs, or emotions.

It can be concluded that meaning-making is influenced by context and therefore it relies on subjective grounds. According to Leman (2007), interpretation and, therefore, the description can always change because it depends on subjectivity. This subjectivity will undoubtedly be influenced by the bias of the moment. Meaning-making is a process that will differ from one individual to another, from one mind to another, and so on, and it will be influenced by the knowledge, experience, and emotional state of the listener at the moment. A piece of music can mean something to someone at one particular time in his or her life and then the same piece can mean something else or even become irrelevant. Subjectivity in art -in this case, music- makes for a crucial characteristic of it. This subjectivity invites the listener to make music happen, as it takes them from a passive/receptive role to an active meaning-making one.

In addition, it can also be concluded that the cultural context is an extramusical reality. Culture tends to be a broad concept, which I will discuss later in this chapter, and that broadness constitutes part of this subjectivity. Since cultural context, meaning identity, geography, traditions, and all the elements that represent the culture of a country or group are shaped through arbitrary conventions, it constitutes a particular background and also impacts the way people access, understand, and make meaning of things. This is, of course, the case for music. Now that I have discussed the subjectivity of meaning-making and how

context will also be part of each individual's reality, signification and perception will be addressed more in-depth in the following section.

2.2.3 Signification in music

After discussing concepts and elements previously mentioned in this chapter, now the different stances some of the authors have regarding music and its signification will be addressed and contrasted. Signification will be approached separately from meaning, since it is perceived as a "difficult" area that needs to be discussed on its own, and also because of its link to other elements in music, such as lyrics. Both of these arguments will be explained in more depth in the following sections.

According to Hatten (1994), signification in music refers to the practice of interpreting music. This simplistic or technical concept is later contrasted by Leman (2008) who provides a more intrinsic definition of signification. Leman claims that music signification refers to how humans engage themselves with music and why they do so. Leman's definition seems to be suitable for this chapter and this study since the definition approaches not only the action of signification but how individuals get to those conclusions.

As I mentioned before, I consider essential to discuss signification separately from meaning because, even if at a simple glance, and after stating how subjective or "vague" music and its meaning can be, it seems that musical signification is a more complex area. According to Lévi-Strauss, signification has been perceived as "intelligible and untranslatable" (as cited in Tarasti, 2002, p. 8), yet these prejudices are not necessarily intended to be negative. Therefore, to discuss this complexity is key, since it reflects the subjectivity of musical signification: which is created by each individual, and thus different for every person. This 'vagueness' or subjectivity in the meaning of music allows it to be flexible and unique with every listening opportunity. People can hear the same piece of music, but they will not necessarily listen the piece in the same way.

Subjectivity in signification seems to be a much-needed quality to understand individual perception, as well as to prove how music can be interpreted in endless ways. This is related to, as previously stated, this 'vague' feature in music. This characteristic in music

is what makes it so flexible and universal. Individuals can appropriate music in their particular way and this possibility can enrich signification and make it vast.

In contrast to wordless music, the signification of music with words will rely on verbal descriptions, which help people get in contact with the meaning of music. Such verbal descriptions can help reveal meanings that music holds and that have remained hidden; thus, words in this sense might be the easiest way to the meaning of the song. Words in a song work as a more explicit aid when it comes to interpreting a song or understanding it. That is because words function as a tool that provides access to signification. According to Hatten (1994), not only do words provide access but they also may enhance the level of direct involvement with music.

This explains why individuals like one song over another. Words in a song can convey a message that connects with what a person is dealing with or experiencing at the moment, which determines the level of involvement of that person with the song. They can also reference objects and concepts in the realm of knowledge of the individual and, thus, it can build a connection through identification.

It is now clear how music can either hold meaning with or without any words in it. Sounds or tones can hold meaning on themselves, and it is inherently of the human mind to order these signs and assign them meaning, it is an organic process. However, other extramusical elements influence perception and the way people interpret music. Sound and words are not the only elements that build metaphors and meanings behind songs. In the following section, these other elements will be discussed. I will explore music perception and the elements that influence it as a whole.

2.2.4.1 Music perception

According to Tarasti (2002), “Music has always a content, and this content has a conventional, arbitrary relationship with its signifier, i.e. the aural and physical embodiment of the musical sign” (p. 8). As I have stated in the prior sections, music itself and music with words will mean different things for each person. In this section, I will address the other elements that shape the way we interpret things. According to Rice (2001),

All human beings, including ethnomusicologists, understand the nature and significance of music (its meaning in the broad sense) by making metaphors that link music to other aspects of human experience. Each metaphor makes a truth claim about the ontological status of music: music is art, music is meaningful action, music is humanly organized sound, and so forth. (p. 22)

Those “other aspects” that Rice alludes to are later mentioned in his statement, as he discusses how music, being art, is meaningful action. In this sense, music is understood just like any type of art, which is embedded in the culture and its features (identity, traditions, language, among others) of each individual.

To address extramusical elements that determine the meaning-making of music, to speak of cultural and social aspects is pivotal. As Tomasello (1999) states, meaning is socially embedded, which, as I have previously mentioned throughout these sections, makes meaning referentially flexible. This aspect makes meaning-making depend on each individual’s perception and particular context, rather than being one fixed meaning for all individuals. The way an individual will perceive and make meaning is shaped by culture and society. These institutions dictate what individuals in them understand as the “common grounds” of culture and identity. As a result of this, individuals signify music according to their experiences and background, which is ultimately shaped and influenced by their culture and the society they belong to.

In addition to this, Leman (2008) claims that “the narrative discourse is furthermore a logical discourse but being logical means that there exists a common social and cultural ground for the receiver to understand” (p. 16). Without this common ground, individuals could not relate the language in songs to other parts of their lives or their cultural baggage. Therefore, for the discourse in music to be logical for the listener, and for the discourse to be signified, it needs to be characterized by individuals’ projections, which are built on personal experiences. This common ground is formed between society and each individual’s experiences, which will ultimately influence the way the listener makes sense, and the meaning of music. As a result of this, culture is imbued in individuals’ perceptions.

These common grounds will inherently be an important element for building the way we perceive music and the world around us in general. As suggested before, this can influence our understanding and how we share or express what we think of a song, or how we experience music, with others. As discussed previously, regardless of having the same age, nationality, gender, etc., our perceptions will tend to be different. Among the differences between one individual and another, perceptions are likely to be influenced or will tend to be similar to those with whom we share characteristics in common. Even though individuals are different, they tend to share certain characteristics with others, especially those with whom they belong in the same group. Leman (2008) proposes:

What the sender says about musical experience can be important for the receiver, because the latter is a member of the same social group. Owing to that social context, the receiver can easily understand the intentions of the sender because they can be understood as projections of the receiver's own intentions. (p. 16)

Such a statement may suggest that referential accuracy is another extramusical element that takes place in perception. Referential accuracy is the ability to express the nuances of subjective interpretations (Leman, 2008), but for people to be able to express these nuances in a clear, explicit way, references can be used. These references allow individuals to make these distinctions that are often subtle when referring to music. Although meaning-making lies on subjective grounds, these grounds are built according to each person's experiences and background, which can also be shared or similar to those in the same social group. These similarities are seen as references that can help the sender and the receiver co-create the meaning of music.

As a conclusion to this section, to address some of the concepts previously discussed is useful. The complexity and subjectivity of music signification are acknowledged but this makes it flexible. Also, the important role of social and cultural constructs was highlighted, emphasizing how culture shapes our perception. Consequentially in the following section, I will discuss the role of culture and music.

2.3 Culture and music

Throughout the previous sections, it has been addressed that music is a highly subjective experience, but that feature is part of its universal nature, as it is art in general and since music belongs in that category, it is usually expected to be subjected and influenced by culture and society. In the following sections, I will discuss the important role that culture, as it has been mentioned in previous sections, holds within our perception. Although automatic and unconscious, the perception we hold of things and the world around us is not just random, it is entirely rooted in the culture we are imbued in. The different concepts of culture will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.1 Culture

Culture is seen as one of the elements that shapes the perception of individuals, and now its role within the making of perceptions will be discussed. The complexity in defining culture is pertinent to mention. Probably equally, as complex, or as subjective to explain than music meaning, there is culture. Such a familiar word like culture can be difficult to explain. Different concepts of culture will be explored to show the relationship culture(s) hold with music.

Different definitions of culture -and different types of culture- have been proposed by different authors throughout the years. Eagleton (2000) proposes that “‘Culture’ is said to be one of the two or three most complex words [...] ‘culture’ is both too broad and too narrow to be greatly useful” (p. 35). Culture is a complex concept to define given its dynamic nature of constant change. People tend to define culture either by simplistic terms or rather complex ideas.

When we think of culture, some ideas come to mind. For some people, culture refers to “high culture” which is related to “excellence” or “the best knowledge” (Martin, 2003). This would suggest that culture refers to elite or high status, probably a misconception of the term, since it suggests for some people that culture is related to products and contents that are only affordable by people with a high economical or intellectual status.

Even so, to categorize culture rather than conceptualize it in one concise idea, makes it harder to be understood. In that case, if there is such a thing known as high culture, there is also mass culture, popular culture, etc. I will specifically address pop culture in the following sections but before discussing it, discussing the concepts of culture by some other authors is useful to have a better understanding of the concept as a whole. For Williams (1965), culture refers to:

a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior. The analysis of culture, from such definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. (p. 57)

Williams (1965) acknowledges how culture is a way for individuals to express meaning, and this meaning is imbued by values and the way we live. On the other hand, Rooney (1996) supports this but also highlights the influence of power and politics over culture, and therefore, their direct impact on our meanings and values, even in the way we behave. This definition then would suggest that culture is not only in certain parts of life, but it is, in fact, the way people live.

These previous definitions seem to be accurate regarding the aims of this study. According to them, culture reflects what we have learned throughout our lives but also, culture is shaped by power relationships. On this account, it is fundamental to explore how this influences what individuals listen to and what it means to them. Since culture is said to be meanings, value, and lifestyle, we can also claim that culture shapes our identity. Individuals seek to express themselves through identity, as Eagleton (2000) claims:

Like culture, the word means both what is around us and inside us, and the disruptive drives within can easily be equated with anarchic forces without. Culture is thus a matter of self-overcoming as much as self-realization. If it celebrates the self, it also disciplines it, aesthetic and ascetic together. Human nature is not quite the same as a field of beetroot, but like a field it needs to be cultivated. (p. 11)

It seems that a paradox lies in the last metaphor. Throughout our lives, individuality and praise of ourselves seem to be encouraged and celebrated. However, the idea of individuality is constantly shaped by institutions of power. Our identity might be the only thing that is truly ours, but still, culture has taught us what the norm is.

To speak about identity and culture is pertinent, given the aims of the current study. As I will discuss in the following sections, for individuals in general, but especially for young people, identity is extremely important, since this is the way they express themselves. For most young people, music serves as a statement of who they are: their ideas, their opinions, etc. Music for them seems to be a discourse of identity and self-expression. Therefore, music represents a way in which they can say who they are and the way they feel about things, and also the way they understand the world.

To continue with the argument of Eagleton (2000) regarding culture, he also states that:

culture shifts us from the natural to the spiritual, it also intimates an affinity between them [...] we resemble nature in that we, like it, are to be cuffed into shape, but we differ from it in that we can do this to ourselves, thus introducing into the world a degree of self-reflexivity to which the rest of nature cannot aspire. As self-cultivators, we are clay in our own hands. (p. 11)

How much of this “freedom” do individuals have to shape their own identity is debatable. Despite that, perhaps through reflection individuals might be able to “shape” themselves into what is ideal for them, however, part of what is ideal to individuals has already been shaped by culture. It is difficult to perceive the boundaries of the individual self and the individual as a member of society and culture. This struggle is addressed by Hacking (1986) who proposes that people are *made up*. In this sense, adolescents are no exception, since they constantly tend to make themselves up or “fashion themselves” (Gee et al., 2001) as they tend to follow trends and relate to what, according to their perception, is current or fashionable.

