

USE OF MUSIC IN EFL LEARNING: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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Tiivistelmä <p>Tässä tutkielmassa tarkasteltiin opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä musiikin käytöstä englannin opiskelussa. Musiikin ja kielen yhteyksiä on tutkittu laajasti, ja on todettu, että musiikki on monipuolinen työkalu kielten opiskelussa. Opiskelijoiden näkökulmasta aihetta on kuitenkin tutkittu hyvin vähän. Tässä tutkielmassa selvitettiin, millaisia kokemuksia opiskelijoilla on musiikin käyttämisestä englannin opiskelussa vapaa-ajalla sekä koulukontekstissa, millaisia hyötyjä he näkevät musiikilla olevan englannin oppimisessa ja mitä muita toiveita tai ideoita heillä on liittyen musiikin käyttöön englannin oppitunneilla.</p> <p>Tutkimus perustui kvalitatiivisiin menetelmiin. Aineistonkeruu toteutettiin puolistrukturoituna yksilö- ja ryhmähaastatteluin. Haastateltavia oli yhteensä kolme ja he olivat lukion toisen vuosikurssin opiskelijoita. Aineisto kerättiin helmikuussa 2021 ja sen analyysissa hyödynnettiin laadullista sisällönanalyysia.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että opiskelijoiden kokemukset musiikin käytöstä vapaa-ajalla olivat samankaltaisia: musiikkia käytettiin runsaasti. Kokemukset koulumaailmasta puolestaan vaihtelivat. Osalla kokemuksia oli vain vähän, kun taas osalla musiikkia oli käytetty oppitunneilla monipuolisemmin. Musiikilla nähtiin olevan lukuisia positiivisia vaikutuksia englannin opiskeluun ja oppimiseen niin kielen eri osa-alueiden oppimisen näkökulmasta kuin yleisesti opiskelua tehostavien seikkojenkin näkökulmasta. Opiskelijoiden mukaan musiikin avulla voidaan parantaa lausumista ja laajentaa sanavarastoa. Lisäksi musiikki voi toimia apuvälineenä keskittymisen, muistin ja mielialan kohentamisessa sekä sen hyödyntäminen voi kasvattaa motivaatiota englannin opiskelua kohtaan. Tutkimustuloksissa nousi esiin myös genrevalinnan ja oppilastuntemuksen tärkeys. Lisäksi opiskelijat esittivät esimerkkejä musiikkia hyödyntävistä harjoituksista, jotka voisivat heidän mielestään edistää kielen oppimista.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Music is deeply connected to our everyday lives. We hear music on the radio, in grocery stores, and in restaurants. We watch movies and tv-shows where music plays a central role, we go to concerts, and listen to music on our own. Music offers us a way of coping with our emotions: it can comfort us when we are feeling sad, it can help us feel energetic when working out, and it can boost our happiness. Music is connected to cultures and can teach us about history and different traditions that people have had. Furthermore, music can be used for interaction and expressing ourselves. Since music is such a big part of our lives, it could be rational to bring it to the language classroom, too.

During the recent years, integration of different subjects has been emphasized in the field of education. Moreover, learner autonomy and student-centred learning have been highlighted in The National Core Curricula more and more, which supports the idea of using teaching methods and materials that suit and interest the students. In the field of language teaching and learning, innovative and creative ways of teaching have been discussed and the potential of music as a tool in language learning has been recognized. For example, according to Anna Halme from The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL (Veirto 2016), there has been a growing interest in utilizing musical methods in language teaching.

The similarities between music and language have been investigated widely (See e.g. McMullen & Saffran 2004; Besson & Schön 2001). There is a great deal of studies that show how music can be used to support language learning and how beneficial combining music into language learning can be (See e.g. Alisaari 2016; Engh 2013). In addition, teachers' experiences and perceptions have been studied in many master's theses (See e.g. Keskinen 2014; Pasanen 2010). However, only little research has been conducted on students' perspective on the phenomenon, which indicates the need for further research.

Personally, I became interested in this topic because I am studying to become both a music and English teacher. Additionally, I am curious of exploring how these two subjects could be used together and what kind of benefits this kind of combination would have on students' learning. In my studies, I have learned that music is a versatile tool not only for studying in general but

also from linguistic point of view. Having the opportunity to examine this in practice shaped the idea for the present study.

This study aims at investigating the use of music in EFL learning from students' perspective: what kind of experiences they have, what they think of the benefits of using music in English language learning, and what kind of other hopes and ideas they have about using music in the EFL classroom. Exploring students' previous experiences can help gaining understanding of what kind of musical exercises or ways of using music works and what does not work in the language learning point of view. Furthermore, scrutinizing how beneficial students see the use of music and giving students an opportunity to present their own hopes and ideas about how to use music in English learning provides valuable information for professionals working on the field, especially for English and music teachers. The findings of this study can be used for planning courses, developing teaching techniques, and finding motivating, new ways to include in language teaching. Making teaching versatile and working with different methods also helps students to find what works best for them and can make them feel more motivated to learn. Additionally, this study can provide important information on how teachers of different subjects, in this case, music and English, could work together and benefit from each other's knowledge and skills.

The present study was conducted by utilizing qualitative methods. The data was collected in February 2021 with semi-structured focused interviews: one individual interview and one group interview. Altogether three second year high school students participated. The analysis method used in the analysis process was qualitative content analysis. These procedures are explained more thoroughly in chapter six.

The first chapters of the present study form the theoretical background. Chapter two presents similarities between music and language, introduces theories regarding language learning, and describes how The Finnish National Core Curricula for Basic Education and for General Upper Secondary Education (POPS 2014; LOPS 2019) present cross-curriculum integration in the music and language learning point of view. Furthermore, it reports how The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) addresses combining music and language learning. Chapter three introduces practical applications for using music in language learning, previous studies conducted on the phenomenon, and benefits of combining music and language teaching. The fourth chapter presents the methodology of the study and the findings of the

present study are reported in chapter five. The last chapters include discussion and conclusion, where the main findings are discussed, the reliability of the findings is evaluated, the significance of the present study is reflected, and ideas for future research are suggested.

2 MUSIC AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1 Similarities between music and language

Fonseca Mora (2000, 147) lists several similarities between music and language. For instance, they both are based on sounds and they deliver a message of a kind – speech is more detailed whereas music appeals to emotions. In addition, they share features such as pitch, volume, stress, tone, rhythm, and pauses. Furthermore, exposure is crucial when learning both music and language. In order to acquire a language, one needs oral or written input (or in the case of sign language, visual). Additionally, the way music is perceived develops through exposure, which also explains why music from foreign cultures that one is not familiar with sounds strange – they are simply not accustomed to it and its patterns of sounds and rhythms. (Fonseca Mora 2000, 147.)

McMullen and Saffran (2004) also find many similarities between music and language from the developmental point of view. They indicate that both music and language are organized in a temporal manner, which separates them from other abilities such as vision or social organization. They add that the similarities between music and language are especially heightened when examining the developmental perspective: the need for input and exposure is particularly significant when learning about a system, in this case, music or language, before discovering its communicative use. (McMullen & Saffran 2004, 289–290.)

From the cognitive point of view, music and language, two most human cognitive abilities (Besson & Schön 2001, 255), are strongly connected and there are several similarities between them. According to Besson and Schön (2001, 234), many definitions given for music can often be applied for language. Correspondingly, definitions given for language are often usable for music, too. The similarities between music and language are remarkable when viewing the brain structure-function relationship. (Besson & Schön 2001, 234.) Patel (2007) lists these similarities as following: sound elements, rhythm, melody, syntax, evolution and meaning. Next, these similarities are introduced more thoroughly.

Like mentioned above, music and language are both based on sounds. According to Patel (2007, 86), in both these domains, the human mind interacts with a specific feature of sound: pitch in

music and timbre in speech. In music, pitch forms the primary basis for the sound categories, such as intervals, chords, and scales. In speech, it is timbre, such as vowels and consonants. Even though they differ in how their sound categories are formed, the mechanisms that produce and maintain learned sounds in music and language are suggested to overlap substantially. (Patel 2007, 9, 86; Besson & Schön 2001, 235.)

Temporal structure and rhythm are also shared features in music and language. Patel (2007, 96) defines rhythm as “the systematic patterning of sounds in terms of timing, accent, and grouping”. They continue that these features are present in both music and speech: they are both characterized by them. In both, elements like tones and words are organized into larger units like phrases. (Patel 2007, 96, 176–177.) Arom (2001, 27–28) mentions that the temporal ratios that determine a musical piece by the segmentation of time are crucial factors in defining music. This applies to language, too: specific rhythm and temporal, sequential events are strongly connected to language production as well. In addition, in both language and music, it is expected that the words or notes and chords are presented on time. (Besson & Schön 2001, 234–235, 254.)

Another similarity between music and language is melody, even though it is good to consider that the term used for melody in speech is often *intonation* instead of melody. Patel (2007, 182) uses the following definition of melody: “an organized sequence of pitches that conveys a rich variety of information to the listener”. This definition applies to both music and speech. It emphasizes the large amount of information that speech and musical melodies can convey, such as affective, syntactic, pragmatic, and emphatic information. In addition, the definition highlights the importance of meanings that the mind converts the sound sequences into – melody perception is seen as a constructive process. Furthermore, it is indicated that the processing of melodic features in speech and music may cross in the brain. (Patel 2007, 182, 238.)

Moreover, musical and linguistic syntax are said to share similar features. According to Patel (2007, 241), syntax in music and language means “the principles governing the combination of discrete structural elements into sequences”. They list that the main similarities between musical and linguistic syntax are “the existence of multiple levels of combinatorial organization, hierarchical structuring between elements in sequences, grammatical categories that can be filled by different physical entities, relationships of structure versus elaboration, and

context-dependent grammatical functions involving interdependent relations between elements”. Moreover, it has been discovered that during syntactic processing, there may be overlap in the neural resources that activate and combine musical and linguistic syntactic representations. (Patel 2007, 241, 267, 297.)

In addition to the features listed above, language and music share similar evolutionary background: both these abilities are universal, unique, and they appear only in humans. Furthermore, they reflect the human brain development. They are results of the human brain’s mental capabilities that show the human species’ ability to evolve. (Brown et al. 2001, 3; Patel 2007, 355–356, 412.)

Musical and linguistic meaning, however, are not as clearly similar as the previous features. Patel (2007, 351) introduces Nattiez’s (1990) view of meaning, saying that “meaning exists when perception of an object/event brings something to mind other than the object/event itself”. Linguistically speaking, meaning can be divided into semantics (how words and sentences reflect reality) and pragmatics (how listeners comprehend what has been said) (Patel 2007, 303). Musical meaning, conversely, has been debated. Kivy (2002, cited in Patel 2007, 304) argues that even though music can have significance and express emotion, it cannot be meaningful in the same sense than language. Nattiez (1990, cited in Patel 2007, 304), on the other hand, emphasizes that meaning depends on circumstances and whether it brings things to mind. Patel (2007, 204) clarifies this thought by giving an example: hearing someone play the piano might at some contexts mean only that the listener’s neighbour is practising, whereas at other contexts it may evoke more complex meanings such as different emotions. Patel (2007, 4) concludes that even though the semantic meaning in music is not as specific as in language, there is a variety of ways how music can be meaningful (Patel 2007, 4).

Even though this section covers many similar features that music and language share and the similarities between those two domains has been emphasized, it is advisable to consider the differences as well. Patel (2007, 4) mentions a few differences, such as language grammar categories that music lacks and music’s greater influence on our emotions. However, here the focus is mainly on similarities, since the present study aims at examining how these two subjects could be combined and understanding the similarities from the cognitive perspective may help gaining a more holistic view on the phenomenon. Moreover, it should be stressed that more research in this area is still needed.

2.2 Language learning theories

There are many theories regarding language learning that have developed over time (See e.g. Cook 2016). This section presents some of the theories in the light of the present study to form the pedagogical background. First, the terms *foreign language learning*, *language acquisition*, and *language learning* are discussed. Second, since the present study focuses on the integration of music and language, *experiential learning approach* is introduced. Music is a diverse tool that can provide language learners meaningful experiences which fit well in the targets and views of experiential learning approach. Therefore, that approach is presented more thoroughly in this section as the pedagogical perspective of the present study.

