

**FOSTERING EFL LEARNERS' NARRATIVE SKILLS
THROUGH CONTEMPORARY MUSIC:
THE CASE OF COUNTRY MUSIC**

**LAS HABILIDADES NARRATIVAS
DE LOS APRENDIENTES DE ILE:
EL CASO DE LA MÚSICA COUNTRY
CONTEMPORÁNEA**

https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_misc/mj.20237385

ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA

Universidad de Huelva

afernandez@oc-languages.com

<<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2660-9749>>

41

Abstract

Facilitating oral skills through authentic materials such as music has been essential in language teaching. Nonetheless, a study whose core element is to foster adolescent English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' narrative skills through contemporary music with highly emotional lyrics is still non-existent. A questionnaire was administered to fifty-eight EFL learners to know their attitude towards the implementation of social issues and music in class. Additionally, both the themes and the structure of two hundred and sixteen songs which constitute the *Corpus of Contemporary Country Songs* (CCCS) were analysed. A possible connection between the narrative and linguistic elements of the songs in the corpus was also considered. The results show that there exists a narrative structure in contemporary country music songs and a wide range of themes towards which students have shown a positive attitude. Furthermore, a positive connection between the different narrative and linguistic criteria employed to analyse the songs included in the corpus was also detected. These results suggest that these song lyrics may serve to promote EFL students' narrative skills.

Keywords: contemporary country music, culture, emotions, foreign language teaching, narrative skills.

Resumen

Facilitar las habilidades orales a través de materiales auténticos como puede ser la música ha sido esencial en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Sin embargo, no existen estudios cuyo elemento central sea desarrollar las habilidades narrativas de los estudiantes adolescentes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE) a través de canciones con letras emotivas. Así, se administró un cuestionario a cincuenta y ocho estudiantes adolescentes de ILE para conocer su actitud en cuanto a la implementación de temas sociales y música en clase. Por otro lado, tanto la temática como la estructura narrativa de las doscientas dieciséis canciones que conforman el *Corpus of Contemporary Country Songs* (CCCS) han sido analizadas. Se ha explorado también la posible conexión entre los criterios narrativos y lingüísticos que han servido para analizar las canciones. Los resultados muestran que existe una estructura narrativa en las canciones del género country contemporáneo y una amplia gama de temas hacia los que los estudiantes han demostrado una actitud positiva. Además, se ha identificado una relación positiva entre los diferentes criterios utilizados para analizar las muestras del corpus. Estos resultados sugieren que las letras de estas canciones podrían servir para fomentar las habilidades narrativas del alumnado de ILE.

42

Palabras claves: música country contemporánea, cultura, emociones, enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, habilidades narrativas.

1. Introduction

One of the most frequent activities of adolescents is listening to foreign music while paying attention to song lyrics. Indeed, music has a tremendous influence on adolescents. From an educational point of view, songs can be used for a wide range of purposes in language teaching, including that of facilitating oral skills (Bora 2012). Moreover, songs have the ability to promote the affective-social relationship among students, providing a pleasant classroom environment, reducing anxiety levels and increasing motivation (Toscano-Fuentes and Fonseca-Mora 2012). In addition to this, one of the essential elements of songs is their linguistic content, that is, their lyrics. Song lyrics may induce several emotions, such as sadness or astonishment, as well as activate different psychological mechanisms, like visual imagery or memory (Barradas and Sakka 2022). It should be noted that there are songs whose lyrics may transmit radical messages, affecting learners' democratic values (Sánchez-Vizcaíno 2022). By contrast, some songs convey emotions in different ways, some tell memorable and moving stories with which students can empathize or understand from their own experiences (Shen

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

2009; Williams 2022). This may be the case of the vast majority of songs in the country music genre, whose main characteristic is the faithful reproduction of daily life while telling their characters' story (Armstrong and Greider 2013; Fell and Sporleder 2014; Eaton et al. 2022). At the same time, these musical resources represent authentic material, allowing cultural aspects to be brought closer to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Likewise, foreign language (FL) learners consider authentic videos to be effective tools to acquire cultural knowledge (Sinyashina 2022). Despite the availability of a variety of multimodal resources in the language classroom, learners normally have few opportunities to explore foreign cultures in class (Sobkowiak 2021).

Using storytelling in EFL teaching helps develop cognitive and affective abilities. Stories include a plot that produces enthusiasm among language learners with the possibility of being able to empathize with the characters, and it can serve as an effective resource to create debates where students can give their own opinion (Kennedy 2014). According to El Majidi et al., "debate is an interactive pedagogical tool" (2018: 35). The problem lies in that adolescent EFL learners sometimes find it difficult to participate in topic discussions (Cunningham 2014). Likewise, the lack of communicative activities based on relevant topics may also hinder the learners' participation in class (Green et al. 2002; El Majidi et al. 2018).

43

The increasing interest in multimodality and the development of literacies beyond the written word has seen a shift to a pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group 1996; Cope and Kalantzis 2015) in language learning. This pedagogical shift is characterized by the active role of learners who engage in meaning-making by means of different modes of communication such as music, images or gestures, and the opportunities which may arise in the language classroom to represent multiple experiences. In this respect, music is regarded as an effective tool to foster affective-social relationships which enable students to engage in communicative activities from multiple points of view. Despite the fact that music-mediated communicative activities could promote students' narrative skills, this type of activity is not very frequent in the EFL class. Similarly, research frequently focuses on the beneficial use of songs with young learners, but research on song use with adolescents is limited (Tegge 2018).

This paper aims to analyze whether contemporary country music could help to develop adolescent EFL learners' narrative skills. For this reason, a corpus of contemporary country songs was created. To explore whether contemporary country songs contain a narrative structure and a variety of themes, a series of narrative elements as well as a thematic analysis were considered. Additionally, the relationship between a series of narrative and linguistic criteria was also considered to determine the suitability of this music genre as a pedagogical tool. Moreover,

getting to know adolescent EFL learners' opinion and attitude towards certain social issues was also of interest to establish a connection with the themes found in contemporary country songs.

2. Music in FL teaching

Both music and language can be used as instruments of communication. The elements that unify this relationship are the vocal and auditory channels, as well as the similarities with respect to melody and rhythm (Patel 2007; Sacks 2007; Fonseca-Mora et al. 2011). Similarly, according to Thompson and Quinto, “music is viewed as a language of emotion, with melodic features signifying distinct emotions” (2011: 363). Thus, considering that music plays a very important role in the emotional development of adolescents, it can also be regarded as a fundamental element in language teaching.

44

In addition to music, song lyrics are also an essential tool in language teaching (Shen 2009). Songs provide students with an approach to oral discourse through lyrics that are easy to remember (Christiner and Reiterer 2013). It should be noted that memory can be activated by the melody and rhythm of songs, being greater when musical elements are combined with movements and images (Iwata 2005). In addition, song lyrics often represent the discursive characteristics of spoken language and, accordingly, students are exposed to the authenticity of speech and the different varieties of the English language. In this regard, deviant clippings such as *gonna* or *wanna* are repeatedly used in music (Kreyer and Mukherjee 2007).

With respect to the role of multimodal resources in the language classroom, the use of auditory input linked to images or texts like music videos is considered very popular (Sankey et al. 2010), especially among secondary students due to their familiarity with multimedia. In this sense, multimodal learning by means of audiovisual products is regarded as one of the most effective techniques in the field of FL teaching (Becerra and Muñoz 2013), since this music-mediated learning experience plays a pivotal role in students' learning process (Cores-Bilbao et al. 2019).

Another important element when using songs in the language classroom is the fact that most of the time their lyrics make reference to cultural aspects of the target language (TL), promoting learners' cultural competence (Reina 2010). The fact of experiencing cultural diversity makes it possible to establish both cognitive and affective links between people and cultures (Beacco et al. 2016). Conversely, a culturally-alienated individual shows a lack of interest towards the

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

culture of others (Krishnappa 2020) and has no cultural empathy (Ridley and Lingle 1996).