Popular culture is not built upon sharing the same characteristics solely but by sharing similar values and ideological frameworks. According to Eagleton (2000), “people from the same place, profession or generation do not thereby form a culture; they do so only when they begin to share speech-habits, folk lore, ways of proceeding, frames of value, a collective self-image” (p. 39). Hence, to be part of a group is wanted since we are cultural individuals who seek for a sense of belonging. We want to identify as part of a group and in consequence of this, there is an underlying need to belong.

The need to belong makes it more complex to know exactly to what extent individuals are influenced by mass culture and how that impacts their identity and perception. The fact that the culture in which we are embedded plays a major role in who we are is undeniable. We belong in several cultures that dictate how people should act, look like or even think. Perhaps, even when we are being ourselves, we are probably following or reflecting what we have been told, implicitly or explicitly, to be. In that sense, we can conclude that we are ourselves the way culture has taught us to. In the following section, I will discuss how popular culture affects music and its role in perception.

2.3.2 Pop culture

As I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, this study was conducted among young students. The musical genre was important to select because I knew the choice could affect the outcomes of the research. After reading about music and similar studies, it seemed that pop music was the sensible choice. The reason why I considered so was related to the age of my participants, which were entering adolescence at the time, an age in which individuals tend to look for their identity and tend to resort to mass media.

Although some adolescents may not be persuaded by popular trends, pop culture and music have been linked to young listeners, especially teenagers. According to Murphey and Albert (1985) who defined pop songs as the motherese of adolescents, there is an obvious connection between “mainstream” music, meaning pop, and young learners. The reason behind this claim seems to be related to how adolescents are constantly exposed to this mainstream genre of music (pop), and how this relates to their identity or the shaping of it.

To become fully integrated into the mainstream, most individuals must learn to adapt to the linguistic, sociocultural, discursive, and academic norms and practices (Duff, 2001). The latter goes beyond and into the classroom context, which also functions as their socialization environment, and the place where they go every day to learn. Socialization within the classroom is another way in which teenagers are exposed by their peers to mass media and ultimately, pop music. In this sense, Boyle et al. (1981) define pop music as in “its broadest sense to include any type of music a person had experienced through the mass media or any other means. This broad definition allowed subjects to include a diverse range of styles as their preferred selections” (p. 48). Thus, pop music can be seen as a broad genre that includes a diverse range of styles. This broadness makes it approachable to a more extent audience, which will allow it to dictate what is mainstream or not.

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, pop music is the greatest example of “vague” references in music. This “vagueness” refers to how topics in pop music and lyrics are common places in which most individuals find something that alludes to emotions or situations they can relate to since they have faced in their lives. One example of this would be a common place in song, such as love or heartbreak. Most individuals have experienced it, therefore it is easy for the listener to take a love song and make it its own.

Common places and clichés exist in art, and music is not an exception. People can find in songs a means of saying the things they cannot say on their own or with their own words, therefore music is the canvas they use to tell their own story. Pop music allows people, and in this particular context adolescents, to find meaning. According to Murphey (1992), it is pop ghost discourse (which refers to the lack of explicit references in lyrics, and therefore open to interpretation and appropriation by the listener) that allows people to assign pop music their meaning, based on their experiences.

This appropriation is what makes pop music situational since its meaning will depend not only on who is listening but their experiences and the moment, either physical or mental, in which they are experiencing the music. To understand the appeal of pop music among adolescents, Le Blanc’s (1980) interactive theory of music preference seems helpful. This theory takes into consideration all the sources that determine the different music preferences of individuals.

This theory maintains that “music preference decisions are based upon the action of input information and the characteristics of the listener, with input information consisting of the musical stimulus and the listener’s cultural environment” (p. 4). This cultural environment then plays an important role in the music taste or preferences of the listener and the way understands or signify music. In this regard, we can infer that the taste in music each individual has is the result of musical stimulus but also that individual’s characteristics. This might explain why some people like a certain genre of music (pop, rock, metal, jazz, etc.) and how that reflects something about who they are.

LeBlanc (1980) suggests different levels of variables regarding the way individuals perceive and appreciate music. The following table shows the different levels and describes each one of them.

Table 1

LeBlanc’s (1980) model of sources of variation in musical taste

Level	Description
8	Variables for input: aspects of the music and listening situation. Decision-making system.
7, 6, and 5	Enabling conditions: psychological, attentional, and affective state.
4	Characteristics of the subject and individual differences.
3, 2, 1	Respondent action with variables: individual’s patterns or response to a given musical stimulus.

Note. Adapted from “Outline of a Proposed Model of Sources of Variation in Musical Taste” by A. LeBlanc, 1980, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 61, p. 30.

Levels 1, 2, and 3 refer to the basic response of an individual to a musical stimulus. In level 1, the listener either accept or reject the song. This is later confirmed on level 2, which involves judgment: the listener will either discard the music selection or will want to explore further and sample the song through repetition. After these two levels, the listener is ready for level 3, which involves processing by the respondent’s brain.

Level 4 features the listener’s particular characteristics regarding their musical training, their personality, gender, among others, and how these affect their affective state,

which is considered in level 5. Levels 6 and 7 also relate to the basic conditions in which the listening happens: physiological enabling conditions and the attention given by the listener.

Nonetheless, I will expand on the eighth level, which identifies nine different factors that impact perception. Some of these factors are related to physical stimuli such as referential meaning and performance, to mention a few. These elements have been explored in the first section; as such, I will now introduce the factors related to cultural effects on the input data, such as media, peer group, family, educators, and authority figures, and incidental conditioning (Le Blanc, 1980) that also determine musical taste, preferences, and perceptions among people.

In addition, I also consider of interest to look at level four in Le Blanc's theory. Based on the previous statement, in individuals' hierarchy, the personal characteristics of the listener are also considered in this model. "Regarding the individuals' personal characteristics, we can find auditory sensitivity music ability, music training, personality, sex, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, maturation, and memory influence the processing of input data" (Boyle et al., 1981, p. 48). All these factors are related to culture. As it has been previously stated, culture will shape the way we perceive and live life.

Individuals are presented with music, which allegedly is presented as mainstream or dominant, or "what they should listen to", to belong. It is now the beginning of the listener-action stage in LeBlanc's (1980) model. At this level, individuals cease to be passive, and they proceed to process the data by the listener's brain. At this level, Boyle et al. (1981) claim that:

A decision is made as to whether more exploration or experience is desired by the listener in order to make a judgment. If the former path is chosen, the listener then returns to level eight for additional input; if the latter decision is made and a judgment is formed, the information proceeds to level one and is rejected or accepted. (pp. 48-49)

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, it is the human mind that is in charge of the order in which we make sense of tones, the semantic of tones, and signification. As suggested by Le Blanc's (1980) model, it does happen as an organic process, but different

social and cultural aspects will determine the results. In this sense, we could say that more than stimuli, we relate sensations or emotions with what we have learned or experienced. To assign meaning to a tone, our mind will have to triangulate between the stimulus or organic response with our backgrounds or schematic knowledge. The way we understand things, in this case, music is related to what we know and have a record of in our minds.

However, how these factors seem to influence young listeners and determine their perceptions and music selections are also related to cultural factors, attitudes, and music preferences. Such preferences are situational and subjective (Wapnick, 1976). Again, context and subjectivity are mentioned as part of the elements that influence an individual's perception. In addition to this, Kuhn (1979) also highlights how notable attitudes towards music are and how these are built. Considering this, he addresses factors like age, socioeconomic status, listening experiences, media exposure, to name a few. Kuhn mentions that physiological, self-report, and behavioral measures can influence these attitudes towards music too.

Music does not only mean something at a personal level but it can also be related to socialization and collective experiences such as concerts or parties. With this in mind, a good example of this could be a massive event like a music festival, in which large quantities of people gather together to experience music collectively. Concert goers attend festivals because it gives them the possibility to experience the music live as they watch their favorite artists perform, but they also get the opportunity to socialize with people who share common interests.

This sense of belonging tends to influence people to develop a certain attitude or perception towards music, as suggested by Boyle et al. (1981), repeated hearings, community, peer influences, education level, and music training also play an important role in the shaping of individuals' perceptions. According to this, it seems that individuals like a song based on what it presents among the group he or she is part of or wants to belong to.

Other factors like gender, age, or intelligence are also considered to play a role on perceptions. For example, it is common that young individuals look up to artists and consider them a reference, a role model, or even an idol or hero of sorts. Some individuals could aspire

to the aesthetic of a certain performer or their talent as songwriters. In contrast, perhaps a person who has received an education in music theory or plays an instrument perceive music differently, focusing on other details such as execution and composition, even skill or talent. These aspects could not be perceived as in-depth by those who have not been professionally trained in music.

The context also influences the choices people make about the music they hear: back in the 1960s African-American communities fighting for civil rights, used blues music as a way of talking about the struggles of racism and oppression. In a more current context, another example is that of people who like *banda* music, who seem to enjoy it because the topics tend to describe the lifestyle of Northern Mexico, which is something they understand or can relate to, because of their setting.

As one can assume, peer influence and socioeconomic relationships are important for people in general and especially for adolescents. They try to build their identity and through social interactions they choose what to consume, in this case meaning music. Therefore, social interactions will shape their attitudes as well. Aspects such as “community attitudes” and “peer influences” can be determinants in adolescents’ decision-making. The influence of those around them, and especially the influence of mainstream culture, will have an impact on their choices, music being one of them.

As mentioned before, repeated hearings are also present in the way adolescents experience and perceive music. This aspect of pop music will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

2.3.3 Pop music in the classroom

As stated in previous sections, several factors influence the way individuals perceive music. I have addressed music semantics, music perception, culture, and its influence on what adolescents listen to and how they listen to it. I also discussed the relevance of pop in mainstream culture. Now, I will look at pop music and its role in the classroom. The main reason to focus on pop music in this study is related to the age of my participants, and the interests that the majority of them showed regarding their music preferences when I

conducted this research. It was important for me to look at music and its influence on young people to understand my participants' choice for this genre.

In research among adolescents and pop music in the EFL classroom, Domoney (1993), states that pop music is ever-present in students' everyday lives. In this sense, they are not so different from teenagers in many other parts of the world. This claim can make one expect teenagers not be so different from one place to another, in the sense that, pop music and repeated hearings of what is trending currently is what they are exposed to constantly.

Martin (2003) suggests that everyday culture seems innocent and harmless even. Despite that, sometimes the things that we do not notice, because of their ordinary nature, hold significant information about who individuals are and how they go about life: traditions, routine, beliefs, among others. Popular culture is part of this everyday life for most people because it is embedded in most aspects of life thanks to the media and information technology, even sometimes imposed as what the majority should consume or aspire to consume. This influences the perceptions young individuals have. Since adolescents are building their identity, they tend to follow trends and consume what is promoted as current or popular. Regardless of this, not all young individuals are exposed to the same; some even if exposed to pop culture will choose different things than the rest of their peers.

To define popular culture, I have mentioned that it is related to mainstream culture. From this perspective, Storey (1993) defines popular culture as what is liked by many people. Therefore, pop culture tends to, or is expected to be consumed by the masses and adolescents are no exception to this. According to Edensor (2002), pop culture is "devised to pacify the masses and accommodate them to the needs of capital. Whilst it seems foolish to deny the powerful impact of certain heavily promoted images, ideals and themes, such accounts reify and homogenize popular culture" (p. 13). Popular culture has a clear influence on life, especially for teenagers who are constantly exposed to it, either directly or through the influence of their peers.

Considering and using the current context as an example, social media seems to dictate and influence what people, especially young individuals, consume, as it not only influences their consumerism but also their identity. Pop culture has an important place

among social media and other streaming platforms. One clear example of how music is now consumed is related to records and how they are now an artifact for collectors. This is an outstanding contrast with younger listeners who now opt for digital material, which also suggests something about the ephemeral effect of music in the current context.

Most young learners who are starting to define who they are do not want to be singled out, therefore, they tend to feel the need to consume what is current to fit in with the rest of their peers. Among their social group, teenagers tend to exchange information about what is mainstream or popular, an example of this could be Spotify playlists with trending tracks and how teenagers share them among each other, ultimately determining what is worth listening to in their groups.

