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**TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH SONGS**

**CAMPINA GRANDE  
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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado à Coordenação do Departamento do Curso Letras Inglês da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Graduado em Letras Inglês.

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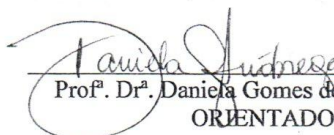
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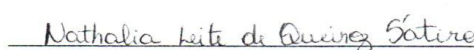
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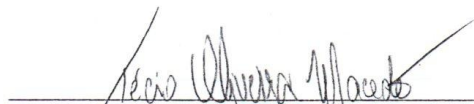
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À minha avó, D. Amilde Bernardes, que me inspira desde sempre, e à minha mãe, Maria Di Cavalcanti, pelo esforço, exemplo e dedicação à educação, DEDICO.

“In the end, the love you take is equal to the  
love you make”  
McCartney, Paul

## SUMMARY

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## RESUMO

Este trabalho apresenta possibilidades de usar o gênero canção no contexto do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira nas escolas da rede pública. Uma aula dada numa escola de nível médio do estado da Paraíba é detalhada com o propósito de apresentar maneiras pelas quais um professor poderá envolver aspectos gramaticais e fonológicos enquanto o conhecimento cultural da língua-alvo é explorado através do uso de canções em sala de aula. Duas músicas do grupo The Beatles foram usadas na lição. A atividade ocorreu durante o PIBID – LETRAS INGLÊS. O artigo objetiva promover reflexões acerca da importância de trabalhar arte na escola e da relevância de aproximar alunos aos estudos da língua inglesa e da sua cultura.

**Palavras-Chave:** Canção. Gênero. Inglês. Ensino-Aprendizagem.

## ABSTRACT

This work deals with possibilities of using the genre song in the context of teaching English as a foreign language in schools. A lesson given in a public middle school of Paraíba state is detailed with the purpose of pointing out ways by which a teacher could involve phonological and grammatical aspects while cultural knowledge of the language is explored through the use of songs in the classroom. Two tunes of The Beatles are used in the lesson. The activity was applied while I took part in PIBID - LETRAS INGLÊS. This research aims to promote reflections on the importance of working with arts in school and how relevant it is to bring students closer to the studies of the English language and its culture.

**Keywords:** Song. Genre. English. Teaching-Learning.



## INTRODUCTION

With this work, we intend to approach possibilities of using songs in class as a tool to the learning process of the English language in the Public Middle School context. Our general goal is to present a proposition regarding the importance that is to teach the culture of the English language through the use of the genre *song* in the teaching-learning process.

The contact with the English culture through the genre song occurs beyond school walls very frequently and naturally by various means of communication – radio, television, and internet and so on. There is, as our experience as teachers shows us, a great curiosity among students in understanding the meaning of the lyrics of the songs sung in the English language. People often are exposed to a song, learn to like its musical aspects and even appreciate it although they do not comprehend the content expressed in the lyrics. There is a lot of culture in music and in lyrics, and students can benefit from it if songs are worked in class.

As a teacher chooses to work with songs in his/her pedagogical activities, he/she is to promote a joyful and interesting atmosphere while there is insertion of cultural elements to the studying of the target language. Coelho (2009) advocates the importance of relating culture of the language to its study by saying, “when we study an idiom, not only are we making contact with its lexicon and grammatical rules, but also with various cultural aspects of the people who speak it” (2009, p. 12). It is relevant to associate the target language culture to the lyrics. Such an attitude might eventually lead students to an autonomous way of studying on their own as they learn how to make the songs they like listening to as a source of knowledge.

Among the many advantages of speaking English as a foreign language nowadays, being able to comprehend the universal contemporary culture is of great value to the development of the connected and globalized citizen. The National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) claim that students should be able to “position themselves critically, responsibly and constructively in the different social situations” (1998, p. 7) and also says that “the learning of the foreign language sharpens the perception and, as it opens the door to the world, it does not only make way for the information to come, but also makes the individuals, and, consequently the countries, much more well-known over the world” (PCNs, 1998, p. 39). The PCNs also suggest that different genres should be worked in class in saying, “the use of different genres in class can contribute to the increase of the intertextual knowledge of students and it shows clearly that genres can be used for different purposes in the society” (1998, p.45).

Song is a rich genre which synthesizes social phenomena and historical facts. The Beatles, for instance, is an icon of a whole generation. They represent counter-culture - a diffuser movement of revolutionary social behavior. Therefore, to enter the universe of the lyrics of the group is a way to study philosophy, art and history. Believing in the educational potential that music can offer, we used two songs of the band in a class with the purpose of illustrating the possibilities of using the genre song as a tool to study English. The lesson aims to approach real culture of the target language to students’ lives.