All things considered, song lyrics may serve as a medium for class discussion, providing students with the perfect scenario so that they can give their own opinions on topics they may find motivating, since song lyrics carry shared meaning with which adolescents may identify (Messner et al. 2007). Song lyrics also have the capacity to raise awareness about social issues like gender equality or mental health. In this regard, students may feel confident enough to develop their narrative skills while reducing the state of anxiety that they normally feel during the act of speaking in front of their classmates.

2.1. The Emotional Factor in Music

Music can be considered a very important part of teenage life. Adolescents are at a stage in which they start to develop their personalities and feelings. They no longer receive affective input through motherese or the language used in educational centers, but they require another affective source with which they feel safe. Murphey (2013) argues that adolescents feel the need to receive this affective input and that they can find it through songs, which also create a positive classroom environment. In a similar vein, Thompson and Quinto (2011) focus on the importance of understanding how music can communicate and induce emotional states, and stress the different ways in which music affects us.

45

With respect to the relationship between song lyrics and emotions, song lyrics can create mental images that, in turn, evoke emotions in the listeners and facilitate memorization (Eschrich et al. 2008). Likewise, song lyrics express emotions which allow listeners to empathize with the 'persona' created (Levinson 2006), engaging them in a kind of emotional contagion (Juslin and Västfjäll 2008). Thus, this musical and emotional input could be very effective for adolescent students who study a FL, as these experiences could trigger psychological processes in a group capable of reflecting different emotions (Lewis 1999).

The problem is that adolescents lack the ability to recognize and label emotions across different situations as well as to communicate them properly by means of their emotional lexicon even in their L1. Recent studies suggest that students with higher levels of emotional competence or emotional understanding are more willing to participate in class than those who show lower levels in this competence (Bora 2012; Fernández-García and Fonseca-Mora 2022). Similarly, prior research highlights the significance of meaningful communicative tasks through music, which allow students to express themselves from an affective point of view (Shen 2009).

2.2 Narrative Structure of Song Lyrics

In the light of the studies that have focused on EFL learning through different authentic materials, music has undoubtedly been one of the most used resources (Murphey 2013; Kennedy 2014). Moreover, these studies have also proved the benefits of using songs to develop students' narrative skills (Bora 2012). Nonetheless, little has been studied on how to improve EFL learners' narrative skills through contemporary music, especially country music with highly emotional lyrics.

Stories provide students with opportunities to develop acquired language within a context and are an inexhaustible source of authentic material (Deacon and Murphey 2001). Likewise, stories bring language learners closer to the culture of the TL (Ryshina-Pankova et al. 2021). The approach to what constitutes the center of narrations and the characteristic features of narrative discourse allows us to reflect on what elements are necessary for students to develop their narrative skills. The influential narrative model by Labov (2006) specifies the parts of narratives, namely, *abstract*, *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluation*, *resolution*, and *coda*. Thus, once the characteristic elements of the narrative text are known, there is a myriad of stories that students can produce with the possibility of being based on personal experiences, popular tales (Deacon and Murphey 2001) or, as proposed in the present study, contemporary country songs.

46

The analysis of narrative discourse focuses on aspects such as the way a story is told or its basic elements, like the figure of the narrator, the characters or the sequential order within a timeline (Gillig 2000). Similarly, importance is also given to the theme on which a narrative revolves. Thus, the development of students' narrative skills could be facilitated through vivid discussions on relevant topics extracted from certain song lyrics (Murphey 2013). Furthermore, stories help us make sense of the world around us (Deacon and Murphey 2001) and create a feeling of belonging to a specific culture. In this regard, songs also provide multiple cultural contexts that can serve as a resource in the development of narratives of personal identity (Loseke 2007).

2.3. Contemporary Country Music

Popular culture, and hence popular music, is an essential part in the development of identity in adolescence. In addition, it seems that the most determining factor for choosing a specific music genre among adolescents is emotional and the greatest influence comes from the media. As far as contemporary country music is concerned, a recent study indicated that this is one of students' musical preferences in the USA (Petitbon and Hitchcock 2022; Wright 2022). However, this music genre is not very popular among Spanish adolescents because they are not normally

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

exposed to it and, therefore, they have no opportunity to develop a musical taste for it whatsoever.

Contemporary country music is rooted in a culture that has the less favored social classes at the center of its creation. This type of music is normally associated with a low status because it is related to the social class that lives in rural areas or in less populated areas of the south of the USA (Dyck 2021). These musical compositions are full of feeling and culture typical of the working-class people from which they first originated (Armstrong and Greider 2013).

Like folk tales or traditional songs, the origin of country music is also found in the oral tradition. As far as the tone of most contemporary country songs is concerned, the natural use of speech permeates them with authenticity (Armstrong and Greider 2013; Eaton et al. 2022). Moreover, both the voiced southern drawl and twang are distinctive characteristics of this music genre (Mann 2008). These songs are often described as rhyming dialogues in which the melody that accompanies them is simply an extension of the conversation. In addition, spoken opening lines or spoken last lines can also be found through a narrative voice (Fox 2004). With regard to how the narrative develops in these song lyrics, it is normally oriented towards the succession of events within a timeline (Lewis 1999). Additionally, dialogues between the characters sometimes appear through the use of direct style, creating a more natural scenario within the story that is being told (Fox 2004). In addition, as in any story, there also exists a moment of greater tension or climax that normally corresponds to a bridge near the end of the song and that also involves a change in the musical rhythm and tone, giving an unexpected perspective on the theme. In a study carried out with algorithmically generated lyrics, Tee et al. (2022) found that the most common terms in country song lyrics are *got*, *yeah* or *oh*. These terms are generally related to colloquial speech and affect, especially those that express an emotional state.

The discourse of country music has evolved as a social construct and no longer are certain issues considered taboo in Western society, such as the dominant role of women, same-sex relationships or social policy discontent (Hubbs 2014; Shooter 2022). Fox (2004) refers to this music genre as the synthesis of the working class, which recounts its daily experiences within its working-class world. Contemporary country song lyrics also tell stories about real life, memories and reactions to things that are authentic and that happen to all of us (Armstrong and Greider 2013; Engh 2013). Unlike other music genres, these songs are characterized by combining instrumental simplicity with lyrical stories that are told in just three minutes. On occasions, instrumentation occupies much of these compositions, evoking a wide range of emotions. At a textual level, students can benefit from the schematic structure of this genre in order to develop their communication skills.

These structures include intertextuality, intensification, inversion, reported speech as well as everyday language, therefore adding authenticity to the discourse (Fox 2004). All in all, the authenticity of contemporary country song lyrics is undoubtedly the most important element of these musical compositions, and they represent a fundamental source of cultural and emotional socialization.

3. The Study

The main objective of this study is to show the usefulness of contemporary country songs in developing EFL learners' narrative skills. A series of quantitative and qualitative analyses were used. Firstly, information was collected on students' opinions towards the topics that are dealt with in this music genre. Secondly, the *Corpus of Contemporary Country Songs* (CCCS) was created with a two-fold aim; on the one hand, it is intended to carry out a thematic analysis of the song lyrics to know their suitability in relation to the adolescent students' interests; and, on the other, it is aimed at determining whether this music genre can serve to develop the students' narrative skills. Finally, to determine the appropriateness of this musical resource for adolescent students, the relationship between a series of narrative and linguistic elements was also analyzed.

48

3.1. Participants

A total of fifty-eight Spanish adolescent students from three different high schools participated in the present study. The first group (n=20) is in the fourth year of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) and the average age is sixteen years. As for the other two groups (n=38), they study post-Compulsory Secondary Education (Post-CSE) and their average age is seventeen years. Both groups receive four hours of English lessons per week at school. Informed consent was obtained from all individuals included in this study.