Several factors determine the way music is appreciated, Domoney (1993) proposes that individuals can rate or perceive music as important or very important according to variables such as “danceability”. He also mentions other aspects like as if lexis is relatable to the listener. Signification or even the influence of their peers are also mentioned as an influence on the way individuals rate music. The influence of mass media and their streaming of music can also be determined by the music people consume.

Platforms like Spotify, YouTube, or Apple Music dictate trends, and most popular tracks are often displayed for people to listen to. As a result of these factors, the potential of homogenized popular culture is more tangible, and the younger the listener is, the easier he or she will be persuaded, even if some appear reluctant to admit to this influence. In the current context in which globalization and technology have connected most of the population, and information is easily shared, individuals are constantly told what to listen to and what they should aspire to be.

This sense of immediateness and the need to stay updated seems to have affected music too. The way music is produced and consumed in the present is a clear example of this immediateness. Some musicians successfully manage to become popular without recording an album, as was the paradigm in the near past (roughly, the period spanning 1960 to the early 2000's): singles and collaborations suffice. This illustrates how music is consumed in the current context: as quickly as trends on social media dictate.

Since popular culture has been described as influential and ever present in teenagers' lives, and how it is embedded into our everyday life and choices, I will now focus on discussing the elements that make pop music a teddy-bear-in-the-ear (Murphey, 1985). To this extent, Murphey alludes to pop music's simple and affective language, which suggests that pop music is easy to be heard and therefore considered harmless. It seems that pop is made to be liked and ever-present in radio stations or media. Something so common and advertised is hardly regarded as dangerous or problematic. This "harmless" appearance makes it even more approachable.

These traits in pop music make it situational and it "allows song to happen whenever and wherever they are heard" (Murphey, 1985, p. 772), that accessibility makes it an easy choice when it comes to music. The vague references in pop music enable learners to appropriate them by filling them with their experiences and ideas and therefore understand and perceive them according to their context. Thus, discourse in music is also a key element for the appropriation and signification of songs by listeners. Musical discourse and its influence on perceptions will be explored in the following section.

2.4 Musical discourse

In addition to the last section, it is essential to discuss musical discourse in pop music. Since musical discourse considers different elements, I will first explain what musical discourse is in broad terms and then the elements that are part of it. According to Roy (2010), "musical discourse cannot be reduced to the music itself" (p. 15), that is why when we speak of musical discourse, we have to consider several different elements involved. It is suggested by Bradby (2003) that "the analysis of discourse has been applied in three ways to popular music: in the study of song lyrics as performed language, in the description of discourses on or about music, and in the analysis of music as discourses" (p. 67). Therefore, lyrics are a crucial element when it comes to musical discourse, since they convey meaning on their own, just like music.

One of the most outstanding elements of music discourse, that is of interest within my study, was the use of lyrics. The relevance of lyrics within music, especially pop music, is addressed by Watanabe et al. (2016) who claim that lyrics are an important element of

popular music since they convey different discourses that are later interpreted by the listener. Hence, lyrics will play an important role, not only in signification but also in the preference of the listener. Lyrics can determine whether a person likes a song, whether the person relates to the message, or even send out a message the listener cannot convey on their own and will then influence in the reception and likeability.

Lyrics not only make a song “singable” or catchy. They hold meaning and they can activate an individual’s schema or affective filters. In the following section, the importance of lyrics in pop music and their relevance within this research will be discussed.

2.4.1 Lyrics

The relevance of lyrics within this research is considered, as activities applied during data collection focused on them. Lyrics are also fundamental among semantics as well. According to Fang *et al* (2017), “lyrics play an important role in the semantics and the structure of many pieces of music” (p. 464) and as part of their role, one of the main qualities of semantics in music is their lack of specific references. As discussed in previous sections, lyrics do not necessarily refer to fixed subjects, and their meaning is assigned by the listener.

Because of its general content, pop music does not require previous cultural baggage from the listener, as the discourse is immediate and the lyrics tend to lack specialized language. This immediateness allows people to easily relate, as Aleshinskaya (2013) states:

Song lyrics are typically characterized by the lack of specialized language lexemes due to their general-topic content, not related to the professional side of musical life. Song lyrics are a completed musical product, and represent the ‘professional – non-professional’ type of communication [...] The qualitative analysis of 129 pop, rock and rap song lyrics from the Billboard charts identified their main tendency to avoid specialized language vocabulary due to their general-topic, non-professional content. (p. 434)

Pop music is easy to be heard, as mentioned in the previous sections, and the avoidance of specialized language and general topics used in lyrics seem to correspond as well. Pop music is available to the listener as its lyrics are easy to be understood as most of

the lexis featured in these songs are repetitive and therefore easy to remember. Except for explicit cultural references, popular music genres mostly feature lyrics that are related to universal topics like emotions, common places, and struggles that most people can identify with.

For adolescents, to find lexis that they relate to or that they feel they can express their emotions with is easy. Most of these words are familiar to them or related to their context, therefore, young listeners tend to perceive them as a means of self-expression. As suggested by Murphey (1995) lyrics fall into the category of conversational discourse, song lyrics being a non-professional type of communication seem to confirm this claim. In line with this, the identity struggle previously discussed show how individuals appropriate songs as they assign their meaning, also suggests lyrics are used as a way of communication. In addition, Watanabe et al. (2016) state that lyrics “provide an effective means to express the message and emotion of music. Similar to prose text, lyrics are a discourse” (p. 1959), which helps the listener link them with previous experiences or ultimately, relate to the message or emotions it conveys.

Lyrics hold meaning and discourse, they communicate ideas, intentions, emotions, beliefs, values, among others. Therefore, they were considered key in this study, as the participants were teenagers who tend to use music as a way of expressing their feelings or identity. Also, to consider lyrics is necessary, since they were used as part of the music activities conducted in this research.

However, lyrics have particular characteristics that fulfill a purpose or an intention, according to Austin et al. (2010) lyrics have their particularities and properties. Among these properties, frequent repetition of identical phrases or similar ones is present. As well as extensive use of rhyme and refrain. One of the most outstanding properties in lyrics are cohesion and coherence. This refers to how lyrics “stick” to individuals, in this case, young individuals and the linguistic features that are involved. Since linguistic features play a significant role in the music choices young individuals make, the concepts of cohesion and coherence in pop music lyrics and the linguistic features that are involved in them will be explored in the following section.

2.4.2 Cohesion and coherence

Repeated hearings, mainstream culture, and elements in music influence directly on people's choices, especially on young individuals and the way they perceive and signify music. Cohesion and coherence play a major role in semantics and signification. As Johnson (1982) states, individuals can recognize if a text is about a specific topic because of the processing of cohesive elements in the text, in this case, lyrics. Cohesion holds lyrics together and the cohesive properties in a text express continuity among the whole text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion in nature represents a grammatical and lexical relationship within the text, however, for lyrics, the individuals must establish the necessary connections between words and meaning. As Brown and Yule (1983) point out, the source of cohesion is outside the lyrics themselves, since it is up to the listener to generate the meaning. In this sense, lyrics will only represent what the listener decides them to.

In the context of a classroom, lyrics can be used for different purposes and activities: to fill in the blank, to recognize grammatical structure patterns or, as used in this study, they can also be used to be interpreted through figurative language activities. Regardless of the purpose of activities with lyrics, we know that each student can perceive songs differently. They can either interpret meaning differently, enjoy or dislike the activity based on their perception of it. That is when coherence and its role among meaning become fundamental, and in this sense Boon (2005) notes that:

The reader expects meaning to be contained within the 'text-as-presented' and actively seeks to establish the necessary connections between words supplying the information necessary to generate meanings and interpretations for him or her. In this respect, lexical cohesion is created by the text's coherence as an effect of the reader's particular interpretation of that text. (p. 132)

In this sense, lyrics are not only central for discourse, but they are important for the listener who will receive the message and assign meaning to it, which will ultimately influence the perception of the listener. As part of the interpretation of lyrics, I will discuss the role of schemata in the following section.

2.4.3 Schema and lyrics

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) acknowledge that content schemata is concerned with the particular background knowledge of the individual. This is related to the specific content area in which formal schemata is related to the expectations and knowledge individuals hold. A simple example could be how just by reading the title of a song, the schemata of an individual is triggered and their own experiences determine the meaning it holds for them.

As I discussed in the previous section, cohesion leads or guides individuals by holding a text -in this case, lyrics- together, while coherence is only achieved by the link to individuals' schemata (Boon, 2005). These schemata contain the background knowledge that is needed to understand what the lyrics communicate. Therefore, we can note that schema is activated when people make connections or references regarding the information they are receiving. As Carrell (1988) claims, individuals substitute the closest schema they possess, and they try to relate the information received from the lyrics to it, regardless of the subjectivity of interpretation and in this case more specifically, the subjectivity of individuals' schemata. A conclusion of this chapter will be provided in the following section.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the different factors that shape individuals' signification of music. For this chapter and this study, I also mentioned how interpreting music is relevant since people own different backgrounds and schema, which influences the way individuals experience music. I also acknowledge how, even though each individual has a different schema, individuals are constantly exposed to institutions such as mainstream culture and its power relationships which influence their choices and the way they live or perceive the world around them.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology followed while conducting this research. It describes the qualitative paradigm as well as outlines the data collection techniques, setting, participants, ethics, positionality, data analysis, analytical framework, and conclusion.

3.2 Research question and objective

As part of the objectives of this study, I aimed to explore what the perceptions of my participants were regarding the way they experienced music in the English classroom. At first, I expected to find positive feedback from all the students, but the outcome differed from that. The question this research aimed to answer was:

What is the role of schema and music semantics on students' perceptions regarding the use of music in the English classroom?

To understand the participants' perceptions, knowing the factors that influenced them and how these affect their experience regarding music for English learning was essential. Another aim behind the answer to this question was to raise awareness on how the design of activities and choice of materials can change the way learners experience work inside the EFL classroom. The paradigm and methodology followed to answer this question are presented in the following sections.

3.3 Qualitative paradigm

Given the nature of this research and its focus on perceptions, it was necessary to choose a paradigm that would allow me to approach the “human” side of how participants experienced this research. It was significant for me to voice the feelings, actions, and meanings from my participants for them to be heard (Denzin, 1989). Since the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Mack et al., 2005) I decided that for this to follow a qualitative paradigm was appropriate.

A qualitative approach was the most suitable for my research. The qualitative paradigm allows providing information about the “human” side of an issue (Mack et al., 2005) which was one of the main aims of this research. Regarding my research stance, I acknowledge that I do see one truth: music is a useful pedagogical tool within the classroom. But I also look for a partial truth in which I aim to shed light on the classroom where music is used as a learning tool but how it is perceived differently by every member of it.

One of the main aims of this research was to seek the reasons behind why perception is either positive or negative and to achieve that, it was necessary to hear from my participants and their experiences. Therefore, a qualitative paradigm was taken into consideration and followed through this study, as well the concept of everyday culture which will be explored in the following section.

3.4 Phenomenology and everyday culture

The method chosen to conduct this study is an everyday culture grounded in phenomenology. Everyday culture refers to the apparent insignificance of the activities followed by individuals daily. As stated by Blanchot and Hanson (1987), every day has the essential trait of allowing no hold. Everydayness is the perceived as the first in the sense that one has always looked past it: we never see everydayness for the first time but we encounter it all the time. This concept refers to banal ordinary and repetitive activities, like a song in the classroom, as this research intended.

As part of the research, activities aim to let a common activity within language classrooms, such as using music in the classroom, reveal extraordinary in the ordinary (Martin, 2003). To achieve that, I focused on bracketing, which refers to an effort of mitigating any unacknowledged preconceptions on the research by the researcher. This was taken into consideration given the fact that my role within this study was that of a researcher but also the teacher of my participants, therefore, to remain as objective as possible and to keep the rigor of this project was imperative. In this regard, Tufford and Newman (2010) claim that:

Given the sometimes close relationship between the researcher and the research topic that may both precede and develop during the process of qualitative research, bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material [...] it also facilitates the researcher reaching deeper levels of reflection across all stages of qualitative research. (p. 81)

In this sense, bracketing would allow me to draw the difference between being and the act of being through modern phenomenology. First, it was vital to understand the “human side” in this research. As suggested by Smith (2006), phenomenology is the study of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. To understand and analyze the perceptions of my participants, phenomenology allowed me to look at their first-person point of view.