According to Sajavaara (1999, 75), second language learning and foreign language learning are complex to define and to distinguish. They explain that some refer to second language when talking about any language that is learned after acquiring the first language. Some consider only languages that are used in the learner's environment second languages and call those languages that are not commonly used in the learner's environment foreign languages. (Sajavaara 1999, 75.) In Finland, English is commonly considered a foreign language (See e.g. POPS 2014). In the present study, English is referred to as a foreign language, but theories considering second language learning are adapted into English language learning as well, since the processes of second language learning and foreign language learning are similar (See Crystal 2003).

Klein (1986, 28) introduces Krashen's (1981) theory of second language learning by stating that it consists of subconscious acquisition and conscious learning. Acquisition is seen as the more important one: it is based on natural interaction and the learner's focus is on content rather than linguistic rules. Language learning, on the other hand, is based on learning the rules and structures of the target language in a controlled manner, like in the classroom. The theory makes a clear distinction between spontaneous language acquisition and guided language learning and teaching. (Klein 1986, 28.) In this study, language acquisition and language learning are seen equivalent terms: language learning in the classroom context can offer possibilities for natural acquisition and natural language acquisition can include guidance (Sajavaara 1999, 75).

Kohonen (1992, 184–186) introduces Kolb's (1984) ideas and model of experiential learning. According to them, experiential learning means active, functional, and versatile learning, which utilizes different senses, experiences, emotions, and visualization. Experiential learning

approach emphasizes learner's own experiences: the learner is encouraged to gain their own experiences on the target phenomenon. Even though experiences are seen an important part of learning, the approach also highlights the importance of learner's own, active reflections and observations, comprehension, and conceptualization. Learning is viewed as a circle: it is an ongoing, constantly developing process, as can be seen from Figure 1 below. (Kohonen 1992, 184–186.)

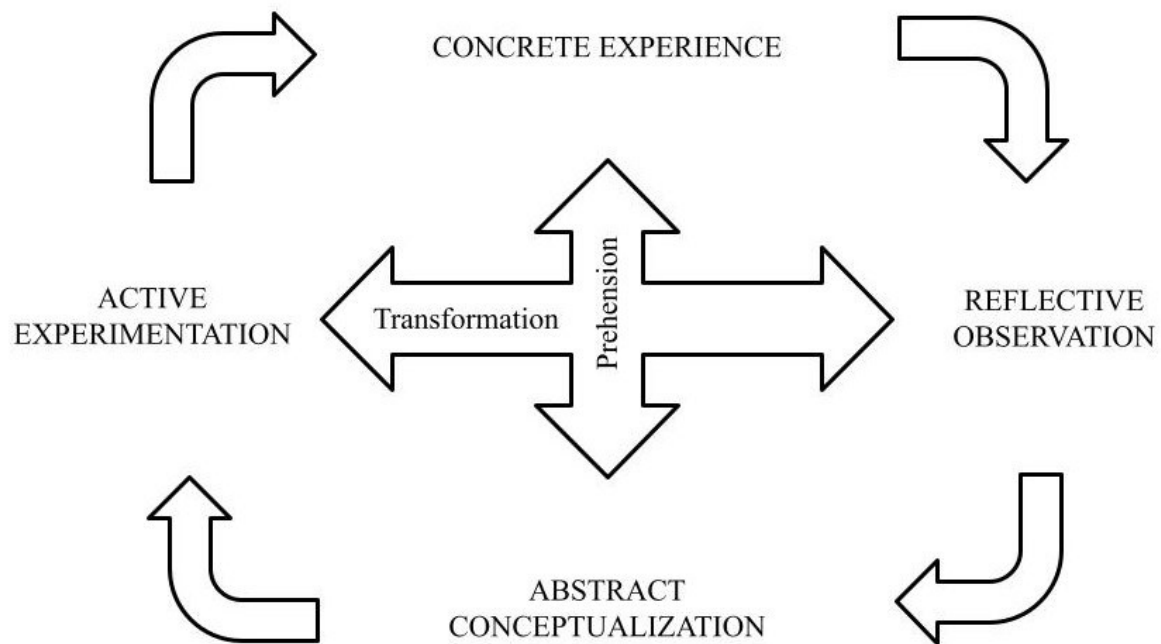


Figure 1. Adaption of Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning.

This circle presents four modes of learning. *Concrete experience* refers to intuitive, open, and creative learning that emphasizes emotions and does not aim at conceptualizing the phenomenon. In practice, this mode of learning can be supported for instance by using group discussions or different kinds of examples and simulations. *Reflective observation* highlights learner's own observations and reflections on their learning process. In addition, it aims at connecting the phenomenon with different associations, considering different points of view, and deepening learner's self-knowledge. This mode of learning can be enhanced by using techniques such as reflective essays or journals, observations, or discussions, for example. *Abstract conceptualization* emphasizes logical thinking over emotions. It aims at systematic thinking, problem solving, and creating suitable rules or theories about the phenomenon.

Techniques that can be utilized to reinforce this mode include theory construction and building models. *Active experimentation*, on the other hand, means actions: it targets finding practical solutions and adaptations through active participation. Furthermore, it highlights influencing people, risk-taking, and changing situations. This mode can be strengthened by using exercises such as projects, games, and dramatizations. (Kohonen 1992, 184–186; Kohonen 2001, 28–29.)

These four modes are connected by two dimensions of learning: *prehension* dimension and *transformation* dimension. *Prehension* dimension presents two ways of knowledge. *Apprehension* means instant, intuitive, and subconscious knowledge, whereas *comprehension* refers to conscious efforts made to understand the phenomenon. *Transformation* dimension addresses the difference between risk-taking actions with little concern of failure and risk-avoiding, observation-based reflections with more concern of failure. Overall, learning is presented as a process which results from the conflicts of these two dimensions. (Kohonen 1992, 186; Kohonen 2001, 27–28.)

Kohonen (2001, 30–31) summarizes the main idea of experiential learning by stating that learning is a continuum, where concepts are continuously modified by experiences, creating knowledge and skills. The learning process requires a balanced merger of the four modes of learning. Moreover, they state the following:

“Learning is a holistic process of relating to the world. It involves feeling, observing, thinking, and acting, as a cyclic process. These modes of learning are integrated, and development in one mode affects development in others. Learning is active and self-directed and continues throughout life.” (Kohonen 2001, 30.)

In the light of language learning, experiential approach emphasizes holistic and versatile teaching methods. Knutson (2003, 53–56) explains that experiential approach to language learning is based on developing language skills by gaining experiences of working cooperatively on specific meaningful, challenging, and communicative tasks or projects, instead of only exploring separate elements of the target language. The tasks or projects should include exposure, participation, internalization, and dissemination. Additionally, they should offer learners opportunities to practice ownership of their own language learning through active reflection and engaging with their previous acquisition experiences. Experiential language learning builds on previous experiences, and it is seen an especially potential approach regarding motivation, investment, and cultural understanding. (Knutson 2003, 53–56.)

This pedagogical approach can be adapted into the idea of combining music and language learning as well. Music and its versatile possibilities can offer many kinds of experiences for language learners, which supports the idea of various teaching methods. Additionally, music could provide opportunities for creating those meaningful and communicative projects or tasks for language learners. As Pasanen (1992, 113) states, music can be used to enhance the target of experiential learning: practical, diverse, and active learning that uses different kinds of experiences, emotions, and imagination.

2.3 Music and language learning in The National Core Curricula and The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

According to The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (POPS 2014), incorporating music into language learning is justifiable. First, in the section of transversal competence, it is stated that students should be encouraged to try and enjoy different ways of expression, to appreciate and use their own bodies to express their emotions, ideas, and thoughts, and to practise interaction diversely. In addition, they should be advised to pay attention and recognize what learning strategies work best for them, to learn to identify and appreciate different cultures, and to participate in creating new cultures. (POPS 2014, 155.) These transversal competence skills can be adapted into music-mediated language learning. Music and language are both closely related to expression, interaction, and cultures, and in addition, trying new ways of teaching will also help students learn new learning methods and finally help them recognize which methods are the most suitable for them.

Second, in the section of English as a foreign language (POPS 2014, 219–220, 348–349), it is presented that different kinds of texts should be used in language teaching, students' own interests should be considered when choosing texts, and students' language use in their free time should be taken into account in teaching. Moreover, the objectives of English language teaching include observing and appreciating cultural diversity and the position of English as a global language, guiding students to choose English learning material that enhances their own learning process, and encouraging students to work with different kinds of materials. (POPS 2014, 219–220, 348–349.) Keeping these objects in mind, including music in language teaching would be advisable, especially if students use music in their free time or are interested in it. In

addition, music can be used to get to know different cultures, for understanding the position of English language, and as learning material.

Third, the section of music and the section of physical education have guidelines that can be applied for language teaching as well. The section of music emphasizes cultural diversity and considering students' own interests and other subjects. It is stated that music teaching should aim at guiding students at making interpretations of music in different cultures and analysing and evaluating how music is used as a means of communication. (POPS 2014, 263, 422.) The section of physical education mentions incorporating music into movement and bodily expression, which can also be combined with language teaching (POPS 2014, 274, 433–435).

The National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education (LOPS 2019) also has guidelines in relation to combining music and language learning. It emphasizes transversal competence, states that using different senses in learning is essential, and that students' own interests, perceptions, and needs should be considered when choosing teaching methods (LOPS 2019, 16, 19). In the section of English as a foreign language, many objects concerning music and English are mentioned, such as cultural diversity, variation in texts used in courses, versatile learning methods, creativity, and the meaning of art and culture (LOPS 2019, 180–182). Furthermore, in the section of physical education, combining it into other subjects like music is encouraged (LOPS 2019, 334). Like mentioned earlier, music and movement can be applied for language teaching as well. In the section of music, transversal competence skills, such as appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity and developing communication skills, are presented as objects that can be enhanced through the subject of music (LOPS 2019, 339–340). Given the above, it can be said that the guidelines in The National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education are affirmative towards cross-curricular integration of music and language.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a policy instrument that offers learners, teachers, and other language experts a basis for creating and evaluating syllabi, curricula, examinations, and other teaching materials. Its main aim is helping to enhance the quality and effectiveness of language learning and teaching. In addition, it aims at providing a mutual foundation for language qualifications and transparent and clear reference points for assessment. It offers six Common Reference Levels that can be used for evaluating and describing the language proficiency levels in a unified manner. (CEFR 2020, 11, 27–28, 36–

37.) In the present study point of view, the focus is on CEFR's perceptions of combining music into language learning.

There are several mentions regarding music and language learning. For instance, it is stated that song lyrics are a valid option when choosing texts for a course (CEFR 2020, 59, 210; CEFR 2001, 95). In addition, music is mentioned many times as a topic for different types of interaction (See CEFR 2020, 72, 83). Furthermore, music, and more precisely, songs and counting rhymes, are seen a tool to practise and enhance the phonetic and rhythmic characteristics of language. It is also addressed that different language teaching approaches are possible to include and utilize. Moreover, imaginative, artistic, and aesthetic uses of language are recommended. These uses include activities like singing nursery rhymes, folk songs, and pop songs; watching and listening to recitals and opera; and reading, writing, listening to, and speaking different kinds of texts, such as poetry, stories, and rhymes. It is reminded that these ways of using language are important both in the educational point of view and in their own right. (CEFR 2001, 56, 171.) As described, CEFR recognizes the potential of using music in language learning, which supports the integration of these two subjects.

3 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR USING MUSIC IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Music, both instrumental and vocal music, can be integrated into foreign language learning for many reasons. For instance, it can effectively motivate students and make them feel more interested in language learning due to music's diverse nature (See e.g. Alipour, Gorjian & Zafari 2012). It can also enhance positive learning environment (See e.g. Paquette & Rieg 2008). Furthermore, its benefits on different linguistic skills, such as vocabulary and pronunciation, have been discovered in many studies (See e.g. Degrave 2019). This part of the study focuses on introducing previous research conducted on incorporating music into language learning. It is divided into subsections based on different areas related to language learning that music has been proven to enhance. These subsections include vocabulary, oral and aural skills, reading and writing, cultural knowledge, learning environment, motivation, and variation in teaching methods. Finally, there is a summary that presents the main points from these subsections and overall benefits of combining music and language teaching.

3.1 Vocabulary

Music seems to be a great tool for memorizing and learning vocabulary. Alipour et al. (2012) discovered that songs are suitable pedagogic material for teaching vocabulary. In their study, the participants were divided into two groups, musical and non-musical group. The participants had to fill in missing words of different song lyrics according to what they hear: the musical group listened to the original songs whereas the non-musical group listened to the teacher reading the lyrics. The results of their study indicated that using music as teaching material enhanced vocabulary recall and retention. (Alipour et al. 2012.)