3.2. Research Questions

The questions informing this current study are the following:

1. What do teenage students think about the use of the themes of contemporary country music in EFL teaching?
2. To what extent are the themes of contemporary country music suited to the interests of teenage students?
3. To what extent can contemporary country song lyrics serve as a discourse model to develop EFL students' narrative skills?
4. Is there any connection between the narrative and the linguistic elements which are found in contemporary country songs?

3.3. Research Instruments

In order to know the students' attitudes and opinions towards the implementation of social issues and music in the EFL class, a questionnaire with ten items based on a 5-point Likert scale was administered. In addition, references were included with respect to students' attitudes towards contemporary country music (see Appendix 1).

Additionally, it was necessary to know whether contemporary country songs deal with topics with which adolescent students can identify. For this reason, the CCCS was created. The number of songs that constitute this corpus is two hundred and sixteen, and they have been selected mainly taking into account the year of publication, that is, those songs that were published between 2000 and 2017. The main reason for this time span was to offer a diachronic analysis, considering the continuous social changes in relation to adolescents' tastes and attitudes as well as the changes that have occurred in the country music genre in terms of the treatment of certain social issues, such as the empowering of women in all spheres of life, same-sex relationships or the social discontent over aggressive policies.

To determine whether there exists a narrative structure in contemporary country song lyrics, a total of thirteen narrative criteria were taken into account based on different studies and models (Gillig 2000; Deacon and Murphey 2001; Labov 2006) on the characteristics of narratives. Thus, this quantitative analysis was performed following the main features of the narrative discourse, such as the identification of a spatial and temporal sequence, the existence of a narrative voice or the presence of characters.

Along with the analysis of the narrative elements, a series of linguistic elements was also considered. To find out the appropriateness of the linguistic contents, the descriptors required in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Companion Volume* [CEFR/L/CV] (Council of Europe 2020) and the linguistic contents established for each level in the Spanish education law were consulted. Thus, the use of cohesive elements in the text, the difficulty of the vocabulary with respect to idiomatic expressions or cultural references, and the grammatical structures were considered. To assess the degree of difficulty of the American variety, the artists' accent was taken into account, which in this case corresponds to the so-called twang or nasal voice. In this way, it was possible to determine the degree of suitability of these songs as didactic tools in EFL teaching. Likewise, to explore whether the language used in the CCCS was appropriate for the students' proficiency, the most frequently used words of the most representative themes in this CCCS were analyzed using the tool *AntConc* (Anthony 2011). All the song lyrics were processed in *AntConc*, but only lemmas were taken into account. Therefore, non-content words such as determiners, conjunctions or

prepositions were excluded from the search. In addition to this, a correlation analysis between the narrative and linguistic elements was performed using the 21.0 SPSS statistics package. This allowed us to consider whether there is a trend in contemporary country songs with respect to these elements and their suitability in EFL teaching.

3.4. Procedures

First of all, to know how much the students agree or disagree with the ten items included in the questionnaire on their attitude and opinion towards certain social issues in the language classroom, they were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was administered in only one session and its completion took approximately five minutes.

As regards the CCCS, the sources that have been consulted to select the most representative songs in this music genre were the charts produced by popular sources such as *Billboard*, *CMT*, *The Boot*, or *Taste of Country*. Due to the rapid evolution of this music genre in recent decades and the emergence of so-called crossover artists,¹ these sources have been indicative to reflect which artists fall into the country genre; hence, constituting inclusion criteria for the CCCS. The song lyrics were collected using a variety of sites.² For every song retrieved, a detailed manual analysis of its thematic content was carried out. Although the content was generally unambiguous, interviews that both artists and authors of the songs have given to different media were also taken into account as inclusion criteria. With regard to exclusion criteria, out of the two hundred and fifty-eight songs that originally made up the corpus, forty-two songs were excluded because they contained either inappropriate language or references to some addictions such as alcohol or drugs in a celebratory way; therefore, the CCCS consists of two hundred and sixteen songs.

Once the songs were categorized by theme following the lists created by the aforementioned sources as well as through a detailed analysis of their lyrics, the next step was to establish narrative criteria following different studies (Gillig 2000; Deacon and Murphey 2001; Labov 2006) to determine whether there exists a narrative structure in contemporary country song lyrics. Thus, a quantitative analysis was carried out in which thirteen narrative elements have served to establish whether a song meets the essential characteristics of a narrative. Moreover, the socioemotional component was also included in one of these elements by means of the use of interjections. In addition, different linguistic criteria were also considered to determine whether the use of these song lyrics was appropriate for the students' proficiency level. Thus, the descriptors of the CEFRL/CV (Council of Europe 2020) as well as the basic concepts required for

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

each group as established in the Spanish education law were consulted. Appendix 2 shows a list of the narrative and the linguistic criteria that were considered to explore the suitability of contemporary country songs in EFL teaching.

4. Results

4.1. Students' Attitudes

To know the students' attitude and opinion towards the implementation of social issues and music in class, information was collected and the percentage was calculated for each group, that is, CSE (n=20) and post-CSE (n=38). A brief clarification of the defining characteristics of the country music genre was made prior to the administration of the questionnaire (Table 1).

Statements	CSE (%)	Post-CSE (%)
1. I think democratic values should be taught in class.	55.00	62.90
2. I can give my opinion on social issues.	25.00	53.91
3. I think drug addiction should be discussed in class.	20.00	35.21
4. I think bullying should be addressed in class.	45.00	75.80
5. I think gender equality should be addressed in class.	55.00	88.98
6. I think freedom of sexual and gender identity should be discussed in class.	50.00	58.40
7. It is very important to know the culture of the TL.	55.00	88.98
8. Learning a FL through songs is very important.	60.00	58.40
9. Music is an effective medium for dealing with social issues.	45.00	40.72
10. I am interested in contemporary country music.	30.00	38.40

51

Table 1. Students' attitude towards social issues and music in language learning

As can be observed, the most valued item for those EFL students in CSE was the use of songs in language learning (60.00%), followed by the treatment of gender equality in class (55.00%), the teaching of democratic values (55.00%) and the incorporation of cultural elements (55.00%). Similarly, the students reported a positive attitude towards the discussion of sexual and gender identity (50.00%). With respect to the degree of maturity or attitude towards certain social issues such as drug addiction, only 20% reported a positive attitude.

By contrast, those students who study post-CSE selected gender equality issues (88.98%) and the teaching of culture (88.98%) as the most valued items. Regarding their opinion towards social issues, 53.91% reported a positive attitude. With respect to the use of music in language teaching, 58.48% of post-CSE students considered it to be a very effective tool. Whilst less than half of CSE students reported a moderate attitude towards the discussion of bullying in class (45.00%), those post-CSE students reported a favorable attitude (75.80%). Concerning the implementation of contemporary country music in the English classroom, 30.00% of CSE students and 38.40% of post-CSE students reported a positive attitude. This may be due to their ignorance of this music genre and their lack of exposure to it.

4.2. Contemporary Country Music Themes

The analysis of the contemporary country song lyrics that make up the CCCS (n=216) made it possible to identify twenty-four different themes, including an additional category ‘*Others*’ which contains themes whose representation was not explicit enough to establish an independent category (Table 2).

