

MUSIC IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

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Introduction¹

For many language teachers and researchers, the traditional “four language skills” concept still constitutes an underlying assumption in the observation and assessment of classroom phenomena, the development of curricular procedures, and the overall organization of textbooks and other pedagogic materials in second language (L2) teaching methodology. Arguably, the artificial separation of the four skills as independent domains of language learning constitutes the main limitation of such a framework. This separation may have been reinforced by a general tendency in the field to adhere to specific methodological orientations which often give more emphasis to the development of a certain skill, or group of skills, at the expense of others. An example is the grammar-translation approach and its focus on analyzing isolated sentences from the target language in order to teach students to read and translate literary texts. Other approaches, such as audiolingualism, increase the amount of listening and speaking in the L2 classroom, often in relation to a pre-determined sequence of grammatical structures taught in an inductive manner. More recent approaches—

communicative language teaching, task-based instruction— have sought the integration of the four skills in the design of courses and classroom activities, while keeping in mind the needs of L2 learners in particular academic situations (for example, courses in public speaking, extensive reading, academic writing, etc.).

The above fluctuations and shifts in L2 teaching methodology suggest that the field has experienced a “pendulum effect” from one extreme to the other in the continuum of methodological orientations and choices (Prator, 1991). However, several recent developments assist teachers and researchers in dealing more creatively with their everyday tasks in the L2 classroom. First, significant advances in learning and linguistic theories since the early 1970’s have created a major shift from a primary focus on teaching and a teacher-centered classroom to an increasing concern with learning and a student-centered classroom (Morley, 1991). The role of the teacher, however, has not lost its relevance to language instruction. Rather, the teacher is seen as a professional able to employ a “principled eclecticism” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Celce-Murcia et al., 1997) in order to provide students the most effective

learning opportunities by taking into consideration students’ personal and academic characteristics, the social and institutional context of the L2 classroom, the teacher’s own personal system of practical knowledge and beliefs about teaching, and his or her specific academic environment (Borg, 1999). In addition, recent findings in both second language acquisition (SLA) in social contexts, and a number of surveys of college and university students have shown that development of cultural understanding constitutes not only an embedded component of language learning and language use, but also a beneficial factor with regard to the students’ motivation and attitudes toward the target language (Omaggio, 1993).

Today’s academic and professional communities are clearly interested in providing language learners with the linguistic and cultural skills needed to succeed in a pluralistic society. This interest contributed to the development of the

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“...recent findings in both second language acquisition (SLA) in social contexts, and a number of surveys of college and university students have shown that development of cultural understanding constitutes not only an embedded component of language learning and language use, but also a beneficial factor with regard to the students’ motivation and attitudes toward the target language

Learning (1996), a collaborative project prepared by ACTFL and several professional language associations and endorsed by over fifty professional and state organizations. These standards are oriented toward the content of foreign language education—“what students should know and be able to do as a result of their study of world languages” (Phillips, 1999: 1-2). They involve five major goal areas (the “Five Cs”), each containing specific principles: Communication (“Communicate in languages other than English”), Cultures (“Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures”), Connections (“Connect with other disciplines and acquire information”), Comparisons (“Developing insight into the nature of language and culture”), and Communities (“Participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world”). The implementation of these goals in schools and post-secondary institutions involves issues such as the length of the sequences of language study, standards-based assessment, and teacher development through the new theoretical and practical frameworks established by the *Standards* (Phillips, 1999). As Omaggio (2001) explains, this may involve

... a number of ways of organizing our thinking about the components of language competence. A skills-based perspective (focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing) can be useful when working on the subcomponents of language competence or in testing specific abilities; a modality-based perspective, such as we see in the Standards, reminds us of the ultimate use to which we will be putting the language skills we are learning. Both perspectives can be helpful in language teaching and will be useful for different purposes. (p. 38)

Listening Comprehension And Music In The L2 Classroom

Nunan (1999) refers to listening as the “Cinderella skill” in L2 teaching and learning, because of its secondary role compared with speaking and, to a lesser extent, writing and reading. L2 teaching methodology seems not to have realized until recently that listening is used in everyday life far more than any other single language skill: twice as much as speaking, four times more than reading, and five times more than writing (Rivers, 1981). Moreover, SLA research in the last 25 years has consistently indicated that comprehensible input through listening and reading plays a key role in the L2 learning process. Rost (1994) notes three other factors supporting the relevance of listening in L2 teaching:

- Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding, access to speakers of the language is essential. Moreover, learners’ failure to understand the language they hear is an impetus, not an obstacle, to interaction and learning.
- Authentically spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to attempt to understand language as native speakers use it.
- Listening exercises provide teachers with the means for drawing learners’ attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language. (pp. 141-142)

Recent research in listening comprehension and classroom-based language development also highlights a number of dimensions to be considered in the teaching of listening. First, the traditional distinction between listening/reading as “passive” skills and speaking/writing as “active” skills has been successfully challenged by studies focusing on the listener’s own individual point of view, as well as the social, cultural, and affective factors involved in any listening performance (Lynch, 1998). Similarly, Hall (1995) suggests that the practical application of notions like “comprehensible input,” “linguistically rich environments,” and “natural conversation” should be determined by the way in which FL teachers realize and define the linguistic and cultural environment for their students, or in other words, “what gets treated as significant to FL learning in classrooms” (p. 56). In her overview of the theories and empirical research supporting the Communication goal in the *Standards*, Hall (1999) discusses three domains that describe learning performances as “Interpersonal” (two-way, interactive communication),

“Interpretive” (understanding of spoken or written language), and “Presentational” (creating spoken or written communication). Consideration of these modalities by both language teachers and learners allows them to view the four skills within a more communicative framework in which listening is related to the understanding of spoken language at different levels of linguistic and cultural complexity (interpretive mode). It also takes into account personal bonds that the listener develops with specific oral texts such as narratives, messages or songs (interpersonal mode).

In the classroom setting, these considerations involve the use of different techniques and strategies in order to relate the characteristics and needs of students and teachers to certain basic principles. Among those principles are awareness and consciousness-raising (Mendelsohn, 1998), prior background knowledge (Berne, 1995; Mendelsohn, 1998), and the variety, authenticity, and cognitive complexity of the topics and tasks in the instruction (Lacorte, 1999). For the listening skill, the move toward authenticity has meant the utilization of a great number of resources: dialogues, interviews, descriptions, narratives, public announcements, phone messages and conversations, commercials, news reports, etc. (Access to these resources via the Internet has become much easier.)

Our experiences in the classroom have shown that carefully selected songs in the target language constitute another suitable pedagogic resource because they:

- facilitate changes in the pace of instruction, regardless of what teaching techniques and strategies are being used.
- represent an entertaining alternative to the main course materials (textbook, workbook, lab tapes or CD-ROM, etc).
- increase the level of motivation and interest among students toward the linguistic and cultural content of courses at any given level of proficiency.
- reinforce the students’ conversational skills through the practice of pronunciation, exposure to new or recently taught vocabulary, and discussion of social and cultural issues in the target language.
- facilitate the comprehension of complex grammatical structures analyzed and practiced from the perspective of a meaningful context.

“...listening is related to the understanding of spoken language at different levels of linguistic and cultural complexity...”

- represent an invaluable approach to diverse cultural and historical issues related to the target language.
- promote an awareness of multiculturalism, i.e., the connections, challenges, resources, and opportunities of a world of diversity.

Songs may be selected, classified, and implemented according to the teacher's linguistic and/or cultural objectives. Further, songs provide flexibility in the L2 classroom because the same song can fulfill multiple purposes: "to enhance the listening skill, improve pronunciation, acquire vocabulary, provide examples of grammatical structures, practice reading and writing, and sensitize the students to cultural facets" (Purcell, 1992, p.192).

In practice, the way we as teachers present songs in the classroom should be closely related to our initial objectives and our knowledge of the different processes involved in listening. For example, if we select a song as the introduction to a discussion activity, questions about the lyrics should encourage students to use their background knowledge of the issue in the discussion. That is to say, the students follow a top-down approach to process their prior knowledge of the context and situation described by the song, and then relate it to the tasks suggested by the teacher. On the other hand, if our purpose is to present a specific grammar item such as a new verb tense, we may prefer to begin by having our students fill in blanks where the new tense appears in the song. In this way, we reinforce a bottom-up approach to listening, by which the students decode the sounds that they hear in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful units to complete texts (Nunan, 1991).

A Representative Example

This section includes a description of several ideas for presenting the same song, "El gran varón," in a Spanish classroom. We selected this song as a "representative" example because the clarity of the musical text and the richness of the content lend themselves to use with a wide range of Spanish proficiency levels and for a variety of purposes. We have designed many of these activities for use at the post-secondary level, and individual instructors will of course have to judge the activities' appropriateness and value for their own learning context. Further, we encourage instructors to think of and implement their own variations in the following activities according to their teaching styles and their students' academic needs and interests.

