

INFORMAL ENGLISH THROUGH MUSIC: A DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

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Abstract

As postulated by Sociolinguistics (LABOV, 2008), language is heterogeneous, dynamic and multifaceted, varying in many different ways. In this regard, the approach to Informal English in class is the focus of this study, since such language variation is widespread and exposed to students in their everyday life, through the internet, songs, series, advertisements, and so on. Thus, after delving into the Socio-Discursive Interactionism perspective and the State Official Guidelines for Modern Foreign Language Teaching (PARANÁ, 2008), the ‘song’ genre has been chosen to be used in the didactic activities which are proposed in this study, since teaching languages through a text genre allows teachers to approach language as social practice. By conducting a literature review on Informal English teaching through music, it has been verified that studies in this field are scarce, indicating the relevance of this study. Therefore, the didactic sequence proposed in this paper intends to provide teachers with activities and ideas to approach Informal English in class as well as contribute to future research on such theme.

Keywords: Informal English; Songs; Didactic Proposal.

Resumo

Como postulado pela Sociolinguística (LABOV, 2008), a língua é heterogênea, dinâmica e multifacetada, variando em muitas formas diferentes. Levando isso em consideração, a abordagem ao Inglês Informal em aula é o foco deste estudo, já que a variação linguística é difundida e exposta aos alunos em sua vida cotidiana, através da internet, de músicas, séries, propagandas, e assim por diante. Dessa forma, após me basear na perspectiva do Interacionismo Sociodiscursivo e nas Diretrizes Curriculares da Educação Básica do Paraná para o Ensino de Línguas Estrangeiras Modernas (PARANÁ, 2008), o gênero “canção” foi escolhido para ser usado nas atividades didáticas que são propostas nesse estudo, já que ensinar línguas através de um gênero textual permite que os professores abordem a língua como prática social. Ao conduzir uma revisão de literatura sobre o ensino de Inglês Informal através de música, foi verificado que estudos no campo são escassos, indicando a relevância desse estudo. Portanto, a sequência didática proposta nesse artigo pretende dar aos professores atividades e ideias para abordarem o Inglês Informal nas aulas assim como contribuir com futuras pesquisas nesse tema.

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Palavras-chave: Inglês Informal; Canções; Proposta Didática.

INTRODUCTION

Languages and their teaching have had countless definitions and approaches in the history of linguistic studies. In light of Sociolinguistics, language is considered heterogeneous, dynamic and multifaceted, varying in many different ways, as presented by Calvet (2002), Labov (2008) and others. Taking into account that students will increase their linguistic repertoire and communicate more freely by being familiar with as many language variations as possible, the approach to Informal English (IE, henceforth) has been chosen for this study, since such language variation is definitely widespread nowadays, through songs, series, advertisements, on the internet, and so on. Besides, IE is not commonly approached in class, as the main topic to be studied (SENEFONTE, 2018). When students are exposed to it at school, they are able to learn language with which they have had or will probably have contact with.

In this way, this paper intends to propose a set of activities encompassing IE through music (more specifically using the ‘song’ genre). To do so, the Socio-Discursive Interactionism perspective (SDI, herein) and the State Official Guidelines (PARANÁ, 2008) underpin this study, principally concerning the concepts of language and genre and the use of text genres in the language classroom.

The rationale of this study lies in the fact that the ‘song’ text genre is regarded as a motivator in class (WOLFF, 2015) and a great source of IE (SENEFONTE, 2014, 2018). Furthermore, research whose focus is specifically to propose/suggest activities approaching IE through music is considerably scarce, as verified in the literature review conducted. In line with the tenets expounded, the aims of this study are: a) to propose didactic activities encompassing IE to teachers; b) to use the “song” text genre in the activities proposed.

Considering what has been exposed above, this paper brings two theoretical sections: the first one composed of three sub-sections (*Informal English*, *Text genres* and *Songs as a genre*, respectively) and the second one which covers a literature review on informal English; the methodology of the didactic proposal, the didactic proposal

itself and some conclusive notes of the paper. Also, the full didactic sequence is provided in the appendix.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the paper contains the theory which supports the study. It is divided into three sub-sections, as previously stated, so as to better explicate each of the topics separately and then establish a connection among them.