Furthermore, using background music can help practising and learning vocabulary. Moradi and Zamanian (2014) investigated the effect of music on English language vocabulary learning. In their study, the experimental group listened to soft background music while reading challenging English words and their definitions. The findings showed that the group listening to music learned and memorized the words and their definitions significantly better than the control group. The writers suggest that listening to soft music on the background while studying can

enhance learning, memorizing, and remembering vocabulary, and is therefore recommended. (Moradi & Zamanian 2014.)

Fonseca Mora (2000, 150–151) mentions that songs can be remembered easily because music is connected to subconscious and affective factors. Songs also usually have repetitive lyrics, which promotes language acquisition and provides an effective way of storing different kinds of lexical patterns in one's mind. (Fonseca Mora 2000, 150–151.) Wallace (1994) states that in order to facilitate text recall, the melody of the song should be simple and easy enough for the learners. They also discovered that when the melody is not repeated and thereby is not that well learned, it does not always help learning and recalling a text. However, they add that being able to sing the melody accurately is not necessary: it is more important that the learner knows the melody well enough to be able to pay attention to and recall the information provided about the text, such as syllable length or other rhythmical information. Moreover, the melody should match the text and provide accurate and relevant information about it. (Wallace 1994, 1471–1484.)

3.2 Oral and aural skills

Songs can be used to improve oral and aural skills as well. For instance, using songs is an effective way of practising, reinforcing, and comparing different kinds of sounds (Paquette & Rieg 2008, 228). They can be used to enhance both listening and pronunciation skills. Students can practise listening skills by trying to hear differences between sounds in songs, since syllable change and pitch changes often accompany each other: pitch contours may promote phonological discrimination (Schön et al. 2008, 976). Pronunciation, on the other hand, can be practised for example by trying to produce different sounds in songs by singing, which Fonseca Mora (2000, 151) also finds a way to improve pronunciation skills.

Strengthening the ability to listen to and produce sounds is crucial to aural discrimination and phonological awareness skills (Hansen, Bernstorf & Stuber 2014, 44). Moreover, segmenting speech into words is another crucial listening skill. Schön et al. (2008) examined the influence of songs on segmenting foreign language speech. In their study, one of the groups listened to continuous speech stream of syllables, one of the groups listened to continuous syllable stream that was sung and where the syllables and pitches were connected, whereas the third group also

listened to continuous stream of syllables that was sung, but without the association syllable/pitch. The participants then had to discriminate words from part-words of those streams that they listened to. The findings showed that the group that listened to the sung stream with the syllable/pitch connection had the highest level of performance, while the group that listened to the spoken stream had the lowest level of performance. The writers suggest that foreign language learning process may benefit significantly of using songs. (Schön et al. 2008.)

In addition, musical training has been proven to be particularly beneficial for linguistic development, which supports the idea of adding musical teaching methods into language teaching. Hansen et al. (2014, 219) introduce Nina Kraus' and their laboratory team's findings on how musical training has developed different aspects of hearing. According to their results, musicians are better at encoding music and speech, have stronger encoding of linguistic pitch information, and they show neural improvement of timbre, pitch, and timing. Furthermore, they have discovered that musical experience promotes hearing in noise and musicians' responses to speech stimulus appear earlier than non-musicians. (Hansen et al. 2014, 219.)

3.3 Reading and writing

Reading skills can be enhanced by using songs as reading material. Paquette and Rieg (2008, 229) suggest that using song-based literature, such as popular music lyrics, when practising different reading strategies can develop reading skills in a motivational and engaging way. Palacios and Chapetón (2014, 13–14, 27) mention that reading and analysing songs can help students connect issues from their personal life, such as their own emotions and experiences, into the themes portrayed in the songs, making learning meaningful and enjoyable. Furthermore, adding music into everyday activities can support overall literacy development (Paquette & Rieg 2008, 231).

Fluency in writing can also be increased by incorporating different musical pedagogical methods into language learning. Paquette and Rieg (2008, 230) introduce different ways of using music that can promote students' writing skills. They present that writing their own song lyrics or modifying existing song lyrics independently, in pairs or in small groups can work as a motivating writing task for students, which also helps learning and reinforcing different contents. They also suggest that creating illustrations, such as drawings or paintings, about the

interpretations students make about a song, and writing their own stories inspired by songs also supports the development of writing skills. (Paquette & Rieg 2008, 230.)

Additionally, Alisaari and Heikkola (2016) examined the effect of singing, listening to songs, and reciting lyrics of songs on writing fluency. The participants were divided into three groups: listening group, singing group, and reciting group. Depending on the group, the participants either only listened to the songs, listened to and sang the songs, or listened to a spoken version and recited the lyrics rhythmically. Before and after the sessions, participants' writing fluency was measured by analysing the number of words in their written stories. The findings suggested that the singing group increased their written fluency the most compared to the other two groups. The writers suggest that singing is a good language teaching method and that it can have a positive influence on writing skills. (Alisaari & Heikkola 2016.)

3.4 Cultural knowledge

Cultural knowledge also plays an important role in the language learning process. For example, Sabatin (2013, 30–31) suggests that learning about the target language culture is essential. They state that it promotes international cooperation and offers students ways to gain a more holistic understanding of the target language, since it provides access to the life and mind of the native speakers. (Sabatin 2013, 30–31.) Using music in the language lessons is a smooth way of promoting students' cultural knowledge. Since music is a big part of culture, it carries many meanings that provide information about the cultural aspects: the context and history of the song, the singer and their background, the genre and its history are all cultural themes that can be discussed in the language classroom to enhance students' cultural knowledge (Degrave 2019, 415).

The potential of music in this context has been recognized by others as well. For instance, Chen-Hafteck (2016) argues that learning music's cultural contexts enhances learners' overall understanding of foreign cultures. Joseph, Nethsinghe and Cabedo Mas (2020) found that singing and discussing the origins of songs from different cultures worked as a way to expand students' cultural knowledge. According to Candlin (1992, cited in Engh 2013, 115), songs provide an especially deep understanding of different societies, their stories, myths, and values. Additionally, Joseph et al. (2018, 33, 42) state that music offers opportunities to strengthen and

embrace diversity. Moreover, Paquette and Rieg (2008, 228) present that discussing the background and history of the music being used can enhance cultural awareness and add multiculturalism in the classroom. Discussing the cultural aspects with the students is also recommended by Pasanen (1992, 105). They suggest talking about a musician, a genre, a musical event, or a piece of music and their significance in a specific culture, for example.

3.5 Learning environment

Since music is a very effective tool when it comes to altering one's mood, it can be suggested that it could be used to enhance mood in the classroom as well. When we listen to music, it can make us feel energetic, excited, happy, calm, or focused, for example. In the language learning point of view, music could be used to foster productive learning in the classroom. According to Moradi and Zamanian (2014), soft background music can create a pleasant learning atmosphere that accelerates learning and promotes creativity and attention. Music can also help students focusing when there is noise or extra voices in the background. (Moradi & Zamanian 2014, 342, 347.) Furthermore, it can encourage students not to make extra noise (Fonseca Mora 2000, 151).

In addition to the mood in the classroom, music can be used to build relationships among students. In their study, Palacios and Chapetón (2014) discovered that musical activities on the class promoted interaction between the students. They examined students' responses to the use of songs as a socially situated literacy practice in the EFL classroom. The results indicated that the use of music gave students an opportunity to create bonds with each other by listening and helping each other, sharing ideas, thoughts and feelings, and valuing other's opinions. (Palacios and Chapetón 2014.) Promoting interaction and respect between students and encouraging them to build relationships can also enhance a positive, safe, and friendly learning environment, which again supports language learning in general.

3.6 Motivation and students' interests

Motivation is an important factor in language learning process (See Nayan, Krishnasamy & Shafie 2014), and studies reveal that it can be increased with the use of music. Alipour et al. (2012) discovered that musical activities improved students' motivation and interest in the

lesson and language learning. Furthermore, the environment of the class was better, students had more fun and the attendance in the class was remarkable. (Alipour et al. 2012.) Degraeve (2019) presents that students' increased motivation towards language learning is one of the many benefits of using music in foreign language learning. Palacios and Chapatón (2014) found that students considered using songs in language learning enjoyable and interesting. In addition, they felt that it was easier to learn vocabulary through songs, and that since songs often involve real life issues, they make English learning more interesting. Therefore, they became more motivated towards learning English. (Palacios & Chapatón 2014.)

Although music has been proven to be an effective tool for improving motivation towards language learning, it should be considered that the effectiveness depends on the students: teacher should know their student groups and base their decisions on what the students' own interests, needs, and likes are. Degraeve (2019, 418) reminds that musical activities might not work for every learner: their personality, hobbies, and interests all have an influence on how music affects their learning and motivation towards learning. All in all, it is crucial to adapt teaching so that it fits the student group. Using music can be a great source of motivation, interest, and enjoyment that enhances learner involvement, but it should be personalized according to the group of students (Palacios & Chapetón 2014, 11, 14).

3.7 Variation in teaching styles

As Gardner (1983) indicates, instead of one, there are multiple types of intelligences, and multiple types of learners. Keeping this in mind, it can be suggested that teachers should support these different kinds of learners by using different teaching methods and varying activities, such as including music in language teaching. Fonseca Mora (2000, 146) highlights the importance of considering the different types of intelligences and learners as well. They state that all the intelligences, including bodily-kinaesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal intelligences, should be nurtured in the classroom, not just verbal, spatial, and numerical intelligences, and that in the language learning point of view, musical intelligence is especially significant and therefore should be developed, too. (Fonseca Mora 2000, 146.) Given the above, music is a potential tool for adding variation to language teaching.

3.8 Benefits of combining music and language teaching

In this chapter, reasons for integrating music into language learning have been presented and some studies conducted in this area have been introduced to provide information on why and how music could be used as a part of language teaching. It has been investigated that using music can enhance linguistic skills, such as vocabulary learning, oral and aural skills, and reading and writing skills, and non-linguistic aspects, such as cultural knowledge, learning environment, motivation, and variation in language teaching.

As described earlier, there are various ways of using music to enhance linguistic skills. Vocabulary can be learned by using songs as pedagogical material and using background music can help memorizing and remembering new words. Songs can also be used to practice listening to and producing sounds, which enhances aural and oral skills. Moreover, it has been discovered that musical training develops different aspects of hearing. Music can also be incorporated into practising reading and writing skills. Songs can be used as reading material and writing skills can be developed by writing or modifying song lyrics, for instance. It has also been investigated that singing may have a positive effect on writing fluency. To clarify the overall, general effect of musical activities and musical interaction on linguistic skills, Figure 2 is presented:

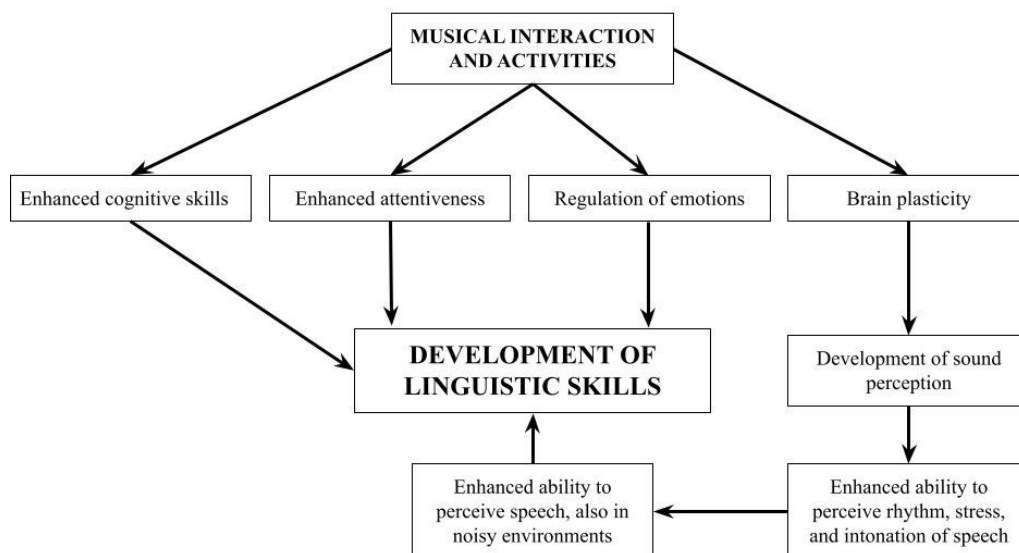


Figure 2. Musical mechanisms and development of linguistic skills, adaption of Torppa's et al. (2020) figure.