We have arranged the proposed activities into four sections according to their main purpose: (1) to develop listening proficiency; (2) to practice vocabulary or

grammatical structures; (3) to utilize the content for conversation and discussion; and (4) to introduce cultural or historical dimensions of the target language. Activities are further divided within these categories according to the proficiency level of the students.

EL GRAN VARÓN (Willie Colón)

Willie Colón: The Best II (Sony Music Entertainment, 1994)

En la sala de un hospital a las nueve y cuarenta y tres nació Simón.

Simón was born in a hospital room at 9:43.

Es el verano del sesenta y tres: el orgullo de don Andrés por ser varón.

It's the summer of '63: Don Andrés' pride and joy because he was a male child.

Fue criado como los demás, con mano dura, con severidad, nunca opinó.

He was raised like the rest, with an iron hand, with sternness, he never talked back.

Cuando crezcas vas a estudiar la misma vaina que tu papá, óyelo bien. Tendrás que ser un gran varón.

When you grow up, you're going to study the same thing as your dad. Listen closely. You've got to be a big man.

Al extranjero se fue Simón, lejos de casa se le olvidó aquel sermón.

Simón went abroad; far from home, he forgot that sermon.

Cambió la forma de caminar, usaba falda, lápiz labial y un carterón.

He changed the way he walked, wore a skirt, lipstick, and a purse.

Cuenta la gente que un día el papá fue a visitarlo sin avisar, ¡vaya qué error!

People say that one day his dad went to visit him unannounced. What a mistake!

Y una mujer le habló al pasar, le dijo hola, ¿qué tal, papá? ¿Cómo te va?

And a woman passing by spoke to him, told him hi, what's up, dad? How's it going?

¿No me conoces? Yo soy Simón. Simón, tu hijo, el gran varón.

Don't you know me? I'm Simón. Simón, your son, the big man.

CORO: No se puede corregir a la naturaleza; a lo que nace doblado jamás otro lo endereza.

You can't correct nature; what is born bent will never be straightened by another.

Se dejó llevar por lo que dice la gente. Su padre jamás le habló, lo abandonó para siempre. CORO

He let himself be swayed by public opinion. His father never spoke to him, he abandoned him forever. REFRAIN

"Y no te quejes, Andrés. No te quejes por nada. Si del cielo te caen limones, aprende a hacer limonada". CORO

Don't complain, Andrés. Don't complain about anything. If life deals you lemons (If lemons fall on you from the sky), learn to make lemonade. REFRAIN

Y mientras pasan los años, el viejo cediendo un poco

And as the years go by, the old man yielding a bit

Simón ya ni le escribía, Andrés estaba curioso. CORO

Simón didn't write to him anymore, Andrés was curious. REFRAIN

Por fin hubo noticia de donde su hijo estaba.

Finally there was news of where his son was.

Andrés nunca olvidó el día de esa triste llamada.

Andrés never forgot the day of that sad call.

En la sala de un hospital de una extraña enfermedad murió Simón.

Simón died of a strange sickness in a hospital room.

Es el verano del noventa y tres, al enfermo de la cama diez nadie lloró. Simón, Simón, Simón. CORO

It's the summer of '93; no one cried for the sick person in bed ten. Simón... REFRAIN

Hay que tener compasión, basta ya de moraleja.

You've got to have compassion, that's enough moral.

El que esté libre del pecado, que tire la primera piedra. CORO

Let s/he who is free of sin cast the first stone. REFRAIN

El que nunca perdona tiene destino cierto
S/he who never forgives has the certain fate

de vivir amargos recuerdos en su propio infierno.

of living bitter memories in her/his own hell.

Prior to working with a song, we typically provide a brief introduction to the artist and his or her music. In the case of Willie Colón, for example, if we have no desire to explore at greater length the singer's biography, we indicate that Colón is a Puerto Rican who was born in New York City, has played a

major role in the world of Latin “salsa” (another topic which can be explored) since the 1970’s, and often includes social commentary and satire in his music. For a more extensive introduction, we direct students to Willie Colón’s official website at <http://www.williecolon.com>, which they can navigate in either Spanish or English in order to view photos, read recent interviews, and participate in a forum with other fans, among other features.