Since this research looked forward to understanding the participants’ perceptions, focusing on the philosophical theory of mind on intentionality, or mental representation, as it lays a foundation for empirical studies of mind in cognitive science was needed. To explore those views and mental representations, to know what music represented to them, to understand why music was fun for some and boring for others was necessary. It was crucial to acknowledge not only whether they liked the experience or not but the reason behind that attitude. Thus, phenomenology, which understands mental representations and personal experience was the most suitable for this study.

In this study, phenomenology is approached towards a post-positivist direction, creating an argument for everyday culture as a place. Phenomenology is a complex set of ideas associated with the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, that enables a genuine manner of representing the realities that participants experience (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). For this research, everyday culture is also part of the method, nevertheless, it is important to address the reason why it was included as part of the method. Everyday culture gives what appears to be devoid, an analysis of power, rules, norms, and assumptions. For this study, everyday culture grounded in phenomenology is approached, which allowed me to take an ordinary activity, like a song in the classroom, and test its influence on my participants’ motivation and perceptions.

To implement a different activity aimed to move out of what was ordinary in my classroom, in which content was approached traditionally, and provide my students with the approach that worked for me as a beginner. It was through their feedback cards that it became evident that this break in routine was not necessarily accepted by everyone, but that diversity among perceptions also meant something. To address how this data was collected, a brief description of the data techniques is introduced in the following section.

3.5 Data collection techniques

To conduct this research, the techniques were chosen to know as much as possible from my participants' perceptions. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2000), the researcher needs to consider the mode of data analysis to be employed and how this will enhance the outcome. Therefore, the data collection techniques used in this study were classroom bucket cards on activities featuring lyrics and a field journal. The activities featuring music used within this study are presented in the following section.

3.5.1 Activities featuring lyrics

These activities served as a stimulus for participants to provide feedback and gather data. The way music was approached in the classroom was through lyrics as the subject for the session was literature and the topic was figurative language. Lyrics were an appropriate choice for this task, as they represented something relatable to the students and were a more pop culture-oriented text. As opposed to a classic or academic text that could be perceived as difficult -out of prejudice- and distant from their everyday context and immediate references, a pop song was chosen to exert an effect of identification and openness.

Song selection for the first activity was based on the participants' opinions about music. To figure out what songs could be a part of their interest, a composition task was assigned to them in which they had to write about music, more specifically about their favorite song and the reasons why it was their favorite. Students were told they could decline from writing about their favorite song in case they did not have one. Furthermore, students were allowed to avoid choosing a song in the case that they did not like music at all. Either

option they chose they were asked to elaborate on either answer and the reasons why they did or did not choose one.

This task was used as a warm-up activity that would allow me to know more about their taste in music but also to get a clearer idea of what music meant to them (or the degree of relevance that music had in their lives). Students had to share their composition with the rest of the class and as they shared this information, I listened to them and wrote down the titles and interpreters of each song they mentioned. Other key information like the reasons why they liked these songs was written down as well. The reason to do this was to gather keywords that could be insightful as to why my participants made these choices and what these songs represented to them.

As mentioned before, music selection for the first activity was based on the song titles that students repeated the most in the assignment about their favorite song. To start with this exercise, printed lyrics of the song were handed to the students and they were asked to highlight any figurative language example they could find (metaphor, simile, hyperbole, or personification). Each type of the latter had a specific color that students had to use when identifying the examples (Appendix B). This first activity was carried out in teams, so students could feel relaxed and help each other in case they needed to. After finishing the activity, students were allowed to listen to the song and share their findings with the rest of the class so they could compare and contrast their answers.

The second time around the song was not assigned. Instead, the students worked on their music. Although this activity followed the same structure and students had to identify the figurative language the same way they did in the first activity, they had to do it by themselves. This time, students used their personal computers and were allowed to wear headphones and listen to the song as they worked. By the end of the activity, students were encouraged to share some examples of figurative language that they found within the lyrics.

As part of these activities, participants were also asked to provide an interpretation of the figurative language examples found. After each activity, students would elaborate on a brief interpretation in which they would explain the metaphor behind each example, especially with the last activity, students had the opportunity to express how and why the

song they chose represented something to them. The figurative language examples they found allowed them to express themselves as the use of lyrics to convey these ideas lower their emotional filter. The format used to provide their feedback on the activities is described in the following section.

3.5.2 Classroom bucket cards

Since the purpose of this research was to investigate students' perceptions, it was necessary to have their feedback on the activities that were implemented. To obtain their feedback, designing a technique that was easy for the participants to access was fundamental. Therefore, a simple format including questions to guide students was provided. Facilitating participants with open-ended questions served to guide them yet they could express their ideas freely. As suggested by Guest et al. (2013), open-ended questions "allow research participants to talk about a topic in their own words, free of the constraints imposed by fixed-response questions" (p. 11) hence, given the age of the participants, I implemented what I called "bucket cards" (Appendix C).

The bucket cards served as an adapted form of written feedback to fit in the research model for this study. This idea emerged to adjust to working with younger students and keep their privacy during the data collection. The consideration regarding this technique is related to the specific characteristics of my participants and the setting and the importance of understanding and considering them. As Devers et al. (2000) explain:

Further specification of the research design requires the researcher to understand and consider the unique characteristics of specific research subjects and the settings in which they are located. In essence, the researcher must make the design more concrete by developing a sampling frame [...] sampling strategies are designed to enhance understandings of selected individuals or groups' experience(s). (p. 264)

The purpose behind this approach was that of providing participants according to their characteristics and particular needs, with a simple format to follow, in which they could provide specific data and any information they felt was important. This approach would also

maintain students' anonymity in case they preferred not to provide their names and as they could hand in their cards by themselves.

To obtain the participants' feedback, the students were provided with pieces of paper (bucket cards) in which they wrote down their opinion about the music activities (as shown in Image 1). Some samples or suggestions were provided to the students so they could fill out with their answers, these questions were only provided as suggestions or examples to guide the students through the activity.

Since this was a different activity than the regular tasks done during class, students needed to be guided through it, always respecting their anonymity and freedom to write or not to write at all. Some of the suggestions provided for them to express their opinion were: write something you liked, something you did not like, or they could simply write down anything they felt was valuable to share about them. The following is an example of the participants' cards:

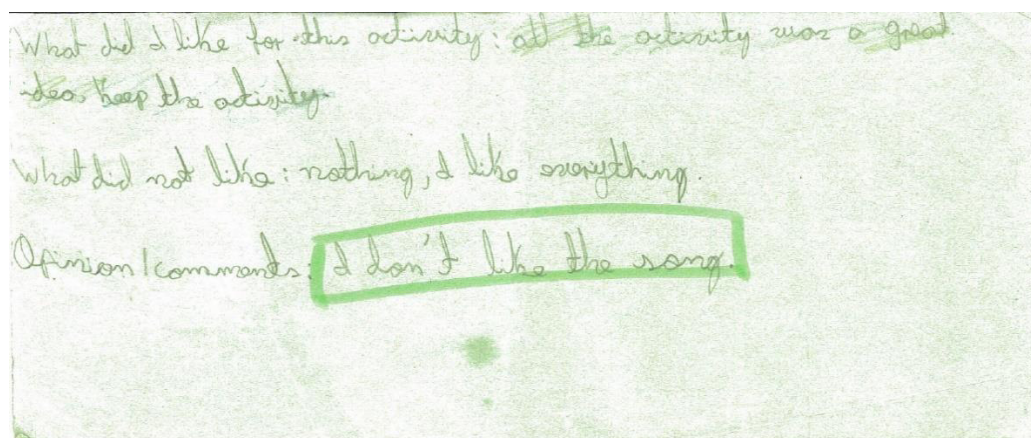


Image 1. An example of a feedback card written by a participant.

Once the students worked on their feedback cards, they had to turn them in. A friendly and trusting environment was considered for the participants to hand in their cards without feeling intimidated by anybody, from their peers to the researcher (me, their teacher). Due to this relation between student-teacher, I made clear that participants were not expected to provide specific answers, so they were certain that the task could not affect their grades or their performance as students.

Although this transparency regarding the activities was clearly stated from the beginning, it was coherent to find a system in which they could share their thoughts confidently. Therefore, the “bucket” or box was set for the students to put in their feedback cards. This box was placed on the back of the classroom and each student was able to turn it in after the activity with no particular order.

Even if the researcher was also their teacher, and the environment in the classroom was open and relaxed, I was familiar with their characteristics as a group. According to their age and my experience working with teenagers, it was certain that it was important for them to feel comfortable and not judged. This technique was implemented twice, according to the two music activities done. Once class was dismissed and the classroom was empty, all the cards were gathered, sorted out, and coded. As part of the instruments used to carry out this study, the importance of using a field journal is discussed in the following section.

3.5.3 Field journal

It is a common recommendation in social research that the researcher keeps a journal, as Dörnyei (2007) states “in qualitative research almost anything can be perceived as potential data, and there is no reason why the researcher's field notes, real-time comments, memos and annotations would be exceptions” (p. 160). In line with this, keeping a journal was regarded as beneficial for the research. Since observation allows the researcher to look at what takes place in situ (Patton, 1990) a journal would later help make sense of the information obtained and triangulate between the data provided by the participants and my observations.

To enhance and gather as much information as possible and since I was the teacher of the participants, I decided to conduct the activities myself and become an active participant in this research, thus a journal with my observations (Appendix D) seemed necessary. The importance of observation was acknowledged since it does not just involve vision: it includes all senses. Observation also involves the processing of the data, as Fox (1998) suggests it involves the interpretation of how we perceive or sense the data and how our perception involves information processing, which allows raw data to be organized into something that can be organized and understood.

To understand my participants' experience better, it was critical to observe them as they worked on the music activities. Feedback cards were their first-person point of view, but many other factors would also provide information from their experience. Writing down a field journal allowed me to notice as much as possible during the activities: from students' gestures and body language or any verbal comments they would make at the moment, to any questions they could ask. In Image 2 some examples of these gestures or verbal comments are shown. In this example, I give a detailed description of how some students reacted when they heard about the activity:

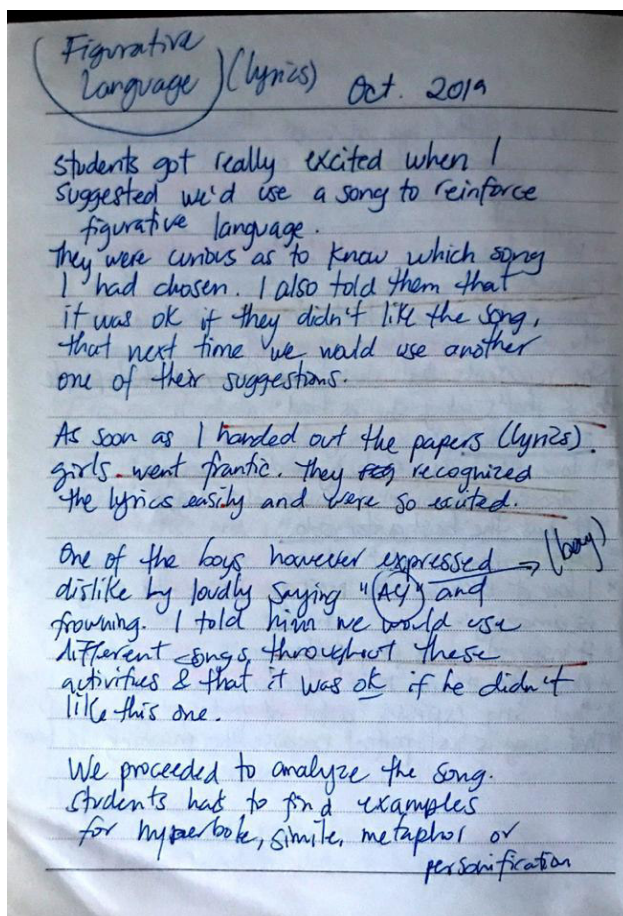


Image 2. An example of one of the journal entries

The journal also allowed me to triangulate the observation notes with the participants' perceptions and to gather as much information as possible to build a thick description of the

data. To know more about the characteristics of the setting and participants, both are explored in the following section.