Figure 2 is based on Torppa's et al. (2020, 210–211) idea of how active participation in musical activities and interaction enhances children's overall linguistic skills. This view can be adapted into foreign language learning as well: Torppa et al. (2020, 219–220) present that linguistic skills are promoted the same way when incorporating musical activities into foreign language learning process, too. They state that the benefits of using music in foreign language learning have been widely studied, and that it is reasonable to combine musical activities with language learning. (Torppa et al. 2020, 209–211, 219–220.)

In addition to the enhancement of linguistic skills, there are many non-linguistic aspects that music can affect positively and that are closely related to language learning as well. Cultural knowledge can be expanded by provoking conversation about music related themes, such as a genre, a musician, or a musical event, and discussing their origin and significance for a specific culture. Furthermore, music can alter mood, and thereby it can be used to improve the learning environment: background music can create a calm atmosphere and help focusing on studying. Musical activities can promote interaction between students, which also builds a safe learning environment. Using music in the EFL classroom can also improve students' motivation and interest in language learning, but teachers should consider students' personalities, needs, hobbies, and interests when choosing the teaching methods. However, it can be stated that variation in teaching styles is recommended, since it helps supporting different kinds of learners in the classroom.

Overall, there are multiple reasons for using music, both instrumental and vocal music, in language learning. Degraeve (2019, 418) reminds that music has multiple benefits on learning and linguistic skills that should be considered. In addition to the benefits mentioned before, music can be just enjoyable and fun for the students. For instance, Palacios and Chapetón (2014) reported that using songs in the EFL classroom was received positively and made the lesson meaningful and enjoyable. In conclusion, it can be suggested that using music in language learning is reasonable. As Engh (2013, 121) states: "from an educational standpoint, music and language not only can, but should be studied together."

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

4.1 Research questions

The aim of the present study is to examine students' perspective on using music in EFL learning – what kind of experiences students have of using music as a tool in EFL learning in the classroom and in their free time, what kind of perceptions they have on the benefits of using music, and what kind of hopes or ideas they have about using music in EFL learning in the classroom. The study aims at discovering how students experience the use of music in EFL learning, how they think these two subjects could be combined, and especially how, if at all, music could be used to enhance English language learning in their opinion.

The main research questions of the present study are:

1. What kind of experiences do students have of using music in EFL learning (both in their free time and in the classroom)?
2. What kind of perceptions do students have on the benefits of using music in EFL learning?
3. What kind of hopes or ideas do students have about using music in EFL learning in the classroom?

The first question focuses on students' own experiences in the past: in what ways have they used English-language music in their free time, have they had English classes at school where they use music, and if so, how have they used music in the classroom. The second question focuses on their perceptions on the benefits of using music in language learning: would they consider it a way to improve their language skills, what kind of learning experiences have they had and what benefits they think it could have. The third question focuses on students' hopes and ideas: what they wish for their English classes, would they perhaps use more or less music in the classroom and how, if at all, would they change their English classes.

4.2 Methodological framework

Since this study aims at making interpretations and gaining descriptive knowledge on the subject, qualitative research methods were chosen to form the foundation for the study. In qualitative research, instead of statistical representativeness, the main goal is to gain deeper understanding about a phenomenon – getting close to people’s lives and how they experience the world. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 59; Brinkmann 2013, 59). Focusing on less participants gives the opportunity to examine details and analyse them more thoroughly (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 59; Eskola & Suoranta 1998b, 15).

From the various qualitative research methods, semi-structured focused interview was chosen as the data collection method. Like Eskola and Suoranta (1998b, 63) suggest, the main goal of interviewing is discovering what someone is thinking. Semi-structured interview is based on themes instead of detailed questions. The themes are the same for all the participants but it is possible to rearrange the original interview structure during the interview. The verbal, live interaction with the participant also enables asking additional questions, which makes semi-structured interview a flexible approach. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 34–35, 48.)

In addition to the interviews, a small questionnaire was conducted to receive some background information about the participants before the interviews. The background information included name, age, gender, class year, opinions about studying English, and situations where they use music on their free time. Collecting this data before the interviews saved time and gave the possibility to keep the focus on the research questions during the interviews.

4.3 Participants

According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 73), in qualitative research, it is crucial that the participants have knowledge and experience on the subject matter. Furthermore, Sulkunen (1990, cited in Eskola & Suoranta 1998b, 50) states that participants should be interested in the study and that they should have relatively similar backgrounds. I wanted to investigate students’ perspective for a few reasons. First, students’ perspective has not been studied as widely as teachers’ perspective. Second, I wanted to give students an opportunity to introduce their

thoughts and ideas. Third, I thought that students' hopes, ideas, and experiences could possibly work as a bank of ideas for teachers – it is fruitful to know what could motivate students.

The participants, who are referred to as P1, P2, and P3 in this study to protect their privacy, were second year high school students, who were all interested in both music and English. Some of the participants studied at a music programme, and for all the participants music was a big part of their free time as well. All the participants liked English very much and for some it was even their favourite subject. They all also felt that English was easy for them. This background information is crucial to indicate in order to gain a holistic understanding of the findings. The findings would assumably differ quite plenty if the participants were not this interested in both these subjects. However, it is understandable that students with this background would happily voluntarily participate in a study like this. It is also good to consider Sulkunen's (1990, cited in Eskola & Suoranta 1998b, 50) statement of participants' interest on the study, which was mentioned above.

4.4 Data collection

The data was collected in February 2021. Altogether three students participated: one of them was interviewed individually and two of them in a group interview. The original plan was to interview two groups of three or four participants, but this time only three students were able to participate. According to Syrjälä and Numminen (1988, cited in Eskola and Suoranta 1998b, 70), if the aim of the study is to gain understanding and new ideas about a phenomenon, it is recommended to use group interview as the data collection method. The group members can help each other during the interview: they can support, encourage, and inspire each other. In addition, it is possible to gain more information than in an individual interview, since the group members can reminisce together and continue the discussion forward. (Eskola and Suoranta 1998b, 70.) It was expected that group interviews would be a great tool for sharing ideas, which would support the aim of the present study.

The interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, a video communications application, due to COVID-19 pandemic. Not being able to conduct the interviews in person created its own challenges. The participant of the individual interview kept their video off, which may have restricted the possibilities of communication. Facial expressions, gestures and body language

are an important part of interaction that the interviewer can utilize to make the interview feel more natural (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 119–121). However, the interviewee sounded relaxed and the interview seemed like a casual conversation, which was the goal. I also kept my video on to be able to show my expressions to make them feel comfortable in the situation. The participants of the group interview were able to participate from the same place and kept their video on, which made the situation a bit more natural than the individual interview. In the beginning of the interview, I explained that in a group discussion like this it is important to try not to speak over one another, so that it will be easier to track afterwards who said what.

Before the interviews, every participants' permission to record the data and take notes was collected. The durations of the interviews were approximately 35 minutes (individual interview) and 45 minutes (group interview). Even if the participants explained something that was slightly irrelevant to this study, their answers were not restricted to keep the conversation natural and fluent. All in all, the atmosphere in both interviews seemed casual.

4.5 Methods of analysis

In qualitative data analysis, the main purpose is to bring clarity into the data and thereby produce new information (Eskola & Suoranta 1998b, 100). In this study, qualitative content analysis was chosen as the analysis method. Qualitative content analysis is not based on a certain theory or epistemology, but different theoretical or epistemic views can be adapted in the analysis. Interpretations and reasoning form a foundation for qualitative content analysis, and the analysis aims at describing the research data verbally, summarizing the main points, organizing the data into a clearer form, and conceptualizing the data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 78, 87–89, 91.)

The base for the data in the present study is formed by the videos recorded and notes written during the interviews. Recordings allow the researcher to examine and analyse the data later, which can help noticing something new (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 12). The recorded interviews were then written into transcriptions, which also helps remembering and noticing important issues (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 12). After that, the transcriptions were read through to become acquainted with the data. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 143) emphasize the importance of reading the transcriptions and becoming familiar with the data. They state that

the analysis depends on how well the researcher knows their data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 143.)

Next, the data was limited into relevant and interesting issues and the nonrelevant issues were eliminated. Miles and Huberman (1994) call this phase *data reduction*. The reduction in this analysis was completed by listing the interview themes in a table and color-coding each interviewee's answers below the different themes. The nonrelevant answers were not attached to the table. After that, the information in the answers was reduced into keywords that describe the main idea in the answer. For example, under the theme "Benefits of using music in English learning", the information was reduced into keywords such as "vocabulary" or "enjoyment", according to the participants' answers. These keywords were then examined, and they were highlighted according to where they occurred – if they occurred in all the participants' answers, in two of them or only in one of them. This made it easier to explore the similarities and differences between the keywords before organizing them into classes. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 92), this process of examining, exploring, and organizing the keywords into classes is called *clustering*. The classes formed based on the keywords mainly followed the interview themes as well. However, compared to the interview themes, also new classes were formed, such as "other experiences from school". Finally, these classes were investigated and utilized to form theoretical concepts and conclusions, which the next chapters, findings and discussion, will introduce more thoroughly. This process that aims at creating theoretical concepts from the original information in the research data is *abstraction*, as stated by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 93).

4.6 Reliability and ethicality of the present study

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 20) state that the most important ethical principles are consent based on informing, reliability, consequences, and privacy. The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2012), on the other hand, lists the premises for the responsible conduct of research, which include integrity, meticulousness, and accuracy during the research process. According to Hyvärinen (2017, 25), ethical research means research conducted in a responsible and reasonable manner. They also emphasize the importance of informing the participants about the research process: what the research is about and how are their information used and stored. In addition, it is crucial to highlight that the participants have the right to

withdraw at any time. (Hyvärinen 2017, 25–27.) Before the interviews, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights to withdraw, and how their data is handled and stored. In addition, their anonymity was guaranteed and it was emphasized that their participation is voluntary. To guarantee the anonymity, the students' school is not mentioned and their names are not used in this thesis. Instead, they are referred to as P1, P2, and P3.

Tiittula and Ruusuvuori (2005, 9) claim that the researcher's effect on the interview is significant and should be taken into consideration when making conclusions. Furthermore, the interview questions and how they are formed affect the interview process and the participant's answers. Even though the researcher's effect is inevitable, their personal opinions should not interfere the participant's answers. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 9.) The interview questions were formed as open and neutral to avoid the interference. However, it should be noted that the questions may have steered the participants' answers, depending on how they interpreted them.

During the research process, it should be remembered that the aim is at revealing the participants' perceptions as well as possible. Nevertheless, like mentioned before, the researcher affects the data collection and analysis, and it is important to keep in mind that the findings are also the researcher's interpretations: the same interview can be interpreted in many ways and from many aspects. What is more, the outcome of the interview is always based on the actions of both the researcher and the participants. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 151, 189.) In my analysis, I aim at describing the participants' answers precisely and truthfully.

4.7 Role of researcher

Interview is a way of social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is expected that the interviewer shows interest and reliability but should not show their own opinions or try to steer the conversation too much. The two main jobs of the interviewer are gathering information and enhancing communication. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 41, 43, 94, 97.) During the interviews, I aimed at showing interest in the interviewees' answers and opinions but tried not to show my own opinions too much, which was a challenge for me since I am interested and excited about this subject. I tried to create a warm atmosphere, so that it would be easy for the participants to talk about their own hopes, ideas, and opinions. In the

beginning, I also mentioned that there are no wrong answers, which I hoped would encourage them.

Laine (2001, 48) states that it is crucial that the researcher pays attention to their preconceptions, so that they can evaluate the effect on the interpretations and on the progress of the study. Like I mentioned earlier, I recognize that since I study to become both music and English teacher, I personally feel positive about combining music and English learning, which is why I had to pay attention to this and try to remain as objective as possible.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into three sections, keeping the research questions in mind. First, the experiences of the use of music in EFL learning in participants' free time, in English classes, in music classes and some other experiences from school are scrutinized. Second, the participants' perceptions on the benefits of using music in EFL learning are under examination. This section is divided into different language learning areas that were discussed. Third, participants' own hopes and ideas are explored. In this section, the focus is first on different ideas about genres, then on different kinds of exercises, and lastly some other hopes and ideas are investigated. In this chapter, several excerpts from the data are included to enable it for the reader to hear the participants' voice and their original stories.