Informal English

Before directly addressing IE, it is important to conceptualize language itself. In light of Sociolinguistics, Calvet (2002), Labov (2008) present it as something heterogeneous, unfinished, dynamic, fluid and multifaceted. In this regard, it is clear that language is not a defined, fixed system. It is plural, ever-changing, and for this reason, it varies in uncountable different ways.

Senefonte (2017) postulates that language and society are inherently connected, in which the former is a reflection of the latter and vice-versa (in a two-way continuum). This way, considering that society and social communities are heterogeneous and stratified, so is language. Consequently, it is possible to assert that language variation occurs mostly on account of social factors, which are related to politics, religion, schooling, gender, economy, geographical position, and others. Furthermore, social factors are not the only cause of language variation, but linguistic ones as well, which includes phonetic, syntactic aspects, to name a few. Nonetheless, in comparison to social variables, it is observed that the variation solely related to language aspects occur to a lesser degree (SENEFONTE, 2018).

To complement the theory on language variation, Castilho (2002) contends that context is the overriding factor for language variation to occur. People tend to use a certain type of language suitable to the situation in which they are inserted, making appropriate choices before/when delivering discourse. Hence, there is one point which definitely has to be taken into account concerning language adequacy: register (basically, related to formal, neutral and informal language realizations). Drawing on Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1972), we can assume that choosing the style of language to be deployed in different contexts is a common problem for English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) students. For this reason, the teaching of English encompassing diverse situations is of utmost importance for a more thorough approach to language use. And IE is indeed part of it and that is the topic on which this paper focuses.

In his doctoral thesis, Senefonte (2018) provides detailed information on IE and its numerous domains/features. Below, some core considerations are made based on it:

- Degree of informality (and formality for that matter) stems from monitoring. The less monitored/controlled/planned language realizations are, the more informal they will be. Thus, synchronous communication is prone to be more informal;
- IE pervades oral and written genres, such as in chats with friends during recess at school, in messages exchanged by family members on a WhatsApp group, etc.
- Among so many features of IE, some of them are: slang, emotional language, idioms, taboo words, metaplasms, fillers, and so on.

Considering the tenets exposed above, the pervasiveness of informal language in most people's routine and the importance of tackling IE in the EFL classes, the next section is intended to approach one of the current trends in language teaching/learning: text genres, as a genre is used in the activities proposed.

Text genres

To begin this sub-section, it is of great importance to shed some light on SDI, seeing that, out of the many perspectives of language and genres existing, SDI is the one that supports this study. Cristovão (2007, p.9) contends that SDI is a theoretical-methodological framework developed in the eighties by Bronckart and collaborators from Geneva and other places, whose epistemological position gathers diverse perspectives from human sciences. Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Schneuwly are just some of the distinguished scholars who influenced on the construction of the SDI framework, each one in their area of expertise. Bronckart (1999) contends that SDI is underpinned by a socio-interactionist perspective of language and by language theories which prioritize social issues. For this reason, SDI contributes to this study, since the activities

proposed to teach IE will not account for the study of the language in isolation, but considering its social factors.

Grounded in the Bakhtin Circle's sociological perspective and theories, in which language is conceived as discourse, the State Official Guidelines (PARANÁ, 2008) define text genres as the social practices which constitute language, whose manifestations occur in typical forms of diverse texts (written or oral) in the various spheres of society. Since language is fluid and used by different cultures and peoples over time, text genres develop as society uses them. Instances of genres are: letter, songs, blog, podcast, and many others. Also, the guidelines establish that the approach to Modern Foreign Language have as its foundation a wide range of text genres, aiming to broaden the comprehension of diverse uses of language, constructing meaning through discursive engagement.

Through what has been said about SDI and from the State Official Guidelines for Modern Foreign Language teaching, it is seen that the use of text genres for this purpose is demanded, as it enables teachers to work with language as social practice, not in a systemic manner. Dolz, Noverraz and Schnewly (2004) state that when communicating, people adapt to the communicative situation, for instance, the way one writes a request letter differs from the way a short story is composed. Oral and written texts produced in society are different from one another, the reason why such texts are delivered in different conditions. Despite this diversity, regularities are verified as well. In similar situations, texts can be produced with similar characteristics, and these texts can be part of the same text genre. By knowing a number of text genres, people will communicate more easily, then the paramountcy of addressing the English language through genres is clearly verified.

Hence, Dolz, Noverraz and Schnewly (2004) suggest the use of Didactic Sequences (DS) in class, since a DS is, in essence, a set of school activities systematically organized around a certain genre. By doing so, teachers will empower students to express themselves in writing and orally in and out of school.