3.6 Setting and participants

This research was conducted at a private bilingual school founded in 1999 in León, Guanajuato. This school is well known in León for its proficient English-speaking students a high percentage of them get Cambridge certifications since fourth grade. Their English program features the following subjects: spelling, vocabulary, grammar, social studies, science, oral reading, reading comprehension, and math. This school works with a bilingual system, in which every grade is divided into two groups. Their program follows a 50:50 allocation of the language in which students spend half of the day working for content classes in Spanish and the other half in English.

Students have a total of 12 and half hours of English a week (around two and a half per day) in which they are taught content classes in English. This school claims to follow a constructivist teaching model in which students are the center of the classroom, as constructivism considers the learner as an active agent in the process of knowledge acquisition (Bada & Olesgun, 2015). Therefore, students are encouraged to make sense of the world around them and build their knowledge as active members of the classroom.

The number of participants was 33 in total, 16 females and 17 males, between the ages of 11 and 12 years old. Most of the participants have studied in the school for most of the primary school. All of them are proficient and able to speak English. One of the school's language policies is for students to speak English at all times with the English teachers. Since they follow an immersion program in which students not only switch teachers per each language but also classrooms, it is encouraged and demanded that they always communicate in English with their English teacher. The ethics for this research are discussed in the following section.

3.7 Ethics

Before conducting this research, it was important to contact the gatekeeper and get access. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2000) access to the institution or organization where

the research is to be conducted and acceptance by those whose permission was needed before embarking on the research was pivotal.

To gain access to the school where this research was conducted, the principal of the school was contacted. A meeting was scheduled with her to present the proposal formally, as well as the purposes and objectives of this project. Since it was necessary to inform participants what was to be carried out with the information they provided, as well as to be honest about the purpose of the study and the conditions of the research (Cohen et al., 2000), all the ethical considerations were discussed. I also explained how all data collected was going to be handled and protected, as both the institution and the participants' identity, were requested to remain anonymous.

The institution agreed to conduct a meeting with the parents of the participants to explain the project and provide them with the consent forms (see Appendix A). It was fundamental to speak about the ethical considerations since the participants were all underage. Therefore, to assure that parents knew that the researcher was aware of the responsibility was needed, not only in search of knowledge and quest for the truth but also to preserve participants' dignity as human beings (Cohen et al., 2000). For that reason, names and any personal information were not be provided. As stated in the consent forms, participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also allowed to request any information and to ask any questions they had during the conduction of this research. My positionality within this study is discussed in the following section.

3.7.1 Positionality

As part of the ethics and the qualitative nature that this study follows, my positionality among this research needs to be stated. Since I, the researcher, worked at the institution in which this study was carried out, I felt it was pertinent to address the fact that I am both a participant and observer in this study. I am a participant and a facilitator, as well as a reconstructionist of my participants' voices. As previously stated, this research was conducted with my students, and my role as their teacher impacted the involvement I had during this project. Thus, my positionality regarding this research is that I am a participant and observer. In this sense, by being a participant observer I could not only conduct the study,

but I could also have a fair perspective of my students' attitudes while working on the music activities. The latter is a result of my familiarity with participants' behavior and performance inside the classroom. In consequence, I worked as a participant and as a facilitator, as well as a multivocal reconstructionist of my participants' voices.

By being involved in the research and conducting it myself, I was able to fully get involved and in touch with the participants and the data, while maintaining an objective position. To become an active participant during this research was regarded as another strength of observation, as "observing individual and group behavior in its natural context and participating in that context can generate insights that other forms of research cannot" (Guest et al., 2013, p. 11). Since I worked with my participants every day, to interpret their reactions and attitudes regarding the activities by observing their gestures, behavior, and even their oral expressions was feasible.

The latter was possible by creating a friendly environment before the study and as a result of the daily routine and dynamics of the classroom, in which they could express their opinions anonymously without any repercussions. This also allowed me to get to know them and their needs better, as well as their perception of the music in the classroom. As part of this study, all the collected data were categorized and analyzed. In the following section, the importance of data analysis is discussed.

3.8 Data analysis

In this section, I will discuss the importance of data analysis. As suggested by Basit (2003) "throughout the analysis, researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what they have studied and to continually refine their interpretations" (p. 143). Therefore, for my research, I decided that for the data analysis I would use thick description. Data was organized into themes and each theme will be written using this rhetorical technique.

Thick description is a part of what is called thematic analysis. Thick description can be used to describe behavior and it involves understanding the context in which the research is taking place. What was intended to be achieved with thick description, as suggested by Ponterotto (2006) was to present detail, context, and emotion observed during the

implementation of the music activities in the classroom. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into an experience. It also describes the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals (Denzin, 1989). To make sense of the data and the perceptions of the participants, data were organized into themes and analyzed using a thick description.

For me to be able to categorize the data into themes, I decided to code each signal word with different colors, depending on the word and what it was alluding to (an emotion, like or dislike). In the following section, I will describe how I coded and categorized the emerging themes.

3.9 Coding

Coding is one of the most significant steps taken during the analysis of the data. It helps organize and make sense of the textual data. As Basit (2003) points out:

coding or categorizing the data has an important role in analysis. It involves subdividing the data as well as assigning categories (Dey, 1993). Codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to chunks of varying-sized words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. (p. 144).

In that sense, coding is an important step in data analysis, since it allows the researcher to identify the emerging themes, through these units of meaning: words, sentences, or larger blocks of texts from my participants. More importantly, coding allows the researcher to communicate and connect with the data, therefore I decided to code the information manually. The reason for me to do this was to get a full comprehension. As suggested by Basit (2003), this manual categorization allows the researcher to understand the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data.

Therefore, color codes were assigned to the text gathered from my participants' feedback papers to structure the text. As suggested by Gläser and Laudel (2013) this coding in the text will usually consist of paragraphs that characterize narrative units. Therefore, I

divided data into different categories, according to the ones suggested in the cards provided to the participants. These categories related to the words found in the feedback that would signal like, dislike or emotions. Each category was assigned a different color: pink for emotions, green for dislike, and blue for like (Table 2).

Table 2

Coding

Code	Theme/Description
pink	Emotions
green	Like
blue	Dislike
yellow	Neutral
BB#, BA#, GB#, GA#	Gender (B: boy, A: girl), group (A or B), number of samples.

Some other aspects such as lyrics were also addressed with yellow (as shown in Images 3 and 4). According to what they like, they did not like and their emotions or thoughts, either negative or positive, shared in their feedback.

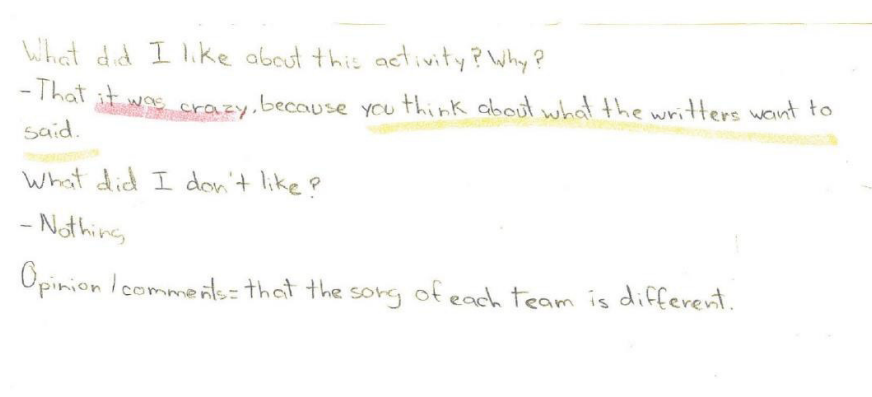


Image 3. An example of a feedback card manually coded.

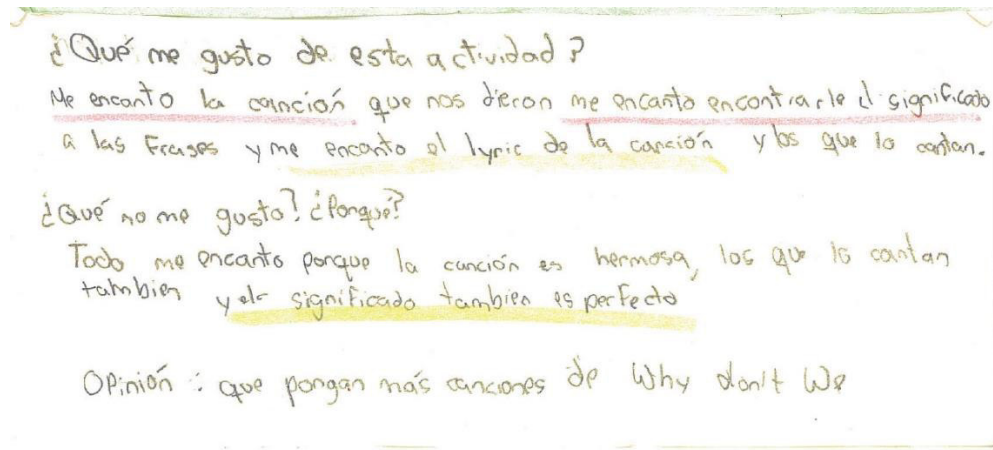


Image 4. An example of a feedback card manually coded.

These feedback cards from the students illustrate the way data was coded using different colors to identify and categorize themes. A conclusion for this chapter is presented in the following section.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, information regarding the methodology followed throughout this research was provided. The approach, method, and an overview of my positionality and ethical guidelines for this research were also presented. Data collection techniques were explained as well as the data analysis. The reason why these instruments were chosen for this study was also and how they allowed me to gather useful information to meet my purposes was explored more in-depth as well. Finally, some preliminary data and insightful information started to come up as the feedback of the participants was collected and a sample of my observation notes was featured in this chapter. In the next chapter, the analysis of the data is presented.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain and discuss the information gathered from the data collected. Then, I will present the findings of this study. For this research, different activities featuring music were carried out at a private bilingual school in León, Guanajuato, within the English classroom and among sixth graders. Perceptions regarding these activities were provided by the participants and will be addressed and analyzed in the following sections of this chapter.

4.2 Data analysis

After gathering the data, it was categorized according to the emerging keywords that would later become the themes for this analysis. As I revised the students' feedback, words related to emotions, mood, and affective relationships were grouped to create the categories. The three main themes that emerged were emotions, self-expression, and break from everydayness. The themes will be discussed in the following sections. I will use metaphors provided by the participants themselves, within their feedback cards, to address these themes. These metaphors relate to the themes that emerged from the participants' perceptions and illustrate what the music used in the classroom meant to them at that moment. In the following section participants' emotions regarding music are explored.

4.2.1 “It makes me feel I can do whatever I want”

The above quote refers to the way the students feel about music and how they experience it. As the data was categorized and analyzed, statements related to feeling better were found. As found throughout their feedback, most of the students linked music to both mental and emotional states. When they were asked to write a composition about their favorite song and what that song meant to them, data showed that music influenced their mood. According to the participants' statements, they did feel music helped them by making them “feel better”:

When I hear it, I start to feel better and comfort myself. (GB03)

It helps me feel better and stronger. (BB05)

It makes me feel I can do whatever I want. (BA011)

These statements suggest that music influences participants' emotional and mental states. Verbs such as 'feel' are repeated through these excerpts and are followed by words like 'better' or 'stronger' that denote a sense of joy and positive feelings. Some participants also stated that they felt they could do whatever they wanted whenever they heard those songs. In this sense, they probably referred to music as a means of freedom, perhaps not literally but mentally they feel empowered and happy when listening to those particular tracks.