5.1 Experiences of using music in EFL learning

5.1.1 Free time: active English music listening

All the participants were musically very active in their free time. They all listened to music, sang, and played at least one instrument. Some of the participants also made their own music, took instrument or singing lessons, and played in a band.

The music they listened to was mostly in English, and only very little in Finnish. Depending on the genre or the song, they paid attention to the lyrics and aimed at understanding what the song is about. P3 described how they usually check and translate unknown words using online sources. They explained that it depends on the song, whether they aim at understanding the lyrics, since in some songs the instruments have a bigger role than the vocals:

“Mäkin yleensä jos mä en välttämättä ymmärrä mitä ne sanat meinaa, kyl mäkin katon niitä sanoja. Mä saatan kattoo niitä netistä et mitä ne meinaa ja sitte mä kääntelen ne suomeksi sitten jollakin kääntäjällä. --- Riippuu musiikista, joissakin biiseissä se laulu tai ne vokaalit kertoo enemmän ku ne instrumentit ja sit jossakin sit instrumentit kertoo enemmän ku laulu tai toisinpäin.” (P3)

“Usually, if I don't understand what the words mean, I check them. I might search them online, what they mean and translate them into Finnish using some translator. --- It depends on the music, in some songs the vocals tell more than the instruments and in some the instruments tell more than the vocals or the other way around.” (P3)

In addition to listening to music, all the participants liked singing and mentioned that singing is also a great way of enhancing language learning in their free time. P1 explained how they like

to sing often and that means they also use the language quite often. They felt it may have helped developing their pronunciation skills as well:

“Varmaan lausuminen on parantunu siinä ku paljon lauleskelee niin siinä tulee aika paljon tavallaan puhuttua tai silleen käytettyä sitä kieltä.” (P1)

“Probably the pronunciation has improved, because when you sing a lot, you talk or use the language quite lot.” (P1)

5.1.2 English classes: great variance in the amount of music use

The participants’ experiences of music used in English classes varied. Some of the participants had barely any experiences, and some had experiences of different exercises and ways that music was used.

P1’s only experience was background music that was used in an English class at high school:

“Mun mielestä se oli meiän enkun opettaja täällä lukiossa joka laitto opiskelun ajaks taustalle soimaan tyyliin jotain Mozartia tai jotain semmosta mut siinä ei oikein oo mitään sanotusta ollu.” (P1)

“I think it was our English teacher here at high school that put some Mozart or something like that on when we were studying, but it didn’t have any lyrics.” (P1)

P2 remembered some specific exercises, such as listening to a song and writing the lyrics, and had some vague memories about singing from elementary school:

“Lukiossa tehtiin semmonen tehtävä että opettaja anto sulle jonkun biisin ja sitten sun piti kuunnella se biisi niin monta kertaa että sait kaikki ne sanat kirjoitettua paperille ja semmosessa tilanteessa mulla on ollu semmonen ainut, en muista onko ala-asteella ollu, no ite asiassa joo ala-asteella saatto olla tyyliin että laulettiin jotakin ABC-laulua, yleensä siihen ikään kuuluu semmonen että opiskellaan semmosten lastenlaulujen avulla niitä asioita.” (P2)

“In high school we had an exercise where the teacher gave you song, and then you had to listen to it so many times that you could write all the lyrics on paper, and that situation is the only, I can’t remember if in elementary school we had, well actually yeah in elementary school we may have sung some ABC-song, usually in that age you learn different things with children’s songs.” (P2)

P3 had had the most experience of music being used in English classes. They mentioned written assignments, where the topic was related to music, background music, singing alphabet songs and song ratings, where they evaluated English-language music:

“Jollakin enkun kurssilla sai valita ite että mistä tekee semmosen esitelmän tai pienen kirjoitelman niin yks biisi ja siitä piti kirjottaa niin siinä piti tietysti kattoo niitä sanoja ja kuunnella sanoja että mistä siinä puhutaan. Yläasteella me pidettiin joskus aina sillon tällön just enkussa saatettiin pitää levyraatia että englanninkielisiä biisejä tai muuten vaan että laitettiin taustalle soimaan kun tehtiin tehtäviä. Ja ala-asteella saatettiin just myös näitä aakkosia tai muuta vastaavaa, mut ei oo kovin paljon muistikuvaa mut muistan ainakin sen yläasteen ja lukion kurssin.” (P3)

“In some English course you could choose a song that you would make a presentation or write a small essay about, so there you had to look at the lyrics and listen to them so you would know what it is talking about. In middle school we had song ratings with English songs or then we had background music when

we were doing tasks. And in elementary school we might have had these alphabets and something like that, but I don't remember very well, but at least I remember those in middle school and in the high school course." (P3)

5.1.3 Music classes: preference for English-language music

The participants had different kinds of experiences of English-language music in the music classes as well. P1 mentioned that they did not have a lot of experience of English-language music being used in the music classes: the music was mostly in Finnish. They also discussed how boring they found this, since they preferred English-language music:

"Siellä ei yhteisesti käytetty oikein enkun musiikkia ja se oli mun mielestä vähän silleen tylsää ku ite on aina tykänny siitä enemmän." (P1)

"There we didn't really use English music and I thought it was a bit dull because I've always liked it more." (P1)

P2, on the other hand, had quite the opposite experience. They did not recall any Finnish-language songs being used in comprehensive school:

"Me soitettiin peruskoulussa silloin ku vielä oli musiikkia niin me soitettiin mun mielestä pelkästään enkunkielistä musiikkia, mä en muista yhen yhtä laulua mikä ois ollu suomeks." (P2)

"In comprehensive school, when we still had music, I think we only played English-language music, I don't remember a single song that would have been in Finnish." (P2)

P3 mentioned that if they had a chance to decide what to sing or play in music classes, the students would prefer English-language music over Finnish-language music. They also explained that they think in elementary school, the focus on English-language music might have started in fifth grade, and before that the music was mainly in Finnish. However, they emphasized that they cannot remember exactly:

"Peruskoulussa kyllä mä muistan että meillä oli paljon enkuks, ku monesti sai oppilaat päättää mitä lauletaan tai mitä soitetaan niin varmaan aika monesti saatettiin ehdottaa just enkunkielistä. En mä muista ala-asteelta oikein, no ehkä silloin vitos- kutosluokilla, silloin saatettiin enemmän laulaa enkuks ja siitä alaspäin suomeks, en oikein muista siltä ajalta." (P3)

"In comprehensive school I remember that we had a lot in English, because there were many times when students were allowed to decide what we would play or sing, so I think many times we suggested English-language music. I don't recall elementary school, maybe in the fifth and sixth grade, then we might have sung in English and before that in Finnish, I can't remember it that well." (P3)

P1 described that if there was a chance to choose a song, they picked English-language music, too:

"Meillä oli peruskoulussa semmosia laulukokeita, nii siellä sai ite päättää ihan, ei tarvinnu olla mikään mitä ois tunnilla laulettu, niin kyllä mä sitte mun mielestä siinä lauloin jotain englanninkielistä." (P1)

"In comprehensive school, we had singing tests and there you could decide, it didn't have to be anything that was sung in the class, so then I think I sang something in English." (P1)

In addition to the amount of English-language music being used in music classes, the attention paid to correct language use in the music classes was discussed. P1 mentioned that it is only necessary to pay attention to pronunciation if it is not working at all and there are significant challenges. Otherwise, they thought that it is not that necessary to pay attention to correct pronunciation in music classes. P2 told that their class was good in English and that is why their music teacher did not have to help them with pronunciation. They checked some correct rhythms of some certain words and how the words go together with the melody, but that was all:

“Meiän luokkalaiset oli aika hyviä siinä englannin lausumisessa ja puhumisessa, niin mä en muista, meiän musiikinopettajan ei mun mielestä tarvinnu puuttua siihen, se meni aika sujuvasti. Ehkä sen rytmityksen kanssa miten joku sana menee jossakin tietyssä kohassa ku se pitää vähän rytmittää ku sitä ei puhuta vaan se pitää laulaa sen melodian mukaan niin ehkä sen verran mutta ei sen tarvinnu mitenkään lausumisessa ohjata.” (P2)

“Our class was pretty good at speaking and pronouncing English, so I don’t remember, I think our music teacher didn’t have to correct it, it went pretty smoothly. Maybe the rhythm of certain words at certain parts of the song, when you have to sing it according to the melody and not just speak it, then maybe that, but they didn’t have to guide us how to pronounce.” (P2)

5.1.4 Other experiences from school: use of background music

In addition to music and English classes, the participants had experiences of music being used in other classes as well. In P2’s physics and chemistry classes, the teacher put on music on the background to calm the restless atmosphere and help the students focus on the subject. They explained that using music worked and that it made it easier to focus on the actual task:

“Fysiikan ja kemian opettaja teki silleen et se laitto musiikkia soimaan, aika paljon kuunneltiin jazzia ja bluesia, semmosta vähän niinku rauhallista, niin sitten mä en tiiä miks mutta se jostakin syystä toimi, sitten me oikeesti oltiin hiljaa ja keskityttiin tavallaan siihen musiikkiin ja se musiikki sai meitä keskittymään enemmän siihen aiheeseen.” (P2)

“Our physics and chemistry teacher put music on, we listened to quite a lot of jazz and blues, this kind of calm music, then I don’t know why but for some reason that worked, and then we were actually quiet and focused on the music and that music made us focus more on the subject.” (P2)

P1, conversely, had an experience, where using background music only made the situation worse. They told that especially those students that were restless started talking and shouting to each other and did not concentrate on the tasks at all:

“Ruotsin tunnilla mä huomasin kun käytettiin sitä taustamusiikkia, niin kun siellä oli jo hälinää taustalla, niin sitten luokan räsävillit saatto sitten vähän lähtee siitä et ne ei keskittyny niihin tehtäviin ku ne aatteli että siellä on jo taustamusiikkia niin sitten ne rupes itekin vaan keskustelemaan ja huutelemaan toisilleen ja tälleen, niin voihan se sit tietty olla, voihan se välillä tehdä sellastakin rauhottavaa vaikutusta, mutta ei oikein tiiä ennen ku kokeilee.” (P1)

“In Swedish class I noticed when we used background music, there was already noise on the background, and then those restless students didn’t focus on the tasks, because they thought that there was already background music so then they started talking and shouting to each other, so yeah it can be, it can have that kind of calming effect but you can’t really know before you try it.” (P1)

5.2 Benefits of using music in EFL learning

When talking about the possible benefits of using music in language learning, the following themes were discussed: pronunciation, vocabulary, concentration, memory, mood, and motivation. This section is divided into four topics based on the discussed themes. In addition to these themes, it was mentioned that using music in language learning could be especially beneficial and enjoyable for those students that enjoy music generally. That point of view is explored more thoroughly in the next section.

5.2.1 Pronunciation

Pronunciation was one of the first things that the participants indicated when thinking about the possible benefits. All the participants had noticed that singing had had a positive effect on their pronunciation skills.