Along with the benefits of teaching English through text genres detailed above, Cristovão (2007, p.12) also endorses its teaching focusing on the development of the language capacities related to text genres. From the SDI point of view, the language capacities are a group of operations which enable the realization of a determined language action, and are a valuable tool to mobilize students' knowledge and

operationalize learning. Based on theory explicated above, we conclude that there are basically three types of language capacities, whose central aspects are described below:

- Action capacity: it concerns the adaptation of the language production to the context of production, reception and circulations (representations of the physical environment, speakers' social status and the social setting in which the interaction happens);
- Discursive capacity: it is about the choice of the general infrastructure of a text, the type of discourse and textual sequence to be employed;
- Linguistic-discursive capacity: it involves the abilities to realize the operations implied in the textual production, related to linguistic mechanisms.

At last, Cristovão (2009) gives very helpful advice concerning the production of didactic sequences/textbooks including text genres: use of authentic texts, as they are a reference of the genre covered and provide students with the features of such genre. In a broader way, students will have access to real aspects of a language, and get closer to how language is spoken/written in varied social contexts.

Now that text genres have been discussed, the next section approaches the genre used in the didactic proposal of this study: songs.

Song as a genre

Firstly, the fact that music³ is widespread all over the world is undeniable, and people will probably have contact with it whether they want it or not. Church services, nightclubs, shopping malls, lobbies, films and advertisements are just a few examples in which music can be found. In addition, with the advancement of technology, it has become more and more accessible, and learning English through songs is commonplace. So, why not to use them in the EFL class?

By analyzing this scenario and understanding that music is part of most people's everyday life (especially teenagers'), Gobbi (2001) argues that the use of music in the classroom can arouse positive associations with the study of a language, which many times do not happen when activities are assigned only in more traditional

³ Herein, we understand that music is a broader realm and can encompass numerous artistic possibilities, one of them is the song genre, which in turn is focus of this paper.

ways. With this in mind, teachers can make use of songs to give students more stimulus during the teaching/learning process, since it is such a powerful motivator.

Besides the motivational support music can bring, by no means can the linguistic aspects brought by songs be underestimated. The benefits of using authentic texts, as advised by Cristovão (2009), are reiterated here. Song lyrics are a great source of content in the target language, including oral and written characteristics, offering a myriad of topics to be studied in class: IE (slang, idioms, etc.), metaphors, rhymes, tenses, and others. Also, music facilitates the creation and assignment of listening, speaking, reading and writing, cultural, sociolinguistic/pragmatic activities, which is essential in the current English language teaching, since “[...] the four language skills are the heart of second language classes and, whenever possible, they should be integrated as happens in actual language use [...]” (USÓ-JUAN; MARTÍNEZ-FLOR, 2006, p.7).

After presenting the theoretical framework, the following section concerns the literature review conducted on informal English teaching through music.

RESEARCH ON INFORMAL ENGLISH TEACHING THROUGH MUSIC (SONGS)

This section of the paper is intended to address issues related to the teaching of informal English through music, encompassing studies which propose activities with this aim.

A literature review was conducted between April and May of 2019 in the following databases: CAPES⁴, ERIC⁵, Google and Google Scholar. The search terms defined were: “*Informal English*” + “*Music/Song*”, “*Colloquial English*” + “*Music/Song*”, “*Slang*” + “*Music*”, “*Idioms*” + “*Music*”, and their counterparts in Portuguese, namely “*Inglês informal*” + “*Música*”, “*Inglês coloquial*” + “*Música*”, “*Gírias*” + “*Música*” and “*Expressões idiomáticas*” + “*Música*”, respectively. The criteria established for the selection of the findings were:

- a) research on English teaching/learning through music;
- b) studies (papers, dissertations and theses) proposing/suggesting didactic activities aimed at IE, or closely-related.;

⁴ Official website <https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/#/>.

⁵ Official website <https://eric.ed.gov/>.

c) there was no delimitation of time and place.