52

As the data show, an attempt was made to be accurate with theme selection without going into subcategories or details. However, it was possible that two different themes coexist in the same song, so the most prominent theme was

Themes	(n=216)	(%)	Themes	(n=216)	(%)
Abuse	5	2.31	Love	8	3.70
Adolescence	23	10.64	Memories	14	6.48
Addictions	5	2.31	Others	13	6.01
American culture	20	9.25	Patriotism	3	1.38
Arms	4	1.85	Religion	7	3.24
Fame / Money	9	4.16	Sexuality	2	0.92
Family	17	7.86	Social criticism	6	2.77
Free time	6	2.77	Sports	7	3.24
Freedom	14	6.48	Values	6	2.77
Friendship / Feud	4	1.85	War	13	6.01
Heartbreak	9	4.16	Women in society	7	3.24
Illness	8	3.70	Working class	6	2.77

Table 2. Contemporary country music themes

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

assigned in these cases. One particular case was the distinction between *American culture* and *Patriotism*. In this regard, the former was selected for those songs which focus on certain American cultural customs or cultural references, whereas the latter was reserved for those songs with a powerful pro-American message.

The results indicated that the most representative theme in the CCCS was *Adolescence* (10.64%), in which concerns towards bullying or feelings of an inferiority complex are raised in songs such as “Invisible” or “Road less travelled”, respectively. Regarding issues related to adolescence, the students showed interest in topics that normally occur during this stage, such as drug addiction or bullying.

The second most representative theme was *American culture* (9.25%). This theme is characterized by intertextual references to American culture, as evidenced in songs such as “Southern comfort zone” or “Dustbowl children”, and even textual fragments from other country pieces, as is the case in “This is country music”. It is not surprising that this is a recurring theme in this music genre, since American society in general is often associated with a feeling of deep patriotism. With respect to the students' attitude towards the culture of the TL, it seems that there are numerous songs through which the students could come into contact with the socio-cultural elements of the USA.

Songs about *Family* issues accounted for 7.86%, a topic in which secondary school students showed great interest. Similarly, there were also songs whose main theme was *Memories* (6.48%) as in “Laughed until we cried or I go back”. Likewise, songs which represent the sense of *Freedom* accounted for 6.48% of the CCCS, especially through the use of means of transport such as trains or trucks. A list of the songs which make up the CCCS categorized by themes can be found in Appendix 3.

4.3. Narrative Elements in Contemporary Country Songs

The next stage in the data collection analysis was to observe whether contemporary country song lyrics follow a narrative structure. A quantitative analysis was carried out in which thirteen narrative elements were established to determine whether a specific song meets the essential characteristics of a narrative (see Table 3).

The results revealed the significance of the existence of a narrative voice or narrator (93.06%) throughout the song. Within this criterion, the use of a first-person voice or narrator (59.26%) should be highlighted in comparison to the use of the third person or dialogues (33.80%). A dialogue was considered when two narrative voices are

Narrative elements	(n=216)	(%)
1. Spoken introduction	7	3.24
2. Identification of a temporal sequence	118	54.63
3. Identification of a geographic location	140	64.81
4. Existence of a narrative voice:	201	93.06
Songs with an articulated self	128	59.26
Songs without an articulated self	73	33.80
5. Description of a character or a space-time setting	171	79.17
6. Use of direct speech to introduce characters' words	76	35.19
7. Use of characteristic linguistic elements of a narrative	11	5.09
8. Use of a specific theme throughout the song	216	100.00
9. Use of socio-emotional elements by means of interjections	135	62.50
10. Use of a rhythmic scheme that adds continuity to the song structure	153	70.83
11. Features which hold the listener's attention throughout the song	145	67.13
12. Internal repetitions that produce unification and maintain the listeners' attention	194	89.81
13. Use of a climax corresponding to a bridge at the end of a song	122	56.48

Table 3. Analysis of narrative elements

present in the same song. An example can be found in “Two black Cadillacs” (*And the preacher said ‘he was a good man’ / And his brother said ‘he was a good friend’*).

In addition to the identification of a geographic location or region (64.81%), there was also a description of it or of the characters of the song (79.17%). Similarly, a temporal sequence was also identified through specific connectors related to time (54.63%), which contribute to its development. In addition, the use of interjections (62.50%) reflected the different ways of expressing emotions, like *Oh*, which normally expresses surprise, or *Yeah*, which may express approval but also joy and enthusiasm. Furthermore, the use of repetitions constituted 89.81% of the songs. This was mainly achieved by repeating words or phrases, which help to evoke different emotions such as sadness or surprise. An example of this can be found in “Road less traveled” (*Put your hands up / put your hands up*). This gives continuity to the plot line of the song, as also happens with the existence of a rhythmic scheme (70.83%), which is mainly achieved by the use of rhyming pairs (Fell and Sporleder 2014). The following rhythmic pattern could be found in “Whiskey

lullaby” (*We found him with his face down in the pillow / And when we buried him beneath the willow*). This continuity is also reflected in elements which hold the listener’s interest (67.13%), for example, personal pronouns like *You* or *We*. This is also achieved by means of a chorus in which the same verses are repeated throughout the song (89.81%). Another characteristic element could be found at the end of the song through the bridge, which would correspond to the moment of greatest tension or climax in a story (56.48%). In contrast to this data, only 5.09% of the songs included characteristic phrases of stories as in “Boy gets a truck” (*It ain’t a story as old as time*) or in *You were mine* (*It was happy ever after*).

4.4. Linguistic Elements

Along with these narrative elements, linguistic criteria were also considered. The linguistic descriptors of the CEFRL/CV (Council of Europe 2020), as well as the basic contents as established in the Spanish education law for each group were consulted. Despite the difference of age between both groups, levels of proficiency do not differ considerably. On the one hand, the presence of cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, connectors and lexical cohesion suggested the degree of textual complexity. The appropriateness of the lexical variety was determined with regard to the topics which are normally covered in each educational stage such as entertainment, jobs or family matters. As regards grammatical structures, the degree of complexity was informed by the presence of complex sentences or structures intended to be studied at a specific level. On the other hand, the degree of difficulty in understanding the song was determined considering the characteristics of the American variety with regard to the artist’s accent and the use of twang or nasal voice (Table 4).

55

As far as the linguistic elements are concerned, a high percentage of songs included grammatical structures (85.19%) and cohesive devices (78.24%) that are suitable for the students’ proficiency level according to the CEFRL/CV (Council of Europe 2020) and the basic contents required for each group in the Spanish education law. Song lyrics included the use of modality, relative clauses or reported

Linguistic elements	(n=216)	(%)
1. Use of cohesive elements	169	78.24
2. The vocabulary is appropriate for the students’ proficiency level	156	72.22
3. The grammatical structures are appropriate for the students’ proficiency level	184	85.18
4. No listening comprehension difficulty	148	68.52

Table 4. Analysis of linguistic elements

speech, which is appropriate for both groups. Similarly, a wide variety of lexis referring to entertainment, jobs, emotions or transports was detected. Although the English variety used in contemporary country music is marked by colloquialisms, 72.22% of the songs contained lexical content that can be easily recognized by EFL learners. Finally, despite the fact that this music genre is normally associated with the southern states of the USA where the use of drawl or twang is characteristic, 68.52% of the songs did not include phonological aspects that make them difficult to understand.

The most frequently used words of the five most representative themes of the CCCS —that is, *Adolescence*, *American culture*, *Family*, *Freedom* and *Memories*— were analyzed using the tool *AntConc* (Anthony 2011). This allowed us to determine whether the language used in this music genre is suitable for the students' age. Non-content items like conjunctions, prepositions or determiners were excluded. Thus, the use of verb clippings and nouns such as *gonna* or *love* was representative of the category *Adolescence*. This is indicative of the trend of adolescents to use colloquialism and abbreviations. The most frequently used words for the category *American culture* were *country*, *ain't* or *southern*. Within the category *Family*, we could find words such as *love* or *home*, which are connected with the emotional lexicon. Within the category *Freedom* both *car* or *truck* represented the most frequently used words, whereas *time* and *change* were the most representative words within the *Memories* category. In this regard, we can observe that students at this stage of their learning process would be familiar with the most representative words of these categories.