P1 explained how they thought that singing has helped improving their pronunciation quite much:

“Than superpaljon varmaan lausumistyyliissäkin on auttanu, että tavallaan ku laulaa siinä ni se auttaa oppimaan sitä lausumista.” (P1)

“It has probably helped so much with the pronunciation style as well, when you sing along, then it helps learning pronunciation.” (P1)

P2 talked about how different words are accented differently in certain contexts and how that, in addition to pronunciation, can also be learned by singing:

“Ja tietenkin vähän lausumista, ääntämistä, ehkä joissakin biiseissä jopa oppii miten jotain tiettyä sanaa painotetaan kun se lausutaan tai jossakin tiettyssä yhteydessä missä sitä käytetään niin saatetaan painottaa jotenkin eri tavalla.” (P2)

“And of course a little bit of pronunciation, maybe in some songs you can even learn how a specific word is accented when it is pronounced or in some contexts where it’s used it may be accented differently.” (P2)

P3 added that for them it is easier to learn when being active and doing things, like singing, instead of just listening:

“Mulla ehkä just laulamalla että jos laulaa mukana niin kyllä se helpottaa tietysti kun tekee, ku itellä on helpompi opetella asioita tekemällä ku kuulemalla, et kyllä mä silleen kuulemallakin pärjään mut parempi just, no vaikka voi verrata siihen ku jos tunnilla opettaja luennoi jostakin niin kyllä se on parempi ottaa muistiinpanoja ku vaan kuunnella.” (P3)

“For me it’s easier when you do, like when you sing along, because for me it’s easier to learn things by doing than listening, like I’m okay by just listening but it’s better, like you can compare it to if at class the teacher is giving a lecture about something, then it’s better to take notes than just listen.” (P3)

Nevertheless, P2 mentioned that just listening can help, too:

“Joitakin sanoja oppii, joitakin monimutkasia sanoja oppii sitä kautta ku ne rytmitetään musiikissa tietyllä tavalla ja se menee vaikka jonkun kitaran kanssa samalla tavalla, ku se jaetaan se sana useempaan pieneen osaan niin sit sen oppii lausumaan myös niinku puhekielessä.” (P2)

“Some words you can learn, some complicated words you can learn because they have a specific pacing in music and it can go together and in the same way with like guitar, when the word is divided into several smaller pieces then you can learn pronouncing it like in spoken language, too.” (P2)

To summarise, the participants had found correlation between singing and enhanced pronunciation skills. Moreover, listening to the pacing of the lyrics can help learning the pronunciation style as well.

5.2.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary was another important benefit that all the participants highlighted. It was mentioned many times and was seen a great benefit that could be enhanced in different ways with music.

P2 explained how their vocabulary has improved by listening to songs because of their complex lyrics:

“Sanavarasto on laajentunu tosi paljon, koska yleensä kappaleissa käytetään jotakin vähän monimutkasempia sanoja mitä noissa enkun kirjoissa yleensä opetetaan.” (P2)

“Vocabulary has increased a lot, because usually in songs, they use words that are more complicated than what they teach in English course books.” (P2)

They also thought that if the teacher uses music at class and the students have to try to find certain words from a song, it helps increasing the vocabulary:

“Jos opettaja pistää jonkun biisin soimaan ja harjotellaan sitä et opitaan poimimaan niitä sanoja siitä, myös monimutkasemman kuuloesta asiasta niin sekin harjotuttaa korvaa niille tietyille sanoille.” (P2)

“If the teacher puts a song on and we practise picking up certain words from it, even some more complicated thing, that helps developing the ear for those words.” (P2)

P1 thought that like using the chapters from a textbook, songs could be used to gain more vocabulary:

“Usein enkun tunnilla tehään sitä että kuunnellaan se kappale ja sitte suomennetaan se, niin kyllähän ihan samalla tavalla sen biisinkin voi kuunnella ja suomentaa vaikka parin kanssa ja siinäkin on just silleen, käsitellään biisissä tiettyä aihetta et siinä on se aihe siinä biisissä, vaikka joku rakkaus tai joku tämmönen, niin kyllähän siinäkin tulee just sitä sanastoo ja just biiseissä saatetaan käyttää just erilaisia sanontoja jotka sitten voi oppia siinä.” (P1)

“Often at English classes we listen to a chapter and then translate it, so just like that you could listen to a song and then translate it with your pair for instance, and songs also have specific themes, like love for example, so you would learn vocabulary and songs might also use different kinds of sayings that you can learn too.” (P1)

They also mentioned how songs might use different kinds of sayings that are not necessarily that commonly used in textbooks. The more complex and challenging vocabulary in the songs compared to textbooks was also mentioned by P2, like cited above. All in all, it was stated that music could be a great and motivating way of learning and increasing vocabulary.

5.2.3 Concentration, memory, and mood

The benefits on concentration, memory, and mood were also mentioned. It was discussed that listening to music that one finds good and enjoyable while studying might help concentrating better, working faster, and improving the mood, which all enhance language learning in general.

P3 emphasized that it depends on whether the students are working independently or in groups, if background music should be used and if it would be beneficial:

“Se riippuu että jos saa yksin tehdä hommia et joutuu yksin tehdä niitä töitä niin sitten se on ehkä ihan hyvä koska ainakin ite pystyn paremmin keskittymään, koska tuntuu että muitten ihmisten se hälinä tai muu vastaava mitä ne puhuu, saattaa vähän häiritä ja jos saa kuunnella musiikkia mistä tykkää niin se saa sitten semmoseen parempaan moodiin ja saa tehtyä nopeemmin ja jos vaikka nopeempaa musiikkia kuuntelee niin tuntuu että pystyy tekemään nopeemmin. Ja jos tehään ryhmätehtäviä tai muuta missä pitää kuunnella mitä se opettaja sanoo niin ei ehkä sillon mut jos yksin pitää tehdä niin kyllä se mun mielestä auttaa sillon.” (P3)

“It depends, if you’re working alone, then it might be good because I at least am able to focus better, because I feel like other people’s noise and talk may interrupt and if I can listen to music that I like, then it gets me to a better mood and I can work faster and if I’m listening to faster music, then I feel like I can also work faster. And if we’re working in groups or something else where I have to listen to the teacher, then maybe not but if I have to do alone then I think it helps.” (P3)

They mentioned that listening to music that one likes can help improve their mood, boost their working, and even help them work faster. According to them, it can help concentrating on the subject, especially if there is some noise from other people, since the music blocks the noise. They found music a resource for boosting studying in general.

P2 gave an example of how music has helped them with memory:

“Mä voisin sanoa silleen, ku kasiluokalla ku oli se tietty pätkä historiassa, toisen maailmansodan asiat käsittelyssä, niin mä muistan kun oli se koe ja siinä oli että minä vuonna tapahtui se ja se asia, niin sitten mä rupesin miettimään että missä tää on tullu ja mun päässä rupee soimaan biisi minkä mä oon kuullu ja missä on se aihe ja sit mä laulan sitä mielessäni eteenpäin ja sit se vuosiluku tulee vastaan ja sit mä laitan sen siihen kokeeseen. Et mulla se tekee ku mä kuuntelen paljon semmosta musiikkia missä puhutaan historian tapahtumista niin se auttaa mua myös historiassa.” (P2)

“I would say, when on eighth grade, when we had that specific part in history, about Second World War, then I remember in the exam when they asked in what year something happened, and then I started thinking where have I heard this and in my head this song starts to play that I have heard and that has the topic on it and then I continue singing it forward in my mind and then that year comes and then I put it in the exam. I listen to a lot of music where they talk about historical events, so that helps me in history as well.” (P2)

They explained how they were able to remember a specific piece of information that was asked in an exam, because they had heard it in a song. They thought music can help with other subjects as well, such as history, if the songs are related to its themes. It was also mentioned that if an idea is introduced in a song, it is easier to remember. In other words, music can be used as a tool to recall different things, which is especially beneficial when studying something new.

Furthermore, it was discussed how music may have an influence on the mood:

“Ku ihminen kuulee jotakin rauhottavaa musiikkia niin sit se toimii silleen et alkaa pikkuhiljaa rauhottumaan itekin.” (P2)

“When you hear some soothing music, it works like that that little by little you start to calm yourself down.” (P2)

P2 described how calm music usually also calms the listener. Like cited earlier, they also talked about their experience on physics and chemistry classes, where the peaceful background music had had a calming effect on the restless class and had helped the students focus on the subject. In addition to this, like mentioned above, P3 explained that fast-paced music can help the listener work faster. Consequently, depending on the genre, the tempo, and the atmosphere in music, it can affect the listener’s mood in one way or another. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider that it is not guaranteed that music would radically change the atmosphere, as P1 talked about their experience on Swedish class where the background music only made the restless atmosphere worse. Even so, it can be concluded that music can be a great tool for improving one’s mood.

5.2.4 Motivation

Finally, the effects on motivation were discussed. All the participants thought that using music could add motivation towards language learning if used correctly.

P1 explained that working in a silent class might feel boring and that using background music might add motivation towards studying:

“Kyllähän se (taustamusiikin käyttäminen) vois varmasti monelle lisätä sitä motivaatioo siellä tunnillakin opiskeluun, onhan se vähän tylsä kun tulee se hetki tunnista kun ruvetaan tekemään tehtäviä eikä oo enää semmosta opettajajohtosta niin onhan se vähän tylsä ku hiljassa luokassa vaan istut ja kuuluu vaan kun kaikki näpyttää koneita, voishan se olla ihan kiva jos siinä taustalla kuuluis jotain musiikkia mutta se just että ei ehkä hirveen kovilla volyyymeilla ku muuten siinä ei ehkä voi oikein tehtäviin keskittyä samalla tavalla.” (P1)

“I think it (using background music) might add motivation for many when studying at the class, it is a bit boring when the time of the class that we start doing exercises starts and it’s not that teacher-led anymore, so then it’s a bit boring that you just sit in a silent class and hear how everyone is typing on their laptops, it could be quite nice if there was some music on the background but it shouldn’t be too loud because otherwise it might not be possible to focus on the exercises in the same way.” (P1)

They also discussed the importance of the right volume: the music should not be too loud because then it might interfere the concentration negatively and students may not be able to focus on the exercises that well.

P2 thought that combining music and language learning would be fascinating and could even broaden the views for both:

“Ite vaikka tykkäisin tehdä (esitelmän) jostakin tietystä bändistä, kertoa niistä englanniksi niin se ois mun mielestä tosi kiehtovaa, se avais semmosen uuden näkökulman siihen kielen opiskeluun ja sit siihen mistä musiikkiin liittyvästä aiheesta tekeekään, avaa molempiin uuden näkökulman.” (P2)

“I would like to make (a presentation) from some band, tell about them in English, I think that would be so fascinating, it would open a whole new perspective for language learning and for whatever music related topic you’re doing it about, it opens a new perspective for both of them.” (P2)

Given the above, music can enhance motivation, and the participants thought that they would especially feel more motivated if music was used more and in the right way in English classes. However, it was considered that not everyone might enjoy music that much and if used in the wrong way, it might even cause harm and decrease motivation. These right and wrong ways of using music in English classes are discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

5.3 Hopes and ideas about using music in EFL learning in the classroom

The many things that were mentioned when talking about the participants’ hopes and ideas about using music in the English class are introduced in this section. The importance of the right genre choice was stated many times during the interviews. The participants introduced what genres they like the best and what genres would generally work best with a group of students. However, it was emphasized that the best option would be letting students choose their own music. These ideas about genre are explored first. Furthermore, some specific

exercises that the participants found suitable, motivating, or beneficial are presented secondly. Finally, some other hopes and ideas that the teacher should take into consideration, such as what the group of students is like and variable teaching methods, are revealed.

5.3.1 Genre

The participants stated that the genre choice should be correct. P3 explained how they would personally prefer variation between the classes:

“Mullekin (lempigenre) on varmaan rock ja metallimusiikki, mutta kyllä mä mieluiten silleen että ois vähän vaihtelua että voi hyppiä että toisella tunnilla voidaan kuunnella jotain muuta ja tekis silleen et joka tunnilla kuunnellaan vähän aikaa musiikkia kun tehään tehtäviä niin voi olla eri musiikkigenreistä, mutta mikä omasta mielestä saattais sopia kaikille niin jazz tai swing, se ei ehkä häiritse kovin paljon ku se ei oo niin kovaäänistä.” (P3)

“For me too (my favourite genre) is probably rock and metal music, but I would rather have variation so that you could jump that on one class you listen to something else and on each class you would listen to music for a while, while doing the exercises so then it could be different genres, but what I think would suit everyone would be jazz or swing, that doesn't bother that much because it's not so loud.” (P3)

P3 would like different genres to be used on different classes. Moreover, they figured that suitable genres for all the students would be jazz or swing because they are not as loud as his favourites rock and metal.

P1, on the other hand, said that pop music would probably work best for everyone:

“Musta tuntuu et just joku niinku popmusiikki, niin se ois semmonen helppo ja yleinen, mikä soveltuis kaikille et vaikka joku kunnan metallimusiikki niin se on kuitenkin vaan joillakin tosi mieleinen ja toiset vihaa sitä, et se on vähän semmonen et siinä ei hirveesti oo sitä välimaata. Musta tuntuu et popmusiikki on muutenkin semmosta et se on selkeätä.” (P1)

“I think that a genre like pop music would be easy and general that would work for everyone, because for instance some proper metal music is preferable for only some and others hate it, so there are not many people in between. I think that pop music is clear, anyway.” (P1)

They clarified their thoughts by indicating that pop music is usually very clear and easy to listen. In addition, it does not share strong opinions as much as metal music, for instance.