These feelings of freedom and empowerment could be linked to motivation, in the sense that music is not only heard but felt and individuals tend to assign a particular meaning to it. As previously discussed, meaning is assigned by each individual, and that interpretation is linked to any particular situation that person is going through or has experienced before in their life. Therefore, one could infer music can impact motivation.

The examples previously provided show the importance music has among the participants' moods, which could open the door to the affective factors related to motivation. Krashen (1982) proposes that people acquire language through both objective and affective factors. This statement could be enhanced by the idea of how the interests of each person serves as motivation since they influence the perception they form around something.

In this case, those interests might have influenced the motivation students had to accomplish these activities. Perhaps they even determined whether or not they learned something from working on the activities. As a result of this, the perception students most likely have towards a certain activity, in this particular case the use of music in the EFL classroom can influence their attitude or motivation towards classroom work.

According to the analyzed data, music affects participants' emotional state and therefore their motivation to work. Since their mood is improved as participants listened to music in the classroom, not only in the background but also as part of the learning activities, they expressed the following:

I feel relaxed because I got to hear music (GA01)

I feel very good, comfortable. (BA04)

Very happy and excited because I like to hear music. (GA03)

I loved it too because we had fun and learnt at the same time. (GA04)

I feel good of listening my favorite song in here. (GA05)

In these excerpts, participants refer to their feelings regarding the use of music in class that day. Some of them expressed experiencing good feelings, such as comfort or relaxation. Some others, however, expressed excitement which can also be regarded as a favorable emotion. The last excerpt illustrates how positive perceptions are linked to each individual's particular background, as this participant stated that she felt good because the song chosen for the activity was her favorite.

The latter affected the student's perception of the activity and her motivation to work. As proposed by Ranjbar and Narafshan (2016), "when students are motivated to learn, they try harder to understand the material and thereby learn more deeply, resulting in a better ability to transfer what they have learned to new situations" (p. 13). On that account, it was clear that students' involvement in the activity was linked to motivation, and this was ultimately linked to the song and whether they liked it or not. Those students who liked the song were engaged throughout the activity, unlike those who did not like it and thus did not feel as motivated.

Students who regarded the first activity as interesting and motivational performed satisfactorily and showed to be receptive. This positive perception enabled them to have a better understanding of the activity, which helped them replicate what was learned this first time during the second activity. Accordingly, most students expressed through their statements that their internal disposition was improved by using music within the classroom.

The attitude of the participants who were engaged during the activity was forward-looking to working with music and applying what they had previously learned during class, but now in a way that was relevant to them (especially to those who enjoyed that type of music and most specifically, that song). This response seems linked to affective filters, as Oxford (1996) points out the affective side of a student is probably one of the biggest

influences on motivation regarding language learning success or failure. Without an encouraging emotion and disposition, students might struggle to acquire knowledge.

If music can boost pupils' encouragement and interest, it can also influence positively their acquisition process. As the previous excerpts showed, students who felt their mood improved because of the music in class regarded the activity as exciting and therefore their interest increased which ultimately incited them to work. It can be concluded that music stimulated students and helped them engage and focus. Data gathered from my field journal showed that students were truly engaged with the activity:

Students seem calm. This is the first class, around 8 o'clock in the morning, however, they seem happy and start working right away. Some put their headphones on and start listening. They all seem relaxed; they are so quiet and focused. It is so peaceful around the classroom, so unlikely for these groups. I see some of them smile. Some look so concentrated and engaged.
(Students' music choice - 11/19)

As shown in the data, music lowered anxiety as students showed openness and disposition. In this sense, music can be used as a tool for students to focus and it can also enhance learner involvement. Students tend to feel relaxed and in a good mood while working, which engages and allows them to focus on the task. A friendly and trusting atmosphere in the classroom is one of the most beneficial factors when it comes to motivation in language learning.

However, some students did not perceive the activity as something positive or enjoyable. Music selection played an important part since it directly affects students' perception of the activity. Some students expressed disliking not the activity, but the music (Appendix C), which directly affected their experience:

I don't like the song. (BB07)

The song was so slow and boring. (BB08)

I hate [name of the band]. I like nothing. It is a bad activity. (BB08)

These excerpts show how the chosen song for the activity affected the appreciation of some students. Unlike those who liked the song or the interpreter, some participants explicitly rejected the activity and regarded it as bad. This disapproval was not related to the activity *per se* but directly linked to the music choice. Therefore, it became evident that another factor influencing student motivation is the perceived value of the activity.

If the activity does not suit the students' idea of what is "good" -in this case regarding the music selection, or what they like- they might show a negative reaction. It was clear that students who did not relate to or enjoy the song used for the activity did not enjoy the activity at all. This finding allowed me to realize how music was not something that could engage or motivate every student in my class, which was something that I was not expecting when I started working on this research.

After finding negative feedback among my participants' perceptions, I became aware of the relevance of negative perceptions, and instead of overlooking them, I considered they also provided useful information. I realized that, sometimes, acknowledging the negative sheds light on outstanding aspects as well. The negative feedback allowed me to consider aspects that were not regarded at the beginning of this research, but it was evident that acknowledging the negative was needed.

The following piece of data was gathered from my field journal. This entry is from the observation of the first activity in which the song was chosen and assigned according to the suggestions from the students (the majority, but not all the students liked the song). As I wrote in my field journal, one could see that music choice would affect the experience of the students:

It is around 10 in the morning, classroom is hectic as it usually is, children and I are working on a "Yellow Submarine" assembly and there are pieces of fabric, papers, paint and brushes everywhere. I ask students to gather together in groups. Students proceed to group and are curious as to know what activity we are about to work on. I have the lyrics printed and I ask them to wait for instructions. I start the activity with an opening review. I ask students about figurative language and ask them to provide examples. Then,

I explain the students that we are about to look for figurative language in the lyrics of a song. They seem enthused. They make noise, they start talking and asking questions. They are so curious as to which song it might be. From the beginning, the students show their enthusiasm towards a different activity. They seem even more excited once they find out the activity will feature music, and probably, music they know or enjoy. (Assigned song activity - 10/19)

At this point, all the group is expectant and curious about an activity that is out of the ordinary everyday activities of the classroom. Students participated and provided examples during the opening review routine; their energy was good. As positive and promising as this seemed at that point, the music selection was not presented yet, so speculation gathered students' attention, but this would change drastically once they found out the song they had to work with.

They begin to guess and want to find out: They start to guess, they speak to each other, some students suggest different songs. I explain that, the song that I chose was chosen out of the list of songs that some of them proposed. I also tell them that, this time we will use this one song but eventually, they will all get the chance to have their song picked. They seem to agree on this, or at least that is what they say. As soon as I handed out the papers (lyrics) girls went frantic. It was the song they expected, the band they love. Instantly, the girls who loved this band and song went from enthusiasm to absolutely love the activity: They (girls) recognized the lyrics right away and showed a lot of excitement. Some students do not seem so enthused. (Assigned song activity - 10/19)

Once the students knew the music chosen for this activity, reactions differed from one another. From this first activity, the music choice determined the reactions of the students from the beginning. People who were fond of this music genre (girls) showed great enthusiasm and they were eager to work on the activity. People who were not interested in this music group and this specific song were not as motivated. Some remained neutral, willing to work regardless because it was part of the activities for the day. Some students expressed total rejection for the activity, based as well on the music choice and even the

performers of the song. At this first stance, it was clear how perceptions can be affected so easily either positively or negatively:

One of them (boys), instantly expressed dislike by loudly saying “ay” and frowning... he explicitly stated he did not like the song and he did not like the band. One girl, however, after me having asked them to write their card/opinion immediately said “what if I didn’t like anything?” Such statement highly contrasted to some others made by other students. Some students said “what if I like everything?” (Assigned song activity - 11/19)

It became obvious that if the music was not interesting for the student, the enthusiasm for the activity could end. As Kao and Oxford (2014) suggest that “if the learning material is either not interesting or not readily available, the passion for learning might fade away quickly after any minor obstacle or environmental constraint” (p. 117). These situations a challenge when it comes to providing for every student’s likes or tastes. However, this can also be regarded as an opportunity to become more involved in students’ particular background and try different approaches with contents to which they can relate to:

After reading their perceptions’ cards, I started to notice certain patterns or common places [...] those who liked that band/song totally loved this activity. Unlike the others who thought it was bad just because of the music selection. (Assigned song activity - 10/19)

Acknowledging these differences among students is both a challenge and an opportunity. To consider this when designing activities that will ultimately influence their motivation was probably one of the most significant findings from conducting this research. As a teacher, I realized that I had to take into consideration both positive and negative feedback from my students to improve the activities.

Among those participants who did not like the activity because of the song, positive perceptions were also found. Some students, regardless of not liking the music, perceived the activity positively. In this sense, even though music selection was not among their likings,

the fact that they got to do a different activity inside the classroom remained a promising experience as it opened several possibilities for them. They expressed that:

I love music. I'll be very happy when we work with mine (song). (BA12)

I like music. It is not terrible, but it is not perfect. It was acceptable. (BA09)

The latter was then backed up with some information gathered from my journal. In which I described some of the attitudes I observed from the participants, who even if they did not like the song, were still enthused about working on a different activity and how it could potentially be modified next times with music they did enjoy. As found in the data gathered from my journal:

Some, even if they did not like the song, they thought it was a nice, fun activity and suggested to do it again. Students' interest, involvement, and even participation in learning can be encouraged through songs. The key might be to select music that suits students' needs, interests, and likes. Personalizing the activities might help even more. (Assigned song activity - 10/19)

To personalize the activities students needed to be given the freedom of choosing the song they wanted was determinant. This helped me realize how important it was for them to have a more active role within the classroom. By turning the classroom into a student-centered environment students can feel more encouraged to work and as a consequence, they could develop a more positive attitude towards activities in class.

To consider how these attitudes towards music and its use for learning were also influenced by the culture that is found among the contents of the songs and their particular background was also significant. Students are more likely to be attentive in the classroom, take assignments more seriously, or at least with more curiosity, as they are willing to achieve more if songs feature lyrics with something they knew or related to.

After concluding the first activity, in which the song was assigned and chosen by me, I decided that the following activity had to be designed to suit each students' tastes, in this case, featuring music that was meaningful to them. In this case, for the second activity, I allowed students to choose any music genre and any song they wanted because as explained

in the previous chapter, for this second exercise students were going to work individually with their choice of song.

This decision was based on Kao and Oxford's (2014) study that also suggests that "the learner initiates an analysis of the material by researching and deciphering the lyrics. That is why the learner must be interested in the learning material" (p. 118) thus, I considered that by students choosing their material (lyrics) to work with, they would perform differently. Their interest was there because now they were allowed to choose one song they liked on their own and I expected the results to be different from the previous activity, in which the song was imposed.

Since students were able to choose the music themselves, they showed excitement and commitment to the activity. Their attitudes were different from the beginning, now instead of being intrigued, they were most excited and enthused. As found in my field journal:

I start by explaining the activity, I tell them that, this time, they will get to choose the music they want. Some put their headphones on and start looking for their song. They all seem to be clear about the topic (figurative language) and confident about how to work on the task (they remember the way we worked previously on this). Some students finish the task, easily. (Students' music choice – 11/19)

This time, students seem confident and independent. Not only they are familiar with the task but they can replicate what they did during the first activity. This confidence and motivation are linked to their active role in choosing the material (music) they are going to work with. As students' motivation and focus is on a task they are enjoying, they perform satisfactorily and finish the activity without problems.

Some (students) struggle to find one song that they like and can also be useful for the task. Once time is up and everyone is finished, they are happy and enthused to share their examples. This group in particular like to voice their mind and opinion. (Students' music choice – 11/19)

The overall outcome of this second activity was satisfactory. Students were able to work on the task by themselves as they worked with content they liked. It was evident when they shared their examples that this different approach worked. The reason why this worked is that they had the opportunity to practice and reinforce the content learned in class by using it in something meaningful to them. The following excerpt from my journal (Appendix E) describes how most of the students' responses and performance during this second activity changed drastically:

I allowed students to share their examples. This time, students were not guided, they worked on the task on their own. They provided their examples, and we all discussed the possible meaning. After some suggestions, I would ask the students for their personal interpretation of the lyrics. (Students' music choice – 11/19)

Most students showed understanding of the topic and could work on the task without much guidance. Some of the difficulties they faced were regarding not finding many examples of figurative language in the song they chose, but that was the only struggle for this second activity. Through sharing their examples and opinions, they showed that they not only enjoyed the activity but also learned from it.