56

4.5. Relationship between Narrative and Linguistic Elements

The correlation analysis between the different criteria allowed us to know whether there is any relationship between them and whether they can explain any trend with regard to the type of elements which can be found in contemporary country song lyrics. This will allow us to establish whether this music genre may be of interest to facilitate the development of EFL learners' narrative skills. In order to establish a possible connection between both elements, a correlation analysis was performed. Figure 1 shows the connection between the linguistic and narrative criteria.

As can be observed, a positive and statistically significant connection was detected between the narrative and the linguistic criteria ($r = 0.244$; $P < 0.001$). This data reveals that the higher the number of linguistic criteria met, the higher the number of narrative elements in a song. In this sense, those song lyrics that meet the linguistic criteria established for this study —that is, use of cohesive

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

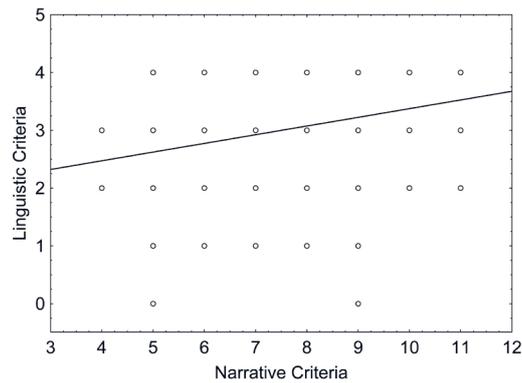


Figure 1. Relationship between linguistic and narrative criteria

devices, appropriateness of both vocabulary and grammatical usage— and phonological appropriateness, include a higher number of narrative elements. This positive trend may be indicative of the relevance of the sample that constitutes the CCCS for its implementation in the EFL classroom to foster students' narrative skills.

57

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The secondary education curriculum establishes that pedagogical actions should facilitate the development of students' narrative skills in everyday situations by means of authentic material to create meaningful learning. In order to determine the effectiveness of contemporary country songs in this respect, a total of two hundred and sixteen songs which make up the CCCS were analyzed. The classification process coincides with other studies on lyrics-based analysis (Fell and Sporleder 2014). In addition, a questionnaire was administered to fifty-eight EFL students seeking their opinion about current social issues.

The data revealed that students have an overall positive attitude towards certain social issues being discussed in the EFL classroom. Similarly, the students at a more advanced stage reported a more positive attitude towards the discussion of issues considered controversial such as domestic violence or drug addiction. Whereas CSE students showed more interest in the use of music in language

learning, post-CSE students displayed a more favorable attitude towards issues such as bullying or gender equality. This suggests that students would be mature enough to deal with various issues in class. In this regard, students would have the opportunity to discuss different topics found in contemporary country songs. Some of these topics may be considered controversial, but if used properly, they may contribute to engaging class discussions. In line with studies carried out by Murphey (2013), this type of resource could be used in class discussions to facilitate the students' narrative skills.

By exploring the most representative themes of this music genre, it was demonstrated that songs about adolescence, American culture, family, freedom or memories constitute a large part of the CCCS. This is in line with the themes explored by Engh (2013) on the representation of certain themes in country music songs. These results are consistent with previous studies that highlight the importance of providing students with meaningful communicative tasks on everyday topics with which they can feel identified (Shen 2009; Zhang and Head 2009). All these themes can be easily recognized by EFL learners, and they may even feel identified with them at some point. As for cultural themes that focus on American society, these may be introduced into teaching through these song lyrics, therefore establishing a connection between the students' culture and that of the TL.

58

Moreover, the results of the present study also showed that contemporary country song lyrics have a structure which is similar to that of a narrative. Consistent with studies that highlight the effectiveness of stories to develop a narrative voice (Gillig 2000; Loseke 2007), the present study detected certain characteristic elements of storytelling such as the presence of a narrative voice, the use of dialogues or the identification of characters in a spatial and temporal dimension. To a lesser extent, direct speech is also used to represent the characters' words. We can conclude that the narrative elements of contemporary country song lyrics coincide with those included in relevant studies and models (Gillig 2000; Deacon and Murphey 2001; Labov 2006). There is no doubt that this is a fundamental characteristic of the stories, in addition to the existence of the description of the characters or the location where the story takes place, which may be associated with the *orientation* in a story. All this implies that these song lyrics may be used with these groups to deal with issues of daily life and applied in class to facilitate the students' narrative skills.

It can be said that having developed their critical thinking and having the ability to give their opinion on certain issues at such an age, students can also engage in emotion-based communicative activities. The incorporation of affective tools into this educational stage is of great importance, especially if we attend to

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

musical tastes, since there are some musical genres with recurrent messages of misogyny and violence. Moreover, the emotional element of this music genre has also been detected in the song lyrics through the use of a bridge at the end of the song and the persona created in such musical compositions. At the same time, this may be associated with the resolution in a story, that is, the climactic moment. Similarly, the data revealed the ubiquitous presence of socio-emotional elements by means of interjections or emotion-laden words such as *love* or *family*. This is in line with the study performed by Tee et al. (2022) with regard to the presence of emotion-related words as the most common elements in country song lyrics. These songs may evoke different emotions and provoke different responses, such as laughter, sadness or compassion. Indeed, since stories activate our feelings, song lyrics can be associated with a specific theme and developed into a narrative as an emotional and intellectual reaction to the events that are presented in the song (Hirvela 2001).

With respect to the linguistic criteria and the students' proficiency level, it was found that adolescent students, especially at higher stages, would be familiar with the linguistic elements. This was determined by consulting the descriptors of the CEFRL/CV (Council of Europe 2020) and the contents required for CSE and post-CSE. The linguistic elements found in the songs coincide with those reported by Fox (2004). Despite the presence of the American variety in most country artists, this may not imply a barrier when it comes to oral comprehension, since more than half of the songs (68.52%) did not include a marked accent or the use of distinctive phonological characteristics such as drawl or twang. We can conclude, then, that the analysis of the linguistic criteria shows that the cohesive, lexical, grammatical and phonological elements are suitable for students at this stage. In addition, the analysis of lyrics with regard to the most representative words coincides with the results found by Kreyer and Mukherjee (2007), showing that deviant clippings characteristic of spoken language are repeatedly used. Thus, this may suggest that the students would be familiar with the most frequently used words in the songs which constitute the CCCS.

A positive trend between the narrative and the linguistic criteria used to determine the appropriateness of this music genre was detected. Thus, the more linguistic elements a song contains, the more narrative elements are included. This could suggest that country songs resemble stories in the sense that their lyrics are similar to structures in which different grammatical forms and the use of cohesive elements provide coherence to the narrative. As regards the most frequently used words in this music genre, the results are in line with those reported by Fell and Sporleder (2014). All in all, these findings may suggest that contemporary country music may serve as an effective pedagogical resource which can be used in different

multimodal ways to facilitate the development of EFL students' narrative skills; therefore, students will be engaged in heterogeneous narratives from multiple points of view (Cope and Kalantzis 2015).

Among the limitations of this study, reference to the linguistic elements should be made with respect to the generalization of these items. For a more accurate analysis, future studies should include more elements in a clearer manner. In addition, the number of participants turned out to be rather small for a study of these characteristics, so future studies should include a larger sample of students. Moreover, these results should be treated with caution, as the questionnaire on the students' attitudes was not validated. Finally, further research might focus on students' awareness of the usefulness of country music to facilitate their narrative skills in the EFL class.

To conclude, this study has explored the potential impact of contemporary country music on EFL students' narrative skills. Recognizing the effectiveness of authentic materials which include both music and affect is a preliminary step for their implementation in the EFL class. In this regard, EFL students may benefit from the use of contemporary country song lyrics as authentic materials to develop their narrative skills.

60

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the R+D project "Multiliteracies for adult at-risk learners of additional languages" (MultiLits) (PID2020-113460RB-100), funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033. The author would like to extend his appreciation to the students, teachers, and headmasters from the school who collaborated in this study. Moreover, the author would like to express his gratitude to Dr Francisco Javier Zamora Camacho for the statistical analyses and to Dr M^a Carmen Fonseca-Mora.