The activity which was applied to the ninth grade group of the Prof. Itan Pereira Middle School will serve as a source for our reflections and considerations in this research. The songs “*Hello, Goodbye*” and “*All Together Now*” written by Lennon - McCartney were chosen due to didactic purposes, basic lexicon and simple

grammar. It was developed and performed when we were Pibid members, in the first semester of 2015.

The lesson was divided into three parts, each one focusing on different aspects to be explored out of the use of the genre song: grammatical (*Present Simple* and *Modal Can* are taught in a deductive way), phonological (emphasis on the linking sounds of words in phrases from the songs) and cultural aspects (facts about the band and its era).

For the development of this work, we considered how songs can be used in an effective way to the studying of the English language in class and how we teachers can deal with cultural, phonological and grammatical aspects presented in the lyrics of a song when using songs in the EFL environment.

This work is divided into 5 parts:

*Introduction*; the introductory section where we present our objectives with this work  
*1. Theoretical Foundation*; a section to explain based upon theorists' ideas how we developed our thesis  
*2. Methodology*; a description of the tasks and procedures of our work  
*3. Working with songs*; where we reflect on our own work & *Final Remarks*: a conclusive section.

## 1. THEORY

According to Santos (2011, p.03), researches reveal that the teaching of English in most public schools is limited to the showing of the basic grammar structures, and they are exemplified with short sentences without a context, students are trained to perform written exercises substituting and repeating them similarly to the way it is done in audio-lingualism. In the classes we observed in Prof, Itan Pereira Middle school primarily to the lessons we were responsible for teaching, we felt that too much time was spent on grammar and translation - features which are common in the Grammar Translation Method.

Lots of methodologies for the teaching of English as a foreign language were developed since the 60's. Traditionally, in Brazil, the Grammar Translation Method is used in class as the most convenient option. We perceived the difficulty shown by students in learning grammar rules when these are taught without a clear communicative context. We concluded in our reflections as Pibid students that the Grammar Translation Method or Audio-lingual characteristics presented in the observed classes might give a too formal tone and diminish students' interest. Students are not directly involved with the issues mentioned neither is there a variation of genres to be worked.

With our lesson, we aimed to bring students to a situation where the issues studied could be more easily related to their comprehension of the world, we also had in mind that if we are to focus on translation and grammar in a task, it should not be disassociated from the communicative context in a given task. In accordance with Antunes (2007), when he says:

The time dedicated to the analysis of recognizing the grammatical unities, the indication of terms and the subdivisions they fit would rather be filled with activities of analysis, production and revision of as many different genres as one should. (ANTUNES, 2007)

We tried in our lesson to minimize the time dedicated to the teaching of grammatical unities. We chose not to focus on jargons. We focused on lexical understanding and the learning of the main ideas of the songs. Our focus on grammar happened at a second moment and we did not mention we were studying grammar.

About the importance of using diverse genres, Marcuschi (2008) advocates that our students should be able to interact with different kinds of texts. The author mentions and explains the social character played by the textual genres. He says

Genres are discursive activities socially established which function to the various types of social control and even power exercise. Genres are also necessary for human interlocution. (MARCUSCHI, 2008).

Besides the factors which reinforce the importance of working with different genres in class and led us prepare our lesson using songs, we also wished to have an activity that could integrate the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). We discussed with our colleagues during Pibid ways by which we could do that. The discussions we had were based upon texts and theories we read about pedagogical practices. These notions led us develop the *Studying English Through Songs* lesson - the worksheet of this activity is in the appendix section.

Brown (2007) advocates in his book entitled "Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy", chapter 17, "*Integrating the four skills*" that the teaching and practice of the English language should work the four skills. There is a trend towards the integration of the four skills nowadays. Foreign language learners can develop their competence in the target language more deeply when they perform perception and reception in a contextualized communicative situation.

it will be easier to reproduce, comprehend and remember the more language is reinforced and the more chances students are exposed to interlinked sentences in an episode which provokes interest, instead of a series of sentences which are not correlated in meaning. (Brown, 2007).

In my experience as a teacher of private schools during 10 years, I have come to agree with the principles of Communicative Approach, which are in accordance with Brown's ideas. As any teacher, I have my own set of beliefs. To create a material to work with music in the teaching of a foreign language, one should base his thoughts on theories. I would like to ask you to read the lesson plan, look at the activity and observe what our intentions were as we go on describing the steps of the class.