Additionally, it was implied that the wrong genre choice would affect negatively on the student's motivation and success, like P2 described:

“Lisäis mielenkiintoo jos se ihminen saa päättää ite mitä se kuuntelee koska jos joutuu kuuntelemaan jotakin mistä ei vaan tykkää, jos se on joku genre mitä vaan vihaa yli kaiken ja sitä on pakko kuunnella niin se sinänsä vie sitä halua opiskella. --- Jos mun pitäis pakolla kuunnella vaikka kolme kertaa viikossa enkun tunnilla jotain teknomusiikkia niin mä veikkaisin että mulla ei kyllä pää kestäis sitä yhtään, niin se varmaan veis mulla sen opiskelumenestyksen siinä mukana.” (P2)

“I think it would add interest if you can decide what you listen to because if you have to listen to something that you just don’t like, if it’s a genre that you hate more than anything and you have to listen to it, it takes your will to study. --- If I had to listen to some techno music, say, three times a week in English classes, I’d say I wouldn’t be able to take it at all, I think I’d lose my success in the studies because of it.” (P2)

P2 estimated that if they had to listen to some genre they hate continuously, they would lose their will to study at all. They also mentioned during the interview that if they hear some music they do not like, they are not able to focus on the exercise or studying at all, because they are actively trying to block the music. If they can listen to music that they like, they do not have to pay attention to it and that is why it enhances their concentration and motivation.

P1 suggested that it could be more motivating for students to choose the genre themselves than having the teacher decide it:

“Kyllä se ainakin mulle ois (motivoivampaa valita genre itse) ja kyl mä nyt uskon et se ois tosi monelle koska jos miettii että opettaja valihtis sinne kurssille vaikka vaan popmusiikkia ja joku tykkää vaikka jostain metallista, niin oishan se nyt kiva että sais tavallaan semmosta oman tyylistä musiikkia edes yhen tunnin käydä läpi.” (P1)

“I think it would be (more motivating to choose the genre yourself) at least for me and I think for many others, because if the teacher chose for instance only pop music and someone likes for instance metal music, then it would be nice that you could use the music of your own choice at least on one lesson.” (P1)

P1 thought it would be nice to be able to use a genre one likes at least on one class, and that it could add motivation. Similarly, like cited above, P2 commented that it would add interest towards language learning if students could choose the genre themselves. Choosing the genre themselves was, after all, seen the best option.

5.3.2 Exercises

The participants presented some ideas for specific exercises that they thought could be fun or motivating, such as writing essays or making presentations or critical reviews on topics related to music and using songs or music videos as material for analysing the lyrics and making interpretations and translations.

P2 believed it would be good to give students opportunities to utilize their knowledge and expertise on music to enhance language learning as well:

“Jos olis vaikka joku kirjotelma, ku yleensähan opettajat antaa joku yhestä viiteen vaihtoehtoa yhteen tehtävään, mistä pitää tehdä, niin että siellä ois ainakin edes se yks mikä liittyy musiikkiin niin ne jotka tykkää musiikista, osaa musiikin teoriaa tai jotakin tämmöstä niin ne pääsis hyödyntämään sitä osaamista ja ottaa se siihen englannin kieleen.” (P2)

“If there was like an essay, for instance, then usually teachers give approximately one to five options on one task, on what you have to do, that there would be at least one related to music so that those who like music, and know about music theory and things like that, so that they would be able to use their expertise and take it to English.” (P2)

They illustrated that a good way to give an opportunity for students to use their skills and knowledge of music in English learning would be to give an option to use music as the topic in an essay, for example. P3 agreed that music could be used as a topic for different assignments, such as presentations, critical reviews, or essays:

“Munkin mielestä se on soveltuva se musiikki just johonkin esitelmään tai arvosteluun tai esseeseen, ja tietty jos tehään luokassa jotain kuuntelujuttua tai katotaan vaikka jotain musiikkivideota ja siitä vaikka yritetään jotain tulkita niin ehkä se siinä mun mielestä toimii. Vaikka ei olisikaan kaikkien lempimusiikkia niin kyllä siitä voi jotain irti saada ainakin mun mielestä.” (P3)

“I think that music is suitable for presentations or critical reviews or essays, and of course in the class if we’re doing some listening or watching like a music video and then try to make some interpretations, then I think it works. Even if it wasn’t everyone’s favourite music, I think you could get something out of it.” (P3)

P3 continued that also listening to music or using music videos for making interpretations could work. They also suggested that even though the music would not be everyone’s favourite, it could be useful in the language learning point of view.

P1 told that translating, analysing, and describing songs would be nice exercises. Furthermore, they described an exercise that they thought could be used as homework as well, not only in the classes:

“Semmonen ois ehkä ihan kiva et sais tai pitäis tehdä esimerkiks kotiläksynä tai siellä tunnilla, että valitsit ite sen biisin ja sitten siitä pitäis analysoida sitä ja jotenkin kertoa ja ehkä suomennella sitä kappaletta. -- - Yks mikä kans vois olla semmonen niin tavallaan ku kotiläksyjä tulee niin tulis semmonen et pitää kuunnella tällöinen kappale ja pitää ehtiä sieltä näitä ja näitä asioita ja silleen että sitä vois käyttää myös kotiläksyissä eikä pelkästään tunneilla. ” (P1)

“I think it would be quite nice if you had homework or at class you could choose the song yourself and then you would analyse it and tell something about it and maybe translate it. --- Another thing could be that when giving homework, you would have to listen a certain song and look for certain things and that could be used in homework as well, not just on the classes.” (P1)

P1 thought that looking for certain things in a specific song would work as an option for homework as well. They also stated that choosing the song yourself would be nice. The importance and positive effect of the option for choosing the music yourself was discussed many times during the interviews and as cited before, it was seen a great way of increasing motivation towards the exercises and language learning in general as well.

5.3.3 Other hopes and ideas

In addition to hopes and ideas regarding genre and exercises, the participants had some other ideas. It was stated that the teacher should consider what kind of group of students they are teaching. P2 suggested that if the group does not enjoy music that much, it would be better if the teacher only used basic tasks:

“Jos tulee joku porukka joista kukaan ei oikein tykkää musiikista ja jotka tiedostaa että musiikkia on olemassa mutta vaikka se oppiaine on niille pakkopullaa niin siinä tilanteessa en ehkä lähtis opettajana laittamaan mitään musiikillisia tehtäviä vaan enemmän semmosta perustehtävähommaa.” (P2)

“If there’s a group of students that don’t really like music and who are aware of music but feel like the subject is forced for them, in that situation I wouldn’t use any musical exercises as a teacher, I’d rather use some basic tasks.” (P2)

P1 advised that it should be considered carefully what kind of songs the teacher uses, and that it would be a good idea to talk about it with the students, and discover what songs they think would be practical, especially if the teacher is not familiar with English-language music:

“Pitää aika harkitusti miettiä mitä biisejä käyttää et onhan siinä se vaikee et jos miettii et enkun opettajan pitäis valita jollekin kurssille niitä biisejä ja sit se kuuntelee vaan jotain suomalaista iskelmää ja sillä ei oo mitään tietoo näistä englanninkielisistä laulajista ja minkälaista musiikkia ne tekee niin siinä vois tulla ehkä vähän semmonen ongelma että minkälaista musiikkia sitten laittaiskaan mutta kyllähän siinäkin vois sitten keskustella oppilaitten kanssa että minkälaisia näkemyksiä niillä on että minkälaiset biisit ois semmosia hyviä ja ihan käytännöllisiä niille tunneille.” (P1)

“It should be considered carefully what songs you use, it is hard if you think for instance that an English teacher should decide the songs for some course and then they only listen to some Finnish songs and don’t have a clue about these English-language singers and what kind of music they make, so it could become a problem, like what kind of music should I use, but then again you could talk about it with the students, that what kind of perceptions they have, what kind of songs would be good and practical for the classes.” (P1)

In addition, P1 reminded that the teacher should be aware of the song so that they know how to use it and what kind of questions to ask about it:

“Sen opettajan kannattas perehtyä siihen kappaleeseen ennen sitä tuntia, että se osais sitten esittää just oikeita kysymyksiä siitä.” (P1)

“The teacher should get acquainted with the song before the class, so that they can ask proper questions about it.” (P1)

P3 mentioned the option for deciding yourself, which has also been discussed earlier in this section, and stressed that variety in teaching methods and ways of using music is usually a good thing and important, even though different teaching styles might feel exhausting at times:

“Monella opettajalla on erilainen tyyli opettaa ja pistää tehtäviä niin kyllä se vähän tuntuu hermoja raastavalta. Kyllä mun mielestä vaihtelu tekee välillä hyvää et ei koko ajan mee sitä samaa reittiä et välillä pitää olla vaihtelua. --- Kyllä se mun mielestä olis kiva jos sitä (musiikkia) käytettäis enemmän, vaikka kyllä sitä käytetäänkin jonkin verran, mut kyllä se ois kiva jos saa just ite päättää tai sitten ois just monipuolisesti.” (P3)

“Many teachers have a different style of teaching and giving tasks so yeah, sometimes it feels a little nerve-racking. I think that variety is good every once in a while, that it’s not always the same, sometimes there has to be some variety. --- I think in my opinion it would be nice if it (music) was used more, even though it is used somewhat, but yeah it’d be nice if you can decide yourself or that it’d be versatile.” (P3)

To summarise, the participants found it especially important that the teacher knows their students and what kind of groups they have. It was suggested that not everyone would necessarily benefit using music in EFL learning as much as those students who enjoy music. Furthermore, it was stated that letting students choose the songs or genres themselves would be motivating. However, genres as pop music, jazz and swing were seen suitable for most students. Moreover, variety in teaching methods and ways of using music was generally seen a positive thing, but it was also mentioned that if the teaching style changes dramatically and continuously, it can feel exhausting.

6 DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate the use of music in EFL learning from students' perspective. The study aimed at discovering what kind of experiences students have had on the phenomenon, what they think of its benefits, and what kind of hopes or ideas they have about using music in the EFL classroom. Overall, the study examined how students feel or think about the use of music in EFL learning and whether they support the idea of combining music and English or not. This chapter summarizes the findings of the present study, discusses how they can be compared with previous research, and evaluates the reliability of the findings.

The findings of the present study can be summarized in three main themes. First, the experiences on the participants' free time were quite similar: music was used a great deal. However, there was variation between the experiences on the use of music at school environment. Second, music was found a beneficial tool in language learning: several benefits were mentioned and discussed. Third, the participants presented some other hopes and ideas regarding the phenomenon. For instance, they suggested that the genre of the music plays an important role, the teacher should know their students well, and variation in teaching methods can be either a positive or negative factor. Overall, music was seen a potential tool in language learning, but it was also discussed that it depends on many things whether it works or not.

The first main finding suggested that the experiences on the participants' use of music in their free time were similar. All the participants listened to music, liked to sing, and played instruments – they were actively involved with music in their free time. Majority of the music they used was English-language music, and they thought that it had improved their English language skills. It could be suggested that since they used English-language music so much, actively listened to the lyrics, searched for unknown words, and aimed at understanding the lyrics most of the time, it would evidently have a positive influence on the English language skills. Ala-Kyyny (2012) examined the role of English-language music in informal English learning and discovered that students that had better grades in English paid more attention to the lyrics and understood them better than students with poorer grades in English. Moreover, the students with better grades considered the impact of English-language music on English language skills higher than students with poorer grades. These results support the findings of this study as well: the participants of the present study succeeded in their English studies, thought it was easy for them, and liked it as a subject.

The experiences on the use of music in language learning at English classes, on the other hand, varied: some of the participants had little experience and some of the participants had more experience. All the participants had experience of background music being used either at English or some other class, and some mentioned specific exercises that they had done at English classes, such as written assignments or listening tasks related to music. The variation on the participants' experiences might indicate that the use of music depends on the teacher's preferences on what kind of teaching methods they choose to use. Even though The National Core Curricula (POPS 2014; LOPS 2019) and The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) support the idea of combining music and language learning, it is not demanded or compulsory. It has been suggested that the use of music in language classroom is occasional (See e.g. Degraeve 2019). Additionally, it has been investigated that language teachers might feel that they are not qualified or competent enough to incorporate music into language learning (See e.g. Keskinen 2014).