To conclude, it was evident that most students were enthused about using music in the classroom. Most of them expressed different emotions regarding songs and what they made them feel at a personal level. It was clear that participants were able to understand and signify music in a particular way, combining the musical stimulus and their background. Some students, however, expressed negative feelings towards the music used in the first activity; this was because of how the experience impacted their perception of the musical selection assigned by the teacher. Even if these students rejected and perceived the activity as bad, some expressed enthusiasm for doing something different while stating that the thing they did not specifically like was the song.

In contrast, for the second activity in which students were able to choose their lyrics to work with, the majority expressed feeling motivated and happy. This, alongside my observation notes, support how perceptions were affected by the music used in the activity

and how music was perceived either as good or bad because of each participant's background. Lyrics and music choice, therefore, were two crucial factors that determined most of the experiences of the participants. In the following section, both will be analyzed.

4.2.2 “Looking for my voice in others”

This refers to the relevance of lyrics and music choice for the activities since these two elements can play a crucial role in perceptions regarding music and what it means to the students. This is also related to how participants perceive music as a means of expressing their feelings, ideas, memories, or struggles.

Data showed that lyrics are a significant part of what students look for when listening to a song. This is because it helps them communicate feelings, emotions, and ideas they are not be able to communicate with their own words. In this sense, lyrics are perceived by the students as an important tool of expression. Several participants stated:

I sing it and I feel that I'm the author who wrote the song. (BA15)

I like it because of the lyrics. I think its message is to say that someone can be there for you. (BA12)

I love it because the message inside the song is amazing. (GA02)

I like all of that type of songs that give you something to reflect of what you're doing. (BB03)

These statements show that the students perceive the words in a song as a tool to voice their minds. As Palacios and Chapetón (2014) suggest, music in the classroom helps to free students' voices so that they can express their ideas, opinions, and feelings about the practices in which they are immersed. Ultimately, the ability to express ideas or to communicate is one of the most significant goals when learning, especially a language in which oral competency is expected. This is further confirmed as the students used mental relationships that correspond to the affective relationship they have towards the discourse in a song. Data showed that lyrics would not only engage students and make them feel related, but they also found them helpful to practice content learned during class related to figurative language:

Me encantó encontrarle el significado a las frases. El significado es perfecto.

(GA01)

I liked that we practiced los metaphor (sic), simile, hyperbole, personification.

(BB01)

Through these statements, students expressed that they enjoyed the activity mainly because of the music, as they were able to find or confirm the meaning behind the lyrics. Participants were also able to find practical use of figurative language, as it allowed them to analyze and understand the meaning of the song they chose at the same time. They perceived the activity as fun because of the music but almost implicitly, there were also using concepts from class. They also expressed how understanding the meaning is important for them to like a song:

I feel so good because I can hear one of my favorite songs. I like the part that

(sic) you need to listen and understand the song. (BA07)

It seems that students find the opportunity to express their opinions, life experiences, and ideas through lyrics. Using songs in the English classroom may allow the students to also express themselves within the learning context, maybe not through their words, but by sharing with others the music they like and what they found in it that meant something to them.

For some students, nonetheless, it was not a fully pleasant experience. Whether it was due to external factors, such as the complexity of the task (finding figurative language examples), the music selection, whether the teacher chose or they had to choose a song themselves, some students shared negative feedback on the activities:

I felt worried because the songs I choose don't have any figurative language

(GA06)

(No me gustó) que no entendí bien los "metaphor..." (sic) (BA13)

Data revealed that some students found the activity frustrating or unappealing because the lyrics in the song they liked could not provide the information requested for this activity.

They felt frustrated that the song they wanted to use was not suitable for the objectives of the activity. Regardless of this, they were able to work by either changing songs or only using a couple of examples.

To conclude this section, data showed lyrics to be one of the most significant elements people take into consideration when it comes to music taste. In this particular setting, and considering the age of the participants, it was also shown that discourse in songs is also regarded as a means of self-expression by most participants. Some of them expressed the significance of understanding the meaning or the message in a song, which made it even more valuable to them. This aligns with previous claims regarding how songs are “vague” until the listener appropriates them and assigns them meaning.

Students seemed to consider this a good opportunity to voice their opinions, thoughts, and emotions. Furthermore, some participants associated deciphering the meaning of their favorite song to something learned in class (figurative language) which made it something meaningful and practical, since they worked on this activity on their own and built the meaning on their own as well. This supports the idea of how music can be used not only in the language classroom to teach vocabulary, but also to teach, practice, and reinforce the content in a way that relates to the students and therefore, becomes meaningful to them. The advantages of breaking the routine within the classroom and its effect on students’ performance are analyzed through participants’ feedback in the following section.

4.2.3 Out of the ordinary classroom routine

This refers to how students perceive the use of music as a break in the everyday routine of the classroom. Data showed that students were enthused to use music for activities because it was something different than the regular activities. Music represented an experience itself for them, and it also represented a break in predictable ordinary activities in the classroom:

I liked that we used music, because when we use music they are special days.

(GB11)

Music was so lovely, (the activity) is so easy and different (GA10)

As suggested by Du (2009) teachers should introduce more diversified teaching methods, use vivid and humorous language to enlighten students as well as create a balanced and nice atmosphere for learning. For some students, classes can become predictable and for some, this makes them feel confidence. In contrast, for some this is not be perceived as exciting. When introducing a different activity, students feel enthused and curious, which can affect their level of engagement and openness to learning. Students expressed appreciation for a change in the routine and the regular activities in the classroom. One of the participants stated that:

I like that my teacher put this works because she gets out of the boring normal learning method. (BA03)

Music can encourage students to learn a foreign language. This can be done by providing a relaxed environment and a change from the routine procedures in the classroom (Engh, 2013). It is crucial for students to perceive the classroom as a friendly environment, that even if familiar, can also have changes and breaks in the routine. The majority of students showed curiosity and enthusiasm just by introducing an activity that was different from the regular classes, which indicates that breaks in routine are not only beneficial for the classroom environment but needed to keep students engaged.

The latter suggests that by breaking down the boundaries or bridging the gaps between stereotypical “institutional” and “informal” learning, teachers can continue to engage students through natural and authentic language. Furthermore, this can also motivate them to practice independently, out of the class (Engh, 2013), and enhance students’ learning. Consequently, this suggests that bringing up these extra-ordinary factors, into the routine of the classroom, will encourage students to use the language naturally. It also enhances what they already do anyway outside the classroom, which is for most of them, listening to music, following trends, and spending time on social media but with an additional purpose and intention of practicing the language as well.

It can be concluded that music also represented a means for students to open up about their perception, not only of the experience but about the classroom as a whole. Data showed that some students were enthused simply because something different happened in class that

day. This finding signaled that my participants perceived the regular activities in the classroom as a routine, and most importantly, how some of them need a break from that routine. Even if they did not like the content, they expressed the need to continue with this change of activities:

I don't like the song, but all this activity was a great idea, keep the activity.
(BA11)

As a side finding from this study, it became evident that my students were probably not communicating (at least not verbally) their needs and their preferences in class. This made me reflect on the importance of creating time and space for students to express their opinion about the things they enjoy and the ones they do not in class. This aligned with the relevance of acknowledging learners' needs since they are members of the classroom and how they should have a more active role when it comes to learning.

Lyrics were used to reinforce and practice content, but it was also through music that students were able to speak up and voice their opinions through their feedback cards. In this sense, analyzing the data allowed me to get to know my students better and, it helped me identify things that could improve in my classroom.

Another valuable conclusion from this analysis was related to negative perceptions. When I first envisioned the design of the activities to conduct this study, I expected it to be something that all students would enjoy. I was expecting positive feedback and when the negative comments started to emerge, I realized how little negative feedback is acknowledged among literature. One of the most significant findings from this research was for me to look at the negative feedback as a source of information.

Negative feedback does provide a lot of useful information. Ultimately, negative comments from the first activity made me realize I needed to change the design of my activities and it also made me realize the importance of students' input when working in the classroom. Furthermore, it was evident that the claim of a constructivist approach to education was not fulfilled entirely, as not all the activities were student-centered. On that account, data made it clear for me that students needed to have a more active role and that

they also had a voice that needed to be heard. As obvious as it seems, students being part of the classroom are not always acknowledged or heard, which makes it difficult for teachers to get to know them and provide for their needs. After conducting this study and analyzing the data, it was evident to me that each student is different and they all matter. In the following section, a conclusion of this chapter is presented.

4.3 Conclusion

After revisiting each of the emerging themes, feedback from the participants, and my observation notes, it became evident that schema and the particular background of each student did influence their perception of the music used during the activities. Therefore, not everyone in the class enjoyed the activity, since music was first assigned and they had to work with it, regardless of their taste. These findings made me reconsider and modify the second activity, from which data showed that, by acknowledging students' needs and likes, both learners and teacher (me) could benefit. The latter could be beneficial for teaching and the design or selection of materials. By acknowledging students' schematic background, needs, and feedback (either negative or positive) it is possible to create a classroom that provides for most, and luckily for all, students.

This chapter explored and analyzed the main themes that emerged from and examples per each theme were provided. Examples from the field journal were also provided and discussed to enhance the description of the activities conducted among the participants. Some side findings and reflections from this analysis and the importance of students' needs and their role within the classroom were pointed out and analyzed as well. In the following chapter, the conclusions from this research will be addressed in depth.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the conclusions based on the findings from my data analysis in Chapter Four. I will also revisit the research question of my research. I will provide a summary of the findings, as well as the pedagogical implications, limitations of my study, implications for further research, and a conclusion.

5.2 Revisiting the research question

This research aimed to explore how schema knowledge, semantics, and music impact the use of music in the EFL classroom. This study presented the following research question:

What is the role of music semantics and schema on students' perception regarding the use of music in the English classroom?

Consequently, the findings from this research were related to the areas of schema, music semantics, and perceptions regarding music in the EFL classroom. To illustrate and elaborate on these subjects, I will discuss the summary of the findings of my research and their respective implications.

5.3 Summary of the findings

Regarding the research question, some conclusions became evident from the data collected from the students' bucket journals and my observation notes. These conclusions are:

1. Schema and music semantics play an important role in shaping perceptions.
2. Schema and music semantics impact the perceptions of students regarding music in the EFL classroom.
3. Teachers who are aware of these implications might benefit from it within their practice.

A more in-depth discussion of these findings is provided in the following sections.

5.3.1 Role of schema theory and music semantics on perceptions

As a result of this research, it became evident that the background knowledge of each participant had a clear influence on the way they made sense of music. Perceptions were shaped by what students knew and their perception of the world. The way students understand lyrics would also be attached to their expectations, which were also built according to what they have been previously exposed to in their everyday lives.

Regardless of how most studies (Domoney, 1993; Duff, 2001; Murphey, 1992) confirm the positive effect music can have in the classroom, there was also negative feedback from my participants, and I thought it was valuable to address its negative impact in the classroom.

An activity, even if it is envisioned to be fun or attractive to learners, is not likely to be effective or motivating for all students. Therefore, I believe it is central to get involved with our students and their schemata. Even if participants seemed to share many similar characteristics, that did not imply all of them shared a similar background. They were not exposed to the same things or experiences throughout their lives; they do not come from the same family structure or dynamics, etc. Therefore, they did not share the same interests or views of things. As a group, they share things in common, like age, same school, nearby or same neighborhood, but as individuals, each one of them has their own experiences and these have built their schemata and they will perceive things accordingly.