The lesson plan in the appendix details every step in our lesson. Choral repetition, for instance, was used in a few moments to practice the sentences students would have to sing along later on. We realize we are living the post-method age and we believe the fusion of techniques of different methodologies can collaborate effectively to the teaching-learning relation.

To conclude this section, we will claim that another reason why it is interesting to work with songs in pedagogical activities when teaching a second language is the unique quality there is in songs to make students develop the capacity to retain information. Once you are exposed to a melody many times, words, phonological aspects, the meaning of the lyrics, and its cultural ideas can be easily memorized. As Gobbi said:

Songs generally use a simple language, conversational and with a lot of repetition. There can be songs quite complex synthetically, poetically and its lexicon might too be complex. It can be analyzed like any other literary sample. (Gobbi, 2001).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research is exploratory and descriptive, as we detail the points raised from the experience when we worked with the genre song in a ninth grade group of a public middle school of Paraíba state.

The lesson was entitled *STUDYING ENGLISH THROUGH SONGS*. Two songs by The Beatles, *Hello*, *Goodbye* and *All Together Now*, were used.

The lesson was developed when I was a Pibid member. The choice of songs was given by didactic issues. We also took into consideration which linguistic level the students were in. I used techniques experienced in different methodologies throughout my earlier experience as a teacher in private language schools.

The lesson plan in the appendix details every step in our lesson. Choral repetition, for instance, was used in a few moments to practice the sentences students would have to sing along later on. We realize we are living the post-method age and we believe the fusion of techniques of different methodologies can collaborate effectively to the teaching-learning relation.

We will now focus on the pedagogical activity which was developed during Pibid as we intend to approach the reasons why using songs in classroom is relevant to the studying of English as a foreign language. It will serve as the basis for our reflections and considerations. Our aim is to show how cultural aspects can be brought to class through songs.

As Pibid members, we had the opportunity to act as teachers in the public middle school Prof. Itan Pereira. First, we had to observe classes and share our reflections via a virtual blog we had. We would gather in meetings weekly and discuss the situations described in our conclusions, generating a rich feedback in group. Our thoughts were based on the pedagogical material we were to read under the guidance of Prof. Thelma Ferreira, the coordinator of the program. Emmeline, the high school teacher with the school, would also take part in the meetings and collaborate with our progress.

Initially, as we observed the classes of the ninth grade group of Itan Pereira, we noticed that most part of the class activities would occur based on the Grammar Translation Method. This made us think of other ways we could work to relate to the students' reality, for we felt there was a distance between that to the one brought by the material adopted by the school, "Vontade de Saber Inglês". We assumed that working with a different genre and exploring techniques from different methodologies would arise students' interest and involvement in the lesson.

We describe the steps that occurred in the classroom and explain the practices that were approached. We will share reflections on the sensations presented by students and the teacher during the class. The lesson was divided into three parts focusing on cultural, grammatical and phonological aspects of the language.

Next section, a brief description of the preparation of the lesson is presented. In the following subtopics, We will describe the steps taken in class and reflect upon

our sensations. Next section is divided into three parts. The first about the Cultural aspects which were studied. The second will be on the phonological aspects performed in class. And the third, on grammatical aspects.

### **3. WORKING WITH SONGS**

The lesson *Studying English Through Songs* was developed by me, Igor Di Cavalcanti, while I was a Literature/English UEPB student and took part in Pibid - a program under the coordination of Telma Ferreira with the assistance of Emmeline Milene, a teacher herself at the school which we had our classes in, during the first semester of 2015. My colleagues and I had the opportunity to teach for a total of 8 classes in order to develop our practices as teachers after having read and discussed theories during the first weeks of the program. The classes were held for a ninth year grade group of students in Prof. Itan Pereira middle school, in the city of Campina Grande - PB.

I shall say I have been a teacher over the last ten years, having worked in various private schools and, parallelly to that, I have been pursuing a career as a musician (singer, songwriter and guitarist). My musical notions have been vital for the development of this paper and for the activity performed in Prof. Itan Pereira middle school.

In the appendixes I and II, we have the material that students were provided with and the lesson plan. We will now describe the steps occurred in class. We divided the lesson in topics as to mention the aspects we tried to perform in class: cultural, phonological and grammatical. It is advisable to take a look at the appendixes while we detail our procedures and sensations about the class.

#### **3.1. CULTURAL ASPECTS**

Here, we will detail our thoughts and feelings about the experience with the group of students, how they reacted to the activity and what happened in class. We were happy to lead the class successfully following the steps as we had planned. Still, in class we get to receive the feedback from students, and that can never be predicted.