Notes

1. The term 'crossover' refers to those artists who attract different types of audience. On occasions, this term has had negative connotations since it has been associated with a cultural appropriation that implies the dissolution of the characteristics of a genre.

2. The following sites have proven to be the most reliable sources: www.songfacts.com, www.cowboylyrics.com, www.azlyrics.com and www.metrolyrics.com

Works Cited

- ANTHONY, Laurence. 2011. *AntConc*. Version 3.2.2, Waseda University, Japan. Available from <<http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/>>.
- ARMSTRONG, Edward G. and Paul L. GREIDER. 2013. "The Presentation of Identity in the Work Songs of Johnny Cash." *Popular Music and Society* 36 (2): 216-233. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2012.656480>>.
- BARRADAS, Gonçalo T. and Laura S. SAKKA. 2022. "When Words Matter: A Cross-cultural Perspective on Lyrics and their Relationship to Musical Emotions." *Psychology in Music* 50 (2): 650-669. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356211013390>>.
- BEACCO, Jean-Claude, Michael BYRAM, Marisa CAVALLI, Daniel COSTE, Mirjam Egli CUENAT, Francis GOULLIER and Johanna PANTHIER. 2016. *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- BECERRA, Beatriz and Rosa MUÑOZ. 2013. "Teaching English through Music: A Proposal of Multimodal Learning Activities for Primary School Children." *Encuentro* 22: 16-28.
- BORA, Duygu. 2012. "The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Developing Speaking Skills: From Brain-based Perspective." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (1): 2094-2098. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.434>>.
- CHRISTINER, Markus and Susanne M. REITERER. 2013. "Song and Speech: Examining the Link between Singing, Talent and Speech Imitation Ability." *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (874). <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00874>>. Accessed April 3, 2023.
- COPE, Bill and Mary KALANTZIS. 2015. *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Learning by Design*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- CORES-BILBAO, Esther, Analí FERNÁNDEZ-CORBACHO, Francisco H. MACHANCOSES and M. Carmen FONSECA-MORA. 2019. "A Music-mediated Language Learning Experience: Students' Awareness of their Socio-emotional Skills." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2238). <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02238>>. Accessed April 3, 2023.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- CUNNINGHAM, Clare. 2014. "Keep Talking: Using Music during Small Group Discussions in EAP." *ELT Journal* 68 (2): 179-191. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cct097>>.
- DEACON, Brad and Tim MURPHEY. 2001. "Deep Impact Storytelling." *English Teaching Forum* 39 (4): 10-15.
- DYCK, John. 2021. "The Aesthetics of Country Music." *Philosophy Compass* 16 (5): 1-14. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12729>>.
- EATON, Judy, Avnee SHARMA and Danielle LAW. 2022. "'I May Look Fake but I'm Real Where it Counts': Positivity and Authenticity in the Songs of Dolly Parton." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. Advance online publication. <<https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000527>>.
- EL MAJIDI, Abid, H.C.J. DE GRAAFF and Daniel M.L. JANSSEN. 2018. "Students' Perceived Effect of In-class Debates in Second Language Learning." *European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL* 7 (1): 35-56.

- ENGH, Dwayne. 2013. "Musical Cultures: To What Extent is the Language Used in the Song Lyrics of Hip-Hop and Country Music Reflective of and Shaped by Cultural Beliefs and Experiences?" *International Journal of English Linguistics* 3 (5): 78-86. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v3n5p78>>.
- ESCHRICH, Susann, Thomas F. MÜNTE and Eckart O. ALTENMÜLLER. 2008. "Unforgettable Film Music: The Role of Emotion in Episodic Long-term Memory for Music." *BMC Neuroscience* 9 (48): 1-7. <<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2202-9-48>>.
- FERNÁNDEZ-GARCÍA, Antonio and M. Carmen FONSECA-MORA. 2022. "EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency and its Connection to Emotional Understanding, Willingness to Communicate and Musical Experience." *Language Teaching Research* 26 (1): 124-140. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819891868>>.
- FELL, Michael and Caroline SPORLEDER. 2014. "Lyrics-based Analysis and Classification of Music." In Tsujii, Junichi and Jan Hajic (eds.) *Proceedings of COLING, the 25th International Conference on Computational Linguistics: Technical Papers*. Dublin: Dublin City University and Association for Computational Linguistics: 620-631. <<https://aclanthology.org/C14-1059.pdf>>. Accessed 28 April 2021.
- FONSECA-MORA, Carmen, Carmen TOSCANO-FUENTES and Kathleen WERMKE. 2011. "The Relation between Language Aptitude and Musical Intelligence." *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies* 22 (1): 101-118.
- FOX, Aaron A. 2004. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-class Culture*. USA: Duke U.P.
- 62 GILLIG, Jean-Marie. 2000. *El cuento en pedagogía y en reeducación*. México: Ed. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- GREEN, Christopher F., Elsie R. CHRISTOPHER and Jacqueline LAM. 2002. "Developing Discussion Skills in the ESL Classroom." In Richards, Jack C. and Willy A. Renandya (eds.) *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.: 225-235.
- HIRVELA, Alan. 2001. "Connecting Reading and Writing through Literature." In Belcher, Diane and Alan Hirvela (eds.) *Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 109-134.
- HUBBS, Nadine. 2014. *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- IWATA, Kiyomi. 2005. *The Effect of Active and Passive Participation with Music on the Foreign Language Acquisition and Emotional State of University Music Students*. PhD Dissertation. The Florida State University School of Music, Florida State University, USA.
- JUSLIN, Patrik N. and Daniel VÄSTFJÄLL. 2008. "Emotional Responses to Music: The Need to Consider Underlying Mechanisms." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 31: 559-621. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X08005293>>.
- KENNEDY, Victor. 2014. "Critical, Cultural and Multimodal Approaches to Using Songs as Literature in Language Learning." *Libri and Liberi* 3: 295-310.
- KREYER, Rolf and Joybrato MUKHERJEE. 2007. *The Style of Pop Song Lyrics: A Corpus-Linguistic Pilot Study*. Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie.
- KRISHNAPPA, Preetham. 2020. "Ineludible Cultural Alienation." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research* 12 (3): 1262-1266.
- LABOV, William. 2006. "Narrative Pre-construction." *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (1): 37-45. <<https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.07lab>>.