I. Developing Listening Proficiency

A. Beginning Level: We use the first two verses and chorus to help beginning students reinforce the sound/symbol association of Spanish vowels and their use in diphthongs. This activity can be done with beginning students the first week of class after they have learned and practiced the Spanish vowel system. After listening several times and checking answers, this activity can be extended to introduce or review the linking that takes place in oral discourse. Students listen again to this portion of the song and circle all the sounds that are joined by vowel linking between words, which often produces diphthongs in spoken Spanish.

EL GRAN VARÓN (Willie Colón)

Willie Colón: The Best II (Sony Music Entertainment, 1994)

En la sala de un hospital a las nueve y c_____enta y tres nació Simón.

Es el verano del sesent_____ y tres: el orgullo de don Andrés por ser varón.

Fue cr_____do como los demás, con mano d_____ra, con severidad, nunc_____ opinó.

Cuando cr_____zcas vas a estudiar la misma v_____na que tu papá, óyelo bien. Tendr_____s que ser un gran varón.

Al extranjero se f_____ Simón, lejos de casa se le olvidó _____quel sermón.

Cambió la forma de cam_____nar, usaba falda, lápiz lab_____l y un carterón.

C_____nta la gente que un día el papá fue a visit_____rlo sin avisar, ¡vaya qué error!

Y una mujer l_____ habló al pasar, le dijo hola, ¿qué tal, papá? ¿Cómo te va?

¿No me con_____ces? Yo soy Simón. Simón, t_____ hijo, el gran varón.

CORO: No se puede corr_____gir a la naturaleza; a lo que nace doblado jamás otro lo _____ndereza.

B. Intermediate/Advanced Level: Prior to listening, students are given 5-10 minutes to read the lyrics and to indicate in the margins what would be logical words based on the context. Alternatively, this can be assigned as homework in prepara-

tion for listening to the song in class. The song is played twice (once for the advanced level) for the students to fill in the blanks with the missing words. Work is checked together as a class after listening to the song and filling in the lyrics. To foster the use of context to anticipate meaning and the development of listening skills, the instructor may reward in some way both the student who has guessed the most words correctly in the pre-listening phase and the student who has accumulated the most correct answers in the listening phase. In order to shift the emphasis from individual competition, a group step can be introduced with students comparing answers prior to, and after, listening to the song and arriving at group answers for both activities.

EL GRAN VARÓN (Willie Colón)

En la sala de un hospital a las nueve y cuarenta y tres _____ Simón.

Es el _____ del sesenta y tres: el orgullo de don Andrés por ser varón.

_____ criado como los demás, con mano dura, con severidad, nunca opinó.

Cuando crezcas vas a estudiar la misma vaina que tu papá, _____ bien. Tendrás que ser un gran varón.

Al extranjero se fue Simón, lejos de casa se le _____ aquel sermón.

Cambió la forma de caminar, _____ falda, lápiz labial y un carterón.

Cuenta la gente que un día el papá _____ a visitarlo sin avisar, ¡vaya qué error!

Y una mujer le habló al pasar, le _____ hola, ¿qué tal, papá? ¿Cómo te va?

¿No me conoces? Yo soy Simón. Simón, tu _____, el gran varón.

CORO: No se puede corregir a la _____ a lo que _____ doblado _____ otro lo _____ndereza.

Se _____ llevar por lo que dice la gente

Su padre jamás le habló, lo _____ para siempre. CORO

“Y no te quejes, Andrés. No te quejes por nada.

Si del cielo te caen limones, aprende a hacer _____”. CORO

Y mientras pasan los años, el viejo cediendo un poco

Simón ya ni le _____, Andrés estaba curioso. CORO

Por fin hubo noticia de donde su hijo _____.

Andrés nunca olvidó el día de esa triste llamada.

En la sala de un hospital de una extraña enfermedad _____ Simón.

Es el verano del noventa y tres, al enfermo de la cama diez nadie _____.

Simón, Simón, Simón. CORO

Hay que tener _____, basta ya de moraleja

El que esté libre del pecado, que tire la primera _____ . CORO

El que nunca _____ tiene destino cierto

de vivir amargos recuerdos en su propio _____.

II. Practicing Vocabulary and Grammatical Structures

The song is played a third (second for advanced students) time, and students circle each use of the preterite and imperfect tenses in the narration of Simón’s story. This exercise permits students to review the contrasting uses of these two past tenses at the same time that they reinforce the narrative content of the song. Depending on the group’s proficiency in narrating and describing in the past, students should be asked to explain why the two tenses are used in certain representative cases.