For some, music was appealing as long as pop idols or popular musicians were involved, for others, the fact that they were so mainstream or into popular culture was something that they did not like. This was mainly because they could not relate to these pop singers or they found nothing interesting in them. They would feel discouraged or they would find music boring. It was evident that music, even if it was the same song played for everyone in the class, it did not represent the same for everybody, which contrasted with what was proposed among literature at the beginning of this research.

5.3.2 Schema theory and music semantics impact in the EFL classroom

Regarding the second finding from this research, since schema theory and music semantics have a key role in the shaping of perceptions, it is clear that they also have a direct influence on the way music impacts the classroom. Since not all the students perceive music activities as positive, this could also have a negative outcome of the whole experience. It was clear that the experience was different from one individual to the other. When I designed the activity, I did not consider any of this, but this became obvious as soon as I started my observation notes and I had to describe students' attitudes, which aligned with their feedback as I went through it later on.

What I first envisioned as a great, fun activity for my students, and as an experience that I thought would encourage them, surprised me as I realized it was not what I had expected. The classroom did change, but from different perspectives: students experienced a break from the classroom routine, they voiced their opinion and became active members who agree or disagree, with arguments. Some enjoyed working, some rejected the activity and all of this information allowed me to realize how importance of a student-centered classroom.

Therefore, for the second session, I decided to modify the activity and have students choose their song to work with. This made most of the students feel engaged and enthused. However, still, some of them expressed feeling frustrated because the music they knew or liked did not have lyrics that could suit the activity, so it was more challenging for them. This also showed me that, even if students like music, it does not mean that all of them want to work with it in the classroom, or at least not to practice content, but more as background music. In the following section, a more in-depth discussion of the use of schema and music semantics in teaching is presented.

5.3.3 Use of schema theory and music semantics in teaching

As the third finding from this study, this is the most significant. As I went through my students' feedback and my observation notes, it was clear that the things that I did not take into consideration when I initially designed the activities, would have been of help to conduct an encouraging and motivating activity to most of my students. The use of schema theory and music semantics would improve the opportunities to provide for most of the

students' likes and needs. Such a task seems challenging but, I believe that this rather than being perceived as discouraging, could be perceived as a great opportunity for teachers to become more involved and committed to their classroom and students. Teachers who are interested in finding new ways to improve their teaching can benefit from finding out more about schema theory and music semantics (in case they are interested in working with music in their classrooms). In addition, more than just focusing on music, schema theory could also be used for any other activity in the classroom.

The more teachers know about their students' backgrounds, likes, and needs, the more possibilities they will have to design meaningful tasks that fit their students' profiles more accurately. The latter will benefit both students and teachers since motivated students are more likely to learn more and invest themselves more in the activities. As I observed with my participants, the use of music they enjoyed created a rather relaxing environment and they did better in the activities, since their attitudes changed, as they expressed enjoyment and they seemed engaged as they worked with something they felt enthused for. To see my students so motivated and engaged also encouraged me to keep on designing activities that would help them have a better time and perform better in the classroom. The pedagogical implications and contributions from this study are presented in the following section.

5.4 Pedagogical implications

The results of this study confirm that the use of music in learning is influenced and perceived in different ways, both positive and negative, by the students because of their schematic knowledge, which implies several factors from culture, age, society, relationships, to mention some. Therefore, I think that one of the implications this study suggests is the importance of educating those teachers who are interested in using music in their classroom about the role of schema and music semantics. Moreover, teachers also need to be educated on the importance of being sensitive regarding their students' personalities, ideas and culture.

I consider that by raising awareness on the role schema has on students' perceptions and how it determines their experience regarding the use of music in the classroom, teachers will be able to have greater results on students' learning. Teachers could be able to do so by designing material or planning activities that can potentially suit most of the students' profiles

by acknowledging their likes and needs. As suggested by Rudby (2003), materials must match the context in which they are going to be used, as well as the needs and interests of the teachers and learners who work within this context. This might help to find the best possible fit between students, teachers, and materials. Therefore, I regard this to be a two-way endeavor and the results are most likely to be positive.

The more teachers and school staff raise awareness about the significance of caring and providing for our learners' needs, the more the school community could benefit from it. One way in which this could be achieved could be through workshops intended for teachers who are interested in using music in their classroom, and I believe that this could also be transferred to other art types, not only music. Schematic knowledge can be used for any type of activity teachers want to use with their students, simply because the more we tailor our teaching to fit the needs and likes of our students, the more we could motivate learners, and that is always a positive thing.

Some implications regarding students themselves are related to learning how to approach the language in different ways, in this particular case, through music that is valuable to them. I think learners benefit from experiencing how what is learned inside the classroom can also be translated into their interests and settings. Taking students' needs and backgrounds into consideration can also boost their confidence and motivation since they feel heard and valued as individuals. Perhaps this can strengthen the bonds and rapport between students and teachers and create a classroom environment in which every member is important. The limitations found while conducting this research are presented in the following section.

5.5 Limitations

The limitations presented during my research process are related to time and the diversity of activities. One of the most significant limitations was the time, even though the participants with whom I conducted my research were my students, the school program requires to fulfill contents and deadlines, among exams and extra activities students have. Therefore, I could not spend as much time or as many sessions as I would have wanted to. It was critical for me then, to design activities that could relate to the topic and contents that I

was teaching at that moment. This situation made it somehow more challenging, I had to find a way to integrate music in a different way than I had first considered. Regardless of this limitation, I was also able to learn something from it, since it worked satisfactorily, even if I had to respect the school's constraints. Despite this situation, I would have liked to have had more freedom in that sense.

Another significant limitation I experienced was the music selection for the activities. I was not fully aware of how crucial music choice was and how it would importantly affect the perception of my students. For the first activity, I selected the song myself, based on the suggestions made by the students in a previous assignment about their favorite music. For this assignment, they had to write down the name of their favorite song and explain why they liked it. I selected the song that was mentioned the most times by different students, therefore, the ones who did not choose that song were not as enthused as the rest. Yet, I tried to adapt the second activity to suit each students' interest. For the second activity, students were encouraged to choose one song to work with it individually and that seemed to have a more positive outcome as students had more input and had the freedom to make choices regarding their work. Although there was negative feedback as well, it was because of different reasons and not entirely because of the music selection. The negative perceptions now were linked to the complexity of the task or the fact that the song they chose did not fit the activity, but not to the fact that they disliked the song. Suggestions for further research among this area of study are presented in the following section.

5.6 Further research

Some of the areas in which I believe future research could be carried out and might benefit from a study such as this belong in the pedagogical field. I find that this study could be replicated with the required modifications regarding other types of media besides music (film, visual arts, painting, literature, to name a few).

The first suggestion for further research is to conduct it in a different context. This could be in a public school or also with either younger or older participants. I believe that the diversity of participants can enrich the study and would be more likely to provide data for both positive and negative feedback. This would support the relevance of the role of schemata

on perceptions. I would also suggest replicating this research and to take schematic knowledge and semantics approach, but focused on different types of art, not only music. For example, literature, drawing, or even film can be used considering the students' particular background and implement activities in which students approach the language through different contents. Moreover, the use of schematic knowledge is not limited only to media, it could also be used among other fields as any interests students might have such as sports or pastimes, or anything relevant for them.

Since this thesis focused on the perceptions of participants and how their schematic knowledge shapes their perceptions, further research might ponder to conduct this study by using different techniques that suit different disciplines and different material and activity design. The conclusion from this chapter is presented in the following section.

5.7 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis project was to explore the role of schematic knowledge and music semantics regarding their use in the EFL classroom and their impact on students' perceptions. The answers to the research question highlighted and supported the important role of schemata and semantics in music in the experiences of the participants and how because of these factors, they experienced the activities either positively or negatively. The findings suggest that more needs to be researched on negative perceptions regarding music in the EFL classroom, as well as the importance of educating teachers and raising awareness among them about the role of schemata and how to use it to benefit from it in their classroom.

In conclusion, I find this thesis of use for all English teachers and educators who acknowledge the importance of class planning and material design that can suit their learners' needs and likes and at the same time benefit their practice. Hopefully, this thesis will help raise awareness on the importance of getting to know not only whether our students' perceptions are positive or negative, but what shapes these perceptions and how to use it to benefit both students and teachers.

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Appendix A: Consent form



UNIVERSIDAD DE GUANAJUATO CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Yo, Fabiola Martínez Guerrero, titular del grupo de 6to grado, actualmente estudio la maestría en Lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza del inglés en la Universidad de Guanajuato. El motivo de esta solicitud es para pedir su autorización, para que su hijo o hija (nombre) participe en mi proyecto de investigación, el cual ya se le ha explicado en la junta informativa con padres de familia. En caso de aceptar esta invitación, su hijo o hija participará en las siguientes actividades:

1. Trabajo en clase utilizando música como herramienta para reforzar contenidos, de la cual, su hijo o hija proveerán su valiosa opinión.

Como se explicó ya, tanto la institución como cada participante permanecerán anónimos y ningún dato personal será utilizado en esta investigación.

Su participación es voluntaria, por lo cual, su hijo o hija tiene la libertad de abandonar el proyecto si así lo desea. En caso de preguntas sobre esta investigación, puede contactarme a través de mi correo institucional: xxxx

De antemano gracias por su interés y esperemos contar con su participación.

Autorizo la participación de mi hijo/a xxxxx

_____	_____	_____
Nombre del participante	Firma	Fecha

_____	_____	_____
Fabiola Martínez	Firma	Fecha

Appendix B: Sample of the figurative language in lyrics activity

Instructions:

1. Look at the highlighted lines and write H for hyperbole, S for simile, M for metaphor or P for personification
2. On the back of the paper, choose three of the highlighted examples and try to explain its meaning

Used to be scared of the ocean

'Cause I didn't know how to swim

I took one sip of your potion

Now I'm just divin' right in

I heard your siren's call, it was beautiful

H I am drowning, God, please don't save me

I'm in too deep

Can't touch the bottom with my feet

H Don't know what you did to me, I can't breathe but I'm living

I'm in too deep

M/H Can't touch the bottom with my feet

Don't know what you did to me, I can't breathe but I'm living

I'm in too deep

Ah ooh-ah-oo-oo

Ah ooh-ah-oo-oo

I'm in too deep

Ah ooh-ah-oo-oo

responsibility

M Treasure chest full of your diamonds

I don't mind staying down here

H Thought by now I would be dyin'

M/H But your love gives me all my air

I heard your siren's call, it was beautiful

I am drowning, God, please don't save me

I'm in too deep

Can't touch the bottom with my feet

Don't know what you did to me, I can't breathe but I'm living

I'm in too deep

Can't touch the bottom with my feet

Don't know what you did to me, I can't breathe but I'm living

I'm in too deep

M/P I heard your sirens call, it was beautiful

I'm in too deep

Can't touch the bottom with my feet

Don't know what you did to me, I can't breathe but I'm living

I'm in too deep

I never thought that you could be

M A underwater symphony, I can't breathe but I'm living

Appendix C: Bucket cards samples

What did I like about this activity? That we practice los
- Metaphor, Simile, Hyperbole, Personification!

What did not like? Que no entendí bien los "Metaphor..."

Opinion/comments: Que la miss explique mejor, Para entender

1 I like no thing because I dont like Why dont We

2 The song was so slow and boring

3 Other song

What do I like about this activity? why?

They use use the music, because when we use music they are special days.

What did not like? why?

Because the music was lonely, and the guy I don't understand why doing a song while she can say his emotions to the girl! 😊

That is of music, because i love music, i don't like this band, but i'll be very happy when it makes mine.

2. I like everything

next song put sweet child o' mine

Epiphone

Appendix D: Sample of observation notes for students' selection

Choose your own song

Students seem pretty calmed and not too thrilled. First class in the morning. However, they seem happy and start working right away.

Some put their headphones on and start listening.

They seem to be clear about figurative language and some finish the task easily.

~~for~~ They all seem relaxed, they're quiet and focused. They look like they are enjoying.

Students were happy and enthused to share their examples after the activity. They were supposed to find figurative language in a song they liked (just as we previously did in the first activity but this time they were not guided, they did it on their own).

Some students shared their examples and we all discussed the possible meaning.

~~They~~ with the second group, students were excited to work on the activity

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