A brief text about the band and its historical context was presented in the beginning of the class as to create a pleasant atmosphere for the working with music lesson. Having in mind that the students' notions of the world should be connected to the theme of the class, we started out having an open conversation under the question "who is your favorite musician / musical act / artist? This part was carried out in Portuguese, naturally, and many of the students in class were eager to cite their preferences. We would write the names on the board. Funk singers, Brazilian rap artists, forró and other genres were mentioned. We then asked who liked listening to music sung in English. Beyoncé, Michael Jackson and Justin Bieber were some of the artists brought up by the kids. We then had a friendly chat on what each artist could be singing about, as melodies might indicate meaning. We talked a little about the Beatles. Some students knew them, others had never heard of them! The material was distributed and the tasks initiated.

The text about the British group was read with the students. I needed to translate, most of the times doing the sandwich-technique, to clear out students'

doubts. Next, exercises one and two were performed with the class. Now, all the students knew about the most successful band in music business and a little about their influence over the world. We then focused on cognate words as a strategy to retain information from a text written in English (reading strategy).

Question number three related the lexicon from the song *All Together Now* with the text previously studied in their text book “Vontade de Saber Inglês”. The class before had been about Walt Disney. *Duck Donald* and *Mickey Mouse* are pictured doing some of the actions sung in the song. The purpose was to connect both classes, its cultural elements were compared. The decades. The history, thus. One day we talked about Walt Disney, the other, John Lennon.

It was an interesting moment to talk about their musical preferences. The text about the band made students more interested in the music. When they listened to the song for the first time, I felt they all connected to it very easily. Some could sing while others had more difficulty in letting themselves comfortable enough to try. The moment was fun and we discussed the ideas of the songs in the questions about the lyrics.

### 3.2. PHONOLOGICAL ASPECTS

After playing the songs a couple of times, we solved the questions about colors, numbers and letters. Not necessarily the vocabulary was new to the whole class. Still, they all tried to sound better after many choral repetitions. Here, the activity was also acted in a very joyful mood. Sometimes, we would perform individual repetition if one or another student seemed not to be participative. It made them all focus.

We also repeated specific sentences extracted from the song *All Together Now*. We paid attention to the linking sounds and how words are connected in the spoken speech. The students were called attention to the table “repeat after the teacher”. Beside it, there is a brief explanation on what it takes to improve our pronunciation - the purpose is that the student himself/herself may study on his/her own.

Students repeated the sentences one by one, choral repetition and individual as the the words isolated from the previous question. The whole class was taking part in the activity. It flew on very smoothly and we could feel the effect of music on the kids. We listened to the songs a couple of times and many students learned how to sing with a good pronunciation.

### 3.3. GRAMMATICAL ASPECTS

In questions four and five, we studied grammar without mentioning we were studying grammar. The function “Can I \_\_\_\_\_?” is taught being connected to the lexicon students had studied before on the lesson about Walt Disney. Students are told to construct sentences with prompts given.

We also give attention to the words of the song “Hello, Goodbye” as a way to prepare students for the following task. Opposite words which signify opposite ideas when two people can not agree on something. Students understood the song and we sang together.

Before the end of the class, we did the Language Focus exercise. I tried to explain and let students do it by themselves. Some could do it without any problems,

while others simply did not get it. The objective was to teach Simple Present and the use of auxiliaries in a dynamic way.

In the end, I felt that this part was a bit confusing. There is a lot more to be developed regarding grammar. Nevertheless, the results were interesting. The students who could understand more easily helped their mates and we all corrected together, writing the answers on the blackboard.

### FINAL REMARKS

In this work we had the intention to present possibilities of working the genre song as a tool for teaching English as a foreign language. We used the lesson taught in a public high school to guide our ideas. It was really satisfying to see students expressing joy when they were in contact with music, with culture and arts in their classroom. The class was extremely funny. The students' faces reflected pure gladness.

I believe that everyone should have access to arts. It's a shame that we have in our society the false idea that art is something chic, or that it reaches a certain social class only.

In the end of this work, I had a feeling that there is much more to be developed. I am happy to have simply started my journey in the academy. Although it is a conclusive project that means a lot for the curriculum, my ideas are still being born. I liked it that I could work on a thing that I truly believe in and what matters the most to me is the experience itself with the students of that poor neighborhood. I know my pupils' hearts were touched. I can feel it more clearly than science might suppose things, Music should be taught always. Humans must learn how to love. For that, we have art!

We hope that this paper will serve for other teachers to reflect ways to make use of music in the classroom and that more students can be motivated for having classes involving musical and artistic matters.

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