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

- LEVINSON, Jerrold. 2006. "Musical Expressiveness as Hearability-as-expression." In Kieran, Mathew (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Blackwell: 192-206.
- LEWIS, George H. 1999. "Traps, Troubles, and Social Issues: Country Music in the Social Science Classroom." *Popular Music and Society* 23 (4): 61-82.
- LOSEKE, Donileen R. 2007. "The Study of Identity as Cultural, Institutional, Organizational, and Personal Narratives: Theoretical and Empirical Integrations." *Sociological Quarterly* 48 (4): 661-688. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2007.00096.x>>.
- MANN, Geoff. 2008. "Why does Country Music Sound White? Race and the Voice of Nostalgia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3 (1): 63-100. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870701538893>>.
- MESSNER, Beth A., Art JIPSON, Paul J. BECKER and Bryan BYERS. 2007. "The Hardest Hate: A Sociological Analysis of Country Hate Music." *Popular Music and Society* 30 (4): 513-531. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760701546380>>.
- MURPHEY, Tim. 2013. *Music and Song*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.
- NEW LONDON GROUP. 1996. "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures." *Harvard Educational Review* 66: 60-92. <<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.1.17370n67v22j160u>>.
- PATEL, Aniruddh. 2007. *Music, Language, and the Brain*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.
- PETITBON, Aimée M. and David D. HITCHCOCK. 2022. "What Kind of Music do you Like? A Statistical Analysis of Music Genre Popularity over Time." *Journal of Data Science* 20 (2): 168-187. <<https://doi.org/10.6339/22-JDS1040>>.
- REINA, Edgar. 2010. "The Use of Songs as a Tool to Work on Listening and Culture in EFL Classes." *Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica* 15: 121-138.
- RIDLEY, Charles R. and Danielle W. LINGLE. (1976) 1996. "Cultural Empathy in Multicultural Counseling: A Multidimensional Process Model." In Pedersen, Paul B., Juris G. Draguns, Walter J. Lonner and Joseph E. Trimble (eds.) *Counseling across Cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 21-46.
- RYSHINA-PANKOVA, Marianna, Willi BARTHOLD and Emily BARTHOLD. 2021. "Enhancing the Content- and Language-integrated Multiple Literacies Framework: Systemic Functional Linguistics for Teaching Regional Diversity." *System* 96(102403). <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102403>>. Accessed April 3, 2023.
- SACKS, Oliver. 2007. *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- SÁNCHEZ-VIZCAÍNO, M. Carmen. 2022. *Multimodalidad y cultura democrática en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- SANKEY, Michael, Dawn BIRCH and Michael GARDINER. 2010. "Engaging Students through Multimodal Learning Environments: The Journey Continues." <<https://www.ascilite.org/conferences/sydney10/procs/Sankey-full.pdf>>. Accessed May 8, 2021.
- SHEN, Chunxuan. 2009. "Using English Songs: An Enjoyable and Effective Approach to ELT." *English Language Teaching* 2 (1): 88-94.
- SHOOTER, Robyn. 2022. "Appalachian Pride: The Role of Sentimentality, Regional Identity, and Female Agency in the Music of June Carter Cash and Dolly Parton." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 34 (3): 104-118. <<https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2022.34.3.104>>.
- SINYASHINA, Ekaterina. 2022. "Spanish University Students' Use of Authentic Videos and their Motives for Engaging in this Informal Activity: A Study with EFL Learners of Different Proficiency Levels." *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 65: 59-86. <https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_misc/mj.20226830>.

Antonio Fernández García

SOBKOWIAK, Pawel. 2021. "Intercultural Teaching in the EFL Classroom - the Polish Context" *International Journal of English Studies* 21 (2): 1-28. <<https://doi.org/10.6018/ijes.466411>>.

TEE, Tze Huat, Belicia Qiao Bei YEAP, Keng Hoon GAN and Tien Ping TAN. 2022. "Learning to Automatically Generating Genre-specific Song Lyrics: A Comparative Study." In Villazón-Terrazas, Boris, Fernando Ortiz-Rodríguez, Sanju Tiwari, M. Ángel Sicilia and David Martín-Moncunill (eds.) *Knowledge Graphs and Semantic Web*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer: 62-76. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21422-6_5>.

TEGGE, Friederike. 2018. "Pop Songs in the Classroom: Time-filler or Teaching Tool?" *ELT Journal* 72 (3): 274-284. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx071>>.

THOMPSON, William and Lena QUINTO. 2011. "Music and Emotion: Psychological Considerations." In Schellekens, Elisabeth and Peter Goldie (eds.) *The Aesthetic Mind: Philosophy and Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.: 357-375.

TOSCANO-FUENTES, Carmen and M. Carmen FONSECA-MORA. 2012. "La música como herramienta facilitadora del aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera." *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria* 24: 197-213.

WILLIAMS, Todd O. 2022. "CBT Structures and Strategies in the Lyrics of Kacey Musgraves." *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 35 (4): 231-240. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2022.2113279>>.

WRIGHT, Alexandra. 2022. "Popular Music and Modern Ensembles." *Music Educators* 70 (4): 13-15.

64

ZHANG, Xiuqin and Katie HEAD. 2010. "Dealing with Learner Reticence in the Speaking Class." *ELT Journal* 64 (1): 1-9. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp018>>.

Received: 29/10/2022
Accepted: 3/02/2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

Appendix 1. Questionnaire on students' attitude and opinion towards social issues and music in class

The questionnaire consists of ten statements on your attitude and opinion towards the implementation of social issues and music into the EFL class. You need to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement considering the following codes: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I think democratic values should be taught in class.					
2. I can give my opinion on social issues.					
3. I think drug addiction should be discussed in class.					
4. I think bullying should be addressed in class.					
5. I think gender equality should be addressed in class.					
6. I think freedom of sexual and gender identity should be discussed in class.					
7. It is very important to know the culture of the TL.					
8. Learning a foreign language through songs is important.					
9. Music is an effective medium for dealing with social issues.					
10. I am interested in contemporary country music.					

65

Appendix 2. Narrative and linguistic elements

Narrative elements

1. Spoken introduction
2. Identification of a temporal sequence
3. Identification of a geographic location

Narrative elements

4. Existence of a narrative voice:
Songs with an articulated self
Songs without an articulated self
 5. Description of a character or a space-time setting
 6. Use of direct speech to introduce characters' words
 7. Use of characteristic linguistic elements of a narrative
 8. Use of a specific theme throughout the song
 9. Use of socio-emotional elements by means of interjections
 10. Use of a rhythmic scheme that adds continuity to the song structure
 11. Features which hold the listener's interest throughout the song
 12. Internal repetitions that produce unification and maintain the listeners' attention
 13. Use of a climax corresponding to a bridge at the end of a song
-

Linguistic elements

1. Use of cohesive elements
 2. The vocabulary is appropriate for the students' proficiency level
 3. The grammatical structures are appropriate for the students' proficiency level
 4. No listening comprehension difficulty
-

66

Appendix 3. List of songs included in the CCCS categorized by themes

Themes (n=24)	Songs (n = 216)
Abuse	"Black eyes, blue tears" (Shania Twain), "Blown away" (Carrie Underwood), "Church bells" (Carrie Underwood), "Concrete angel" (Martina McBride), "Two black Cadillacs" (Carrie Underwood)
Adolescence	"18 inches" (Lauren Alaina), "A place in this world" (Taylor Swift), "After 17" (Alan Jackson), "Cop car" (Sam Hunt), "Don't laugh at me" (Mark Wills), "Fifteen" (Taylor Swift), "Georgia rain" (Trisha Yearwood), "Get out of this town" (Carrie Underwood), "God love her" (Toby Keith), "Invisible" (Hunter Hayes), "Long teenage goodbye" (Lady A), "Love story" (Taylor Swift), "Nothin' like the first time" (Lady A), "Peter Pan" (Kelsea Ballerini), "Pretty" (Lauren Alaina), "Road less travelled" (Lauren Alaina), "Sierra" (Maddie and Tae), "Suds in the bucket" (Sara Evans), "Stealing Cinderella" (Chuck Wicks), "Storm warning" (Hunter Hayes), "Storyline" (Hunter Hayes), "You belong with me" (Taylor Swift), "Young love" (Kip Moore),
Addictions	"Copperhead road" (Steve Earle), "Hemingway's whiskey" (Kenny Chesney), "Whiskey and you" (Tim McGraw), "Whiskey Lullaby" (Brad Paisley and Alison Krauss), "Wine after whiskey" (Carrie Underwood)