Out of the four databases mentioned above, five studies meet the criteria set. Thus, each one of them is discussed in the following paragraphs, and the table below provides an overview of their main characteristics:

Study / Place	Type of study	Focus/Purpose
Coelho de Souza (2011) / Canoas, Brazil	Paper	Teaching English through song lyrics considering their relation with the music and cultural context of production
Kuśnierek (2016) / Poznan, Poland	Master's thesis	Teaching English vocabulary through songs for better memorization
Lieb (2005) / Seoul, Korea	Paper	Using popular music to teach and motivate students in the EFL classroom
Segal (2014) / San Francisco, USA	Master's thesis	Using rap/hip-hop music to teach vocabulary, grammar, discourse and prosody
Wolff (2015) / Japan	Paper	Using music as a motivator in the EFL classroom

Table 1 - Studies proposing/suggesting activities aimed at/ encompassing IE

Source: The authors

With the intention of not only using songs through gap-filling activities in the EFL classroom, Coelho de Souza (2011) discusses how to design tasks not ignoring music and the cultural context of production which come along with them. This way, learners are provided with opportunities to develop the multiple language abilities (speaking, listening, reading, writing, sociolinguistic/pragmatic, cultural etc.) as well as to ponder over important topics, and language variation is one of them. Amongst the suggestions made by the author, one of them is that, when working with questions about the lyrics, teachers should ask students to infer meaning from slang and/or idioms and recognize the degree of formality/informality of the language used.

Considering that listening to music is highly motivating to students and songs are easily accessible, Kuśnierek (2016) decided to investigate whether teaching vocabulary through songs contributes to better memorization of it. So, she led an experiment with two groups of students whose level of English was homogeneous. She taught the same vocabulary through songs to one group and through different activities

to the other. After a week, she administered a test involving the same vocabulary to both groups and, by correcting it, concluded that the students who had learned by means of music presented better results regarding vocabulary memorization. At a given point of the study, the author gives forty suggestions on how to work with songs in class, and one of them is that students identify the meaning of words/expressions as used in the lyrics. However, by analyzing the song-based activities, there was no approach to informal language, even though one out of the two songs used presents varied informal expressions which could be worked on.

Lieb (2005) states in her study that effective teaching and learning rely heavily on students' interests and motivation, and she sees popular music as a great factor to motivate students in the classroom, since most students are very fond of it. Besides, songs are described as a rich source of content for English learning, and among the linguistic aspects highlighted by the author, the easy access to colloquial/informal language and idioms through music stands out. In contrast to it, within the range of ideas for activities, there was just the suggestion of a song to address collocations, expressions and idioms (which may be informal), and barely can informal language be found in these lyrics.

In order to profit from the benefits of music in language learning, Segal (2014) provides a curriculum with rap/hip-hop songs to teach vocabulary and grammar explicitly, that is, conceiving songs as a way to explain/illustrate these topics. This kind of music was selected so that prosody could be approached naturally during the lessons, and the author took the opportunity to expose students to informal aspects of the language, since it is characteristic of this type of music. When reading the lyrics available in this curriculum, it is easy to notice that IE is present. Also, scripted discourses embedded in rap music were created and acted out in video performances, where the teacher and two students talk informally about discourse and school-related issues, respectively.

Taking into account that music is a motivator in the EFL classroom and its pedagogical options are virtually limitless, Wolff (2015) offers in his paper a quick guide on how to prepare a gap-filling exercise from lyrics. The author suggests steps for the preparation of the activity as well as for the procedures to be followed when implementing it. In one of the in-class steps, it is recommended that the teacher briefly discuss the meaning of the lyrics and any difficult vocabulary or idioms, and that reductions (*e.g. wanna, gonna, doncha*) be explained, as they are common in songs.

Discussion on the studies

To begin with, it is of paramount importance to mention that the results of the literature review bespeak the scarcity of studies whose focus is specifically on the approach of IE through music, proposing and suggesting activities for that matter, as it is the intent of this study. Interestingly enough, references to how music is a great source of informal/colloquial language, idioms and slang could be found in the theory of the studies read during the research, even though it was not their focus. So, there seems to be awareness on how important it is to expose students to these facets of the English language, and a consensus that music is, to say the least, one of the best means to teach/learn IE.

After analyzing the suggestions in this regard, it is noticeable that they range from very superficial to more thoughtful and pragmatic ones. In one of the studies (LIEB, 2005), not even the “how to address IE” aspect is present, and in two others (KUŚNIEREK, 2016; WOLFF, 2015) the idea is that teachers and students work on the meaning of informal expressions in the lyrics. Nevertheless, focus is put only on the linguistic factor per se, not covering any social matters. Also, it is mentioned that reductions should be explained since they are common in songs, excluding other contexts in which they are used, be them in spoken or written language.