The following activity is designed for students at the intermediate level, although it can also be used as a review for advanced students or adapted to work with some of the more subtle distinctions between the simple past tenses in Spanish. The exercise provides practice of the preterite and imperfect in a narrative inspired by the story of Simón which highlights the inferior status accorded to women in Hispanic cultures.

LA MAMA DEL GRAN VARON (Simón’s Mom)

La pobre mamá de Simón no _____ (saber) qué hacer. Ella tampoco _____ (poder) opinar en su casa. Su situación _____ (ser) típica de muchas familias puertorriqueñas. En casi todos los asuntos familiares, su esposo _____ (mandar) y ella _____ (obedecer).

Simón’s poor mom didn’t know what to do. She couldn’t express her opinion in her home, either. Her situation was typical of many Puerto Rican families. In almost all family matters, her husband ordered and she obeyed.

Doña Elena, la mamá, _____ (ser) una señora muy buena y cariñosa. Después de que Simón _____ (nacer), ella _____ (pasar) largas horas pensando en el futuro de su hijo. _____ (Soñar-ella) con un futuro muy feliz para su hijo-una carrera profesional, una esposa devota y muchos hijos.

Doña Elena, his mom, was a very good and affectionate woman. After Simón was born, she would spend long hours thinking about the future of her son. She dreamed about a happy future for her son-a professional career, a devoted wife, and many children.

Doña Elena _____ (sospechar) que Simón no _____ (estar) muy contento en la casa familiar, pero ella _____ (decidir) no decirle nada a su esposo. Cuando don Andrés _____ (saber) la verdad sobre la orientación sexual de su hijo, no _____ (querer) ni hablar de Simón. Doña Elena, en cambio, _____ (desear) visitar a vsu hijo y llevarlo de nuevo a casa. Sin embargo, don Andrés _____ (negarse) a discutir el tema y no le _____ (permitir) a ella comunicarse con Simón.

Doña Elena suspected that Simón wasn't very happy in the family home, but she decided not to say anything to her husband. When Don Andrés learned the truth about the sexual orientation of his son, he refused to even talk about Simón. Doña Elena, on the other hand, wanted to visit her son and bring him back home. Nevertheless, Don Andrés refused to discuss the topic and did not permit her to communicate with Simón.

Cuando los dos _____ (recibir) la triste noticia de la muerte de su `nico hijo, la pobre señora _____ (ponerse) histérica y tuvieron que darle un sedante para calmarla. Ella _____ (estar) tan deprimida y desesperada que _____ (pensar) en suicidarse. ¡Qué situación más trágica! El pobre Simón _____ (estar) muerto y su mamá y su papá _____ (sentirse) solos. Sin duda alguna, hay que tener comunicación, compasión y comprensión para promover la felicidad familiar.

When the two received the sad news of the death of their only son, the poor woman became hysterical and they had to give her a sedative to calm her. She was so depressed and desperate that she thought about committing suicide. What a tragic situation! Poor Simón was dead and his mother and his father felt alone. Without a doubt, there has to be communication, compassion, and understanding to promote family happiness.

III. Utilizing Content for Conversation and Discussion

A. Intermediate Level: La vida de Simón (Simón's Life)-Working in pairs or small groups, students retell Simón's story *in the past* by answering the following questions *in their own words*.

1. ¿Por qué estaba tan contento don Andrés con el nacimiento de Simón?
Why was Don Andrés so happy with Simón's birth?
2. ¿Cómo crió él a Simón?
How was Simón raised?
3. ¿Cómo cambió Simón después de salir de la casa paternal?
How did Simón change after leaving home?
4. ¿Por qué rechazó Andrés a su hijo?
Why did Andrés reject his son?
5. ¿Cómo se puede aplicar el mensaje del coro al caso particular de Simón?
How can the message of the chorus be applied to Simón's particular case?
6. ¿Qué significa el consejo de "aprende[r] a hacer limonada" para Andrés?
What does the advice to "learn how to make lemonade" mean for Andrés?
7. ¿Cómo murió Simón?
How did Simón die?
8. ¿Cuál es el mensaje/la moraleja de esta historia de Simón?
What is the message/moral of Simón's story?

B. Advanced Level: Si yo fuera Simón... (If I were Simón...)-Students work in groups of three to prepare a role play based on the characters Simón, Don Andrés, and Doña Elena. They select a topic of conflict for the three, a setting for their argument, and the moment in Simón's life that the conflict takes place. Students should be encouraged to develop as they see fit the characters of the rebellious son, the authoritarian father, and the submissive mother. After the role plays are presented to the class, discussion can be organized around students' conception and representation of the characters, the source of the conflicts, how the conflicts were handled, alternative ways to handle the conflicts, etc.. This activity can be extended by having students represent a parent-child conflict based on their own life experiences.