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

Themes (n=24)	Songs (n = 216)
American culture	"Alabama song" (Allison Moorer), "Airstream song" (Miranda Lambert), "Automatic" (Miranda Lambert), "California" (Tim McGraw), "Chicken fried" (Zac Brown Band), "Country and Western" (Tim McGraw), "Dustbowl Children" (Alison Krauss and Union Station), "Gonna come back as a Country song" (Alan Jackson), "Hard way to make an easy living" (Toby Keith), "Huntin' fishin' lovin' every day" (Luke Bryan), "It's alright to be a redneck" (Alan Jackson), "Mississippi girl" (Faith Hill), "Southern comfort zone" (Brad Paisley), "Southern drawl" (Josh Turner), "Southern style" (Darius Rucker), "Southern way of life" (Deana Carter), "Telluride" (Tim McGraw and Faith Hill), "The rocket that grandpa rode" (Jimmy Buffett), "There's a girl in Texas" (Trace Adkins), "This is Country music" (Brad Paisley)
Arms	"Cupid's got a shotgun" (Carrie Underwood), "Granddaddy's arm" (Blake Shelton), "Guns" (Justin Moore), "Time to get a gun" (Miranda Lambert)
Fame / Money	"Big star" (Kenny Chesney), "Celebrity" (Brad Paisley), "Everybody knows" (The Chicks), "Gold rush" (Gloriana), "Ka-ching!" (Shania Twain), "Last dollar" (Tim McGraw), "Rich and miserable" (Kenny Chesney), "Winning streak" (Ashley Monroe), "You're not my God" (Keith Urban)
Family	"Daughter of a workin' man" (Danielle Bradbery), "Family is family" (Kacey Musgraves), "From the ground up" (Dan+Shay), "Ghosts" (Jake Owen), "Grandpa" (Justin Moore), "Her life's a song" (Alan Jackson), "Home" (Dolly Parton), "House of 1,000 dreams" (Martina McBride), "Mama's song" (Carrie Underwood), "Meanwhile back at Mama's" (Tim McGraw and Faith Hill), "Sunken lands" (Rosanne Cash), "Teenage daughters" (Martina McBride), "Thank God for hometowns" (Carrie Underwood), "The letter to daddy" (Kelly Pickler), "There goes my life" (Kenny Chesney), "While he's still around" (Florida Georgia Line), "Welcome to Earth" (Sturgill Simpson)
Free time	"Boats" (Kenny Chesney), "Muckalee Creek water" (Luke Bryan), "Pontoon" (Little Big Town), "Redneck Yatch club" (Craig Morgan), "Sounds of summer" (Dierks Bentley), "Tennessee river run" (Darryl Worley)
Freedom	"All I wanted was a car" (Brad Paisley), "Beat this summer" (Brad Paisley), "Boy gets a truck" (Keith Urban), "Drive" (Alan Jackson), "Greyhound bound for nowhere" (Miranda Lambert), "Highway 20 ride" (Zac Brown Band), "Island boy" (Kenny Chesney), "Long hot summer" (Keith Urban), "Mud on the tires" (Brad Paisley), "My church" (Maren Morris), "My house" (Kacey Musgraves), "Sea stories" (Sturgill Simpson), "Take a little ride" (Jason Aldean), "The dashboard" (Chris Young)
Friendship / Feud	"Friends" (Blake Shelton), "I know a guy" (Chris Young), "My old friend" (Tim McGraw), "Only prettier" (Miranda Lambert)
Heartbreak	"Best of intentions" (Trace Adkins), "Dirty laundry" (Carrie Underwood), "Tin man" (Miranda Lambert), "Trouble" (Gloriana), "What hurts the most" (Rascal Flatts), "White liar" (Miranda Lambert), "You lie" (The Band Perry), "You'll think of me" (Keith Urban), "You were mine" (The Chicks)

Antonio Fernández García

Themes (n=24)	Songs (n = 216)
Illness	"Forever changed" (Carrie Underwood), "I'm gonna love you through it" (Martina McBride), "Live like you were dying" (Tim McGraw), "Raymond" (Brett Eldredge), "Silent house" (The Chicks), "Skin" (Rascal Flatts), "The locket" (Lauren Alaina), "Tough" (Craig Morgan)
Love	"Breathe" (Faith Hill), "Making memories of us" (Keith Urban), "Oh, love" (Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood), "Tennessee" (Sugarland), "The lighthouse's tale" (Nickel Creek), "The way you love me" (Faith Hill), "Then" (Brad Paisley), "You're still the one" (Shania Twain)
Memories	"American honey" (Lady A), "Blood brothers" (Luke Bryan), "Free" (Little Big Town), "I go back" (Kenny Chesney), "Last time for everything" (Brad Paisley), "Laughed until we cried" (Jason Aldean), "Letter to me" (Brad Paisley), "Moments" (Emerson Drive), "The best day" (Taylor Swift), "The house that built me" (Miranda Lambert), "The road" (Emmylou Harris), "Trip around the sun" (Jimmy Buffett and Martina McBride), "Troubadour" (George Strait), "You're gonna miss this" (Trace Adkins)
Others	"Big black dog" (Emmilou Harris), "Blue smoke" (Dolly Parton), "Delilah" (Blake Shelton), "Long black train" (Josh Turner), "Little boy grows up" (Luke Bryan), "Night train" (Jason Aldean), "Noise" (Kenny Chesney), "Nothin' better to do" (Leann Rimes), "Online" (Brad Paisley), "Robbin' trains" (Josh Turner), "Runaway train" (Little Big Town), "Selfie#theinternetisforever" (Brad Paisley), "Stripes" (Brandy Clark)
Patriotism	"Courtesy of the red, white and blue" (Toby Keith), "Only in America" (Brooks and Dunn), "Where were you?" (Alan Jackson)
Religion	"I saw God today" (George Strait), "Jesus take the wheel" (Carrie Underwood), "Salvation works" (Jennifer Nettles), "Temporary home" (Carrie Underwood), "That old King James" (Scotty McCreery), "Thy will" (Hillary Scott), "When I get where I'm going" (Brad Paisley and Dolly Parton)
Sexuality	"Ain't nothing 'bout you" (Brooks and Dunn), "Honey bee" (Blake Shelton)
Social criticism	"Accidental racist" (Brad Paisley), "California girls" (Gretchen Wilson), "Gone Green" (Brad Paisley), "Not ready to make nice" (The Chicks), "Soap opera" (Brandy Clark), "Somethin' more" (Sugarland)
Sports	"All-American girl" (Carrie Underwood), "Coach" (Kenny Chesney), "Indian Summer" (Brooks and Dunn), "Swing" (Trace Adkins), "The baseball song" (Corey Smith), "The boys of fall" (Kenny Chesney), "What I almost was" (Eric Church)
Values	"Happy ending" (Sugarland), "Hard to figure out (the airport song)" (Lee Brice), "Humble and Kind" (Tim McGraw), "I forgive you" (Kelly Prickler), "Speak to a girl" (Tim McGraw and Faith Hill), "Thank you" (Keith Urban)

Fostering EFL Learners' Narrative Skills through Contemporary Music

Themes (n=24)	Songs (n = 216)
War	<p>"8th of November" (Big and Rich), "American child" (Phil Vassar), "American Soldier" (Toby Keith), "Arlington" (Trace Adkins), "Come home soon" (SheDaisy), "I drive your truck" (Lee Brice), "I just came back from a war" (Darryl Worley), "If you're reading this" (Tim McGraw), "Just a dream" (Carrie Underwood), "Riding with private Malone" (David Ball), "Sleepin' with the telephone" (Reba McEntire and Faith Hill), "The bumper of my SUV" (Chely Wright), "Travelin' soldier" (The Chicks)</p>
Women in society	<p>"Girl in a Country song" (Maddie and Tae), "I'm a survivor" (Reba McEntire), "Juanita" (Shania Twain), "Pocahontas proud" (Gretchen Wilson), "She's not just a pretty face" (Shania Twain), "This one's for the girls" (Martina McBride), "When God-fearin' women get the blues" (Martina McBride)</p>
Working class	<p>"Amarillo sky" (Jason Aldean), "Blowin' smoke" (Kacey Musgraves), "Hard hat and a hammer" (Alan Jackson), "Shiftwork" (Kenny Chesney and George Strait), "The sacrifice" (Dolly Parton), "Working man's PhD" (Aaron Tippin)</p>