The experiences on the music classes varied as well: some of the participants explained that they only used Finnish-language music on the music classes, whereas some told that they only used English-language music. Furthermore, it was said that if the students had a chance to decide, they preferred English-language music over Finnish-language music. Additionally, paying attention to correct pronunciation in the music classes was not seen highly important, especially if the students were familiar with the basics. However, it was mentioned that if the students struggled with pronunciation, it could be advisable to take it into consideration. Even though the participants did not highlight the possibilities of music classes in language learning point of view, it has been suggested that language learning could be enhanced by music educators as well, not just by language teachers. For example, Hansen et al. (2014) emphasize the role of music teachers and music education in language development. In addition, Pasanen (1992, 115) argues that since English-language music is so popular and different music cultures should be introduced in the music classes, English works as a tool in the music classroom, not only contrariwise. Moreover, as stated earlier, the sections of music in The National Core Curricula (POPS 2014; LOPS 2019) present the aspects of communication skills and understanding cultural diversity, which are examples of language learning areas that can be enhanced in the music classroom.

The participants thought that music can have many benefits on English learning. They discussed the positive effect of music on pronunciation, vocabulary, concentration, memory, mood, and motivation. They mentioned that singing and listening to music can both enhance pronunciation skills. It was also stated that songs might have more complex vocabulary than the chapters in the English textbooks, for instance, which helps learning more challenging words. Furthermore, they argued that music can help remember things and concentrate in noisy environments, improve their mood, and that for them, it can also add overall motivation towards language learning. All these benefits discussed have been examined widely, as presented in chapter three. Accordingly, it can be suggested that the findings of the present study support previous studies conducted on the benefits of the use of music in English learning.

The participants presented different kinds of hopes and ideas about the phenomenon. They discussed that the choice of genre is crucial: it can affect either positively or negatively on the students' overall study success and motivation, depending on how enjoyable the student finds the genre. Genres like pop, jazz, and swing were seen best for most students since they were considered simple and easy to listen. It was suggested that variation in the genres would be important, but letting the students decide the genre themselves was found the best way. Giving students opportunities to decide would also support some of the core values of Finnish basic education: students' independency and participation (See POPS 2014). However, music should be suitable for its purposes. As Pasanen (1992, 89) states, the teaching objectives should be kept in mind when choosing music: it is advisable to consider students' opinions and suggestions in a respectful manner, but ultimately teacher should make the decisions based on what the targets are. (Pasanen 1992, 89.)

Another theme the participants discussed was specific exercises they found suitable or interesting for English classes. It was mentioned that music would be an interesting and motivating topic for different exercises, such as essays, presentations, or critical reviews. In addition, making interpretations of songs by listening to them or watching music videos was seen useful. Moreover, translating, analysing, and describing songs were found good exercises, both at school and as homework. Overall, the participants considered music an interesting topic that could be utilized in language learning exercises. These kinds of exercises are also listed by Degraeve (2019), who introduces how music can be used in foreign language learning.

Furthermore, it was suggested that teacher should be aware of their student groups: every student might not benefit the use of music as much as the students who like music very much and find it interesting or fascinating. P2 mentioned that for those students who do not care about music that much, “basic tasks” might work better than tasks that include music. The National Core Curricula (POPS 2014; LOPS 2019) emphasize the consideration of students’ own interests, which also means that if the students are not that interested in music, it should be evaluated whether or not to use music in the English classroom. As stated in chapter 3.6, teaching should be adapted according to the student group.

Finally, variable teaching methods were considered a positive factor if they do not change too radically or too often – a little variation was seen refreshing. On the other hand, having to get accustomed to dramatically different teaching styles continuously was described as nerve-racking. As presented in chapter 3.7, using different teaching strategies is advisable, since that helps supporting different learners in the classroom. Furthermore, both The National Core Curricula (POPS 2014; LOPS 2019) and The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) recommend using various teaching methods.

Overall, the participants personally found the idea of using music in language learning interesting and motivating. Additionally, it was stated that having opportunities to use the knowledge and skills of music in English learning would be intriguing. However, as mentioned above, it was recognized that the usefulness of music in language learning depends on the students and their own needs, interests, and hopes. The findings of the present study corresponded the preconceptions. Since the participants were interested in both subjects, it was predictable that they would assumably find the combination of these subjects interesting and motivating. Moreover, the findings correlated with previous studies, and consequently supported the idea of incorporating music into language learning.

6.1 Reliability of the findings

The present study followed the principles of qualitative research methodology. The data was collected with semi-structured focused interviews and analysed with qualitative content analysis. These choices were formed by reflecting the aims of the study: gaining descriptive knowledge on the phenomenon, which is the target in qualitative research (Eskola & Suoranta

1998a, 61). Since the findings describe and help gaining understanding on the phenomenon, rather than aim at making statistical generalizations, the small number of participants is justifiable. However, the findings might vary at least to some extent with more participants, or if another research method was used. For instance, a quantitative method like a survey would allow generalization and give a broader view on the phenomenon. On the other hand, it would not have the benefits of the qualitative methods used in the present study, such as being able to discuss the themes thoroughly with the participants, making clarifying questions, or allowing the participants explain their views on detail. Overall, the methods used were seen the most suitable for this type of study. Since the findings answered the research questions, it can be suggested that the methods used in the present study were appropriate.

When evaluating the reliability of the findings, the participants' backgrounds should be taken into consideration. As mentioned previously, all the participants were musically active, liked music very much, listened to it a great deal in their free time, played instruments, and liked singing. Additionally, they all liked English as a subject and thought it was easy for them. This kind of background affects the findings inevitably. Since they liked both subjects, it could be expected that they would have positive feelings towards the combination of the subjects. Nevertheless, the participants discussed the phenomenon from a general point of view as well, not only from their own, personal aspect. They considered that they would personally like the idea and felt that it would be motivating and interesting for them, but that not everyone would feel the same. Even though the participants presented their ideas from a general point of view too, it could be valuable to examine how the results would vary with participants that have different backgrounds.

Another thing that might have affected the findings is the nature of the interviews. As presented in chapter 4.4, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews could not be conducted in person. Using a video communications application may have restricted the interaction. One of the participants kept their video off, which meant that it was not possible to take their facial expressions and gestures into account. In addition, the participants were at school when the interviews were conducted. This might have had an influence on how relaxed they felt in the situation or how naturally they were able to present their views on the subject. However, both interviews seemed casual and successful in terms of the atmosphere. The participants seemed to feel comfortable, which could indicate that they were able to present their ideas in a natural manner.

As stated before, I recognize my personal, positive feelings towards incorporating music into language learning, and my background as a music education and English student, which can have an impact on my views on the phenomenon. However, during this research process I aimed at remaining as objective as possible and conducting a thorough analysis. I explored the data carefully many times during the analysis process and after writing the findings chapter to make sure I had included everything that is relevant and that my interpretations would be as truthful as possible. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998a, 211), researcher plays a crucial role in qualitative research process: qualitative research process includes researcher's own views and interpretations made about the phenomenon. Consequently, it should be considered that the findings are my interpretations and reflect my views as the researcher.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 164–165) state that explaining the research targets, process, and methods used in detail improves reliability of the results, because it gives the reader an opportunity to evaluate the research and its findings. In the present study, the aims of the research, the process, and the methods of analysis were discussed and presented thoroughly in chapter four. Chapter five introduced the findings and included several excerpts from the data. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998a, 217–218), using examples from the data allows the reader to see how the interpretations have been formed and to evaluate them, which also increases the reliability of the study.

7 CONCLUSION

The present study offers insights for students' perspective and their perceptions on the use of music in EFL learning. Gaining understanding on their point of view provides valuable information for different experts working on the field: language educators, music educators, experts working on administration, material designers, and specialists developing curricula. The present study also works as a resource for teaching materials since it presents examples on how music can be used in language learning. Additionally, it can be utilized to promote cooperation between teachers of music and English teachers. Furthermore, based on the present study, learners can evaluate their own learning processes and examine how the findings differ from their own perceptions.

In future, several aspects related to the phenomenon of the present study require further examination. First, the perceptions of students with different backgrounds should be investigated. It would be interesting to discover how students who are not that interested in music would perceive using it in language learning. In addition, it would be valuable to find out how students with poorer grades of English, who do not find it as enjoyable as the participants of the present study, or who lack motivation in English learning would perceive or benefit of the use of music. Furthermore, scrutinizing the effect of age on the phenomenon by including participants from different age groups would be enlightening. Additionally, changing the methodological principals into quantitative ones and aiming at generalizations would offer new kind of information. Moreover, since teachers could probably give even more analytical answers and would have more knowledge on the subject on more general level based on their education and expertise, combining their perceptions and students' perceptions in the same study could offer a holistic understanding on the phenomenon. Finally, examining the cooperation of music and English teachers and investigating the possibilities of music classes in language learning point of view would also provide practical and essential information.

Considering the findings of the present study and connecting them with the theoretical background and previous studies, it can be concluded that music is an effective and potential tool in language learning. This should be kept in mind when designing curricula and learning materials, and when evaluating teacher education. As has been investigated, teachers might not feel qualified enough to use music in English lessons but developing teacher education and promoting cooperation between music and English teachers might help with that. However, it

should be emphasized that incorporating music into language learning is just one teaching method and might not work in the same way for every student. Teachers should always consider their student groups' needs, targets, interests, weaknesses, and strengths when choosing what procedures to use. Yet, as has been proven, music can offer multiple creative ways to learn a language and improve the study environment.

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APPENDIX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEWS IN FINNISH AND ENGLISH

Aiheet ja apukysymykset haastattelijalle

Aihe 1 – Vapaa-ajan (englanninkielisen) musiikin käyttö

- Minkä kielistä musiikkia käytät vapaa-ajallasi?
 - o Kuinka suuri osa on englanninkielistä musiikkia?
 - o Jos käytät englanninkielistä musiikkia, millaisia vaikutuksia olet huomannut sillä olevan oman englannin kehittymiseen?
- Oppimiskokemuksia aiheeseen liittyen?
 - o Keskitytkö sanoihin / pyritkö ymmärtämään mistä laulussa puhutaan?

Aihe 2 – Musiikin käyttö englannin oppitunneilla

- Millaisia kokemuksia sinulla on musiikin käytöstä koulussa englannin oppitunneilla?
- Miten opettaja on hyödyntänyt musiikkia englannin oppitunneilla?
 - o Millä luokka-asteilla?
 - o Millaista musiikkia?
 - o Esim. taustamusiikin käyttö, kappaleiden kuuntelu, laulaminen, biisien tekstien analysoiminen / kääntäminen

Aihe 3 – Englanninkielisen musiikin käyttö musiikintunneilla

- Minkä verran käytetty englanninkielistä musiikkia?
- Millaisia oppimiskokemuksia aiheeseen liittyen?

Aihe 4 – Musiikin hyöty englannin opiskelussa

- Tilanteita, joissa olet oppinut jotain englannin kielestä musiikin avulla?
- Mitä ajattelet musiikin käyttämisen hyödyistä englannin opiskelussa?

Aihe 5 – Oppilaiden toiveet ja ideat musiikin käyttämisestä

- Mitä itse toivoisit musiikin käyttämisestä englannin tunneilta?
 - o Lisäisitkö tai vähentäisitkö musiikin määrää oppitunneilla?
 - o Toivoisitko tiettyjä genrejä tai harjoituksia?

Topics and questions to help the interviewer

Topic 1 – Use of (English-language) music in free time

- In your free time, in what language is the music you use?
 - o How much do you use English-language music?
 - o If you use English-language music, what kind of effects on your English language skills have you noticed?
- What kind of learning experiences do you have related to this topic?
 - o Do you aim at understanding the lyrics?

Topic 2 – Use of music in English classes

- What kind of experiences do you have of using music in English lessons?
- How has the teacher used music in English classes?
 - o In what grades?
 - o What kind of music?
 - o Examples: using background music, listening to songs, singing, analysing/translating the lyrics

Topic 3 – Use of English-language music in music classes

- How much have you used English-language music?
- What kind of learning experiences do you have related to this topic?

Topic 4 – The benefits of using music in English learning

- In what kind of situations have you learned something about English with the help of music?
- What do you think about the benefits of using music in English learning?

Topic 5 – The students' hopes and ideas about using music

- What do you wish for using music in English classes?
 - o Would you add or reduce the amount of music used in the classes?
 - o Would you wish for certain genres or exercises?