IV. Introducing Cultural or Historical Dimensions of the Target Language

A. Intermediate Level: El SIDA (AIDS)-Depending on the level of maturity of the

students, Simón's story can be connected to the students' experience. Intermediate students could be divided into small groups to list the causes of AIDS, propose solutions, and share stories related to AIDS. Grammar review can also be incorporated by having each group prepare a list of recommendations in command form to reduce the spread of AIDS in their community.

B. Advanced Level: El machismo en América Latina (*Machismo* in Latin America)-As a homework assignment for an advanced-level class, students are asked to do a library or internet search to find several definitions or descriptions of *machismo* as it pertains to the Hispanic world. They record them in Spanish and share them in class with their classmates. During class discussion, they are encouraged to relate these descriptions to the song (the importance of being a "gran varón," the homophobia of Latino cultures), and they are asked to assess to what extent our society is *machista*, supporting their views with examples from their experience. The latter can also be examined in the form of a debate, with one group affirming and the other denying that we live in a *machista* culture. Additional topics also treated in the song's narrative, such as transgendering and transvestism, can be analyzed as well at the instructor's discretion.

Guidelines For The Use Of Songs In Class

The following general guidelines, divided into three stages (pre-listening, listening, and post-listening) have been adapted from recommendations made by Morley (1991) and Oxford (1993). We have found them most useful for a song, regardless of their specific purpose(s):

Pre-listening:

- Give a real, communicative purpose to the song, and make sure that the content is personally interesting and motivating to learners.
- Stimulate background knowledge and help learners identify the purpose of the listening activity with the appropriate pre-listening tasks (brainstorming vocabulary, presenting and discussing cultural information regarding the topic of the song, pointing out keywords and/or ideas in the song). However, we try not to provide too much information about the song in advance, so that students are encouraged to find out more about it by themselves under the teacher's supervision.
- Give clear directions directly related to the listening and post-listening stages, and ask students to focus on what they have been asked to do.

- Make sure that audio equipment is ready: cassette or CD player, electrical outlets, cables, batteries, and do not forget to cue the cassette or CD to the right song!
- Do not go overboard in your expectations: remember how difficult it may be to understand certain songs in your own mother language.
- Maintain a non-threatening and positive classroom climate to minimize student anxiety before and during the listening activity.

Listening:

- Make sure that everyone understands the directions for the listening activity.
- In order to reduce the likelihood of sensory overload that produces student panic and frustration, stress what students are specifically supposed to listen for and to process.
- Complete the activity in the same time as your students.
- Do not interrupt the listening while students are working on the activity.
- Set aside some time (if possible) to play the song again if you find it necessary.

Post-listening:

- Require students to respond to the listening activity in some meaningful fashion, either individually or in small groups or pairs.
- Use different techniques and strategies to help students process the materials related to the listening activity and infer the overall meaning of the song (providing linguistic clues, reading aloud specific segments of the lyrics, writing key words or expressions on the board, asking questions, drawing, gesturing, etc.).
- Provide supplementary information or activities that will expand students' understanding of the cultural and linguistic features of the song and enable them to relate it to their personal experience.
- Relate the listening activity or activities to your initial purposes, and the purposes of the materials that follow.

Conclusion

Music has traditionally been an underutilized resource in the FL classroom, just as listening has played the role of Cinderella for far too long. Given the increased availability of music today, it is time to exploit the rich linguistic and cultural content offered by singers and songwriters from the target culture. By observing a "principled flexibility," songs can be used to develop students' language proficiency

and foster greater understanding and appreciation of the target culture.

As foreign language educators, we are painfully aware that repetition in meaningful contexts is necessary for language acquisition. Part of the beauty of using songs is that students will willingly listen to music until they "know it by heart." Of course, instructors must take into account students' musical tastes, the clarity of the recording, the comprehensibility of the input for their proficiency level, the content of the lyrics, and the objectives to be accomplished, among other things. However, we have found music in the classroom to be a tremendous motivating force for student learning. Accordingly, we heartily encourage colleagues to heed Horace's sage counsel and to take full advantage of this *dulce et utile* resource to enliven their classrooms and to enrich their students' language and cultural learning experience.

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Endnotes

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