On the other hand, Coelho de Souza (2011) advises teachers to not only make students infer meaning from slang and idioms, for example, but also to recognize their degree of formality/informality, which is something pertinent, since it provides the teacher with a great chance to bring up a discussion over the context of use of such language. Besides, the exercises Segal (2014) proposed using rap music were certainly helpful to acquaint learners with informal language through the songs as well as the video performances, showing suitable situations to the use of IE.

Taking the observations above into account, there are not just downsides regarding what was proposed. Yet, there must be a more thorough approach regarding IE. The problem is not that the most traditional song-based activities are usually employed, such as exercises to fill in the gaps, to translate expressions and to infer meaning from them. The point is that the teaching/learning of informal language cannot be limited to it. Getting learners to know the context they can use IE (where, when, with whom, what for) is essential. Furthermore, the State Official Guidelines (PARANÁ,

2008) indicate that criticalness is something teachers should bring out in students. For this reason, making use of activities which work on learners' different abilities (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and arouse reflection in class upon the use of IE is, indeed, necessary.

Under such perspective, the didactic proposal of this study aims to tackle some of the gaps discussed above. Therefore, the next sections will cover how it was built and explain its activities with more details.

METHODOLOGY

In this methodological section, the context of production of the DS proposed by this study will be described. First of all, it is correct to say that the reading of the aforementioned studies on language variation, informal language (more specifically), text genres, SDI and the integration of the multiple language abilities made it possible to have a solid theoretical background in order to organize activities encompassing these themes afterwards.

Inasmuch as IE was chosen as the focus of the didactic proposal, and working with text genres is fit for its teaching/learning, a given genre should be selected. After thinking it over, a song was chosen to this end, since it is a great source of IE as well as one of the students' favorite genres in basic education. At this point, it is important to clarify that age/level of English was not defined more precisely because of the different contexts in our schools. This way, teachers can analyze both the DS and their context to check its applicability, and even adapt it to their reality.

Having the premises of the DS set, the song *A hard day's night* (*The Beatles*) was chosen, since it provides examples of idioms, collocations, reductions, and verbs at their informal usage. It was also taken into account that even though *The Beatles* reached the top of the world in the 60's and 70's (musically speaking), nowadays many teenagers are familiar with this band. Besides, a version of this song had been released by a well-known Brazilian pop/rock band called *Skank* to be featured on a famous TV show not long before the DS was built, so, these factors could be motivating in class.

As for the structure of the DS, it was divided into four units. The first unit was designed as an icebreaker, with the intent of promoting a discussion to check students' background on the musical aspects of the lesson, make them aware of the context of the song and prepare them for the following parts. The second unit was designed in order to

familiarize students with the lyrics and also with some common features a song may have concerning its structure. Then, the third unit approaches the lyrics in a more detailed way, including questions which cover the features of IE selected from the song in a contextualized way, and deal with the comprehension of the song and the students' reality. In addition, reflection upon social and linguistic issues is aroused in this section. At last, the fourth unit was designed as a wrap-up of the previous ones, whose principal aim is to promote a discussion among students concerning language awareness/adequacy. It is worth mentioning that throughout the DS, there are activities for students to practice their receptive and productive skills (listening/reading and speaking/writing). These activities also demand that students work by themselves, in pairs/trios and in open groups, so that the DS can be as dynamic as possible.

After the proposal of activities was built in the DS, the section *Hints to the teacher* was also designed, to give support/ideas to help teachers perform a good job when administering the DS.

The methodological section of this study has basically shown the nature of the DS proposed. In the next section, the DS is explained in detail, providing the development of the activities in a practical way.

DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

This section is aimed at describing the DS with more details, also taking its applicability into account. For this reason, it is important to mention that the teacher must prepare the materials needed in advance as it best fits their setting in each class. The DS (which is available in the appendix of this paper) may be printed out, and since digital media is present in the DS, computers, tablets and/or smartphones should be used by students during the activities. In this respect, the DS can also explore digital literacy (GIRÓN-GARCÍA, 2015), even though this is not the focus of the proposal.

Below, a table is found to provide an overview of the DS, covering each unit and their main features. Subsequently, a more in-depth explanation is presented.

	Activities	Aims	Theoretical aspects	Time required (on average)
Unit 1	Introduction (reading	To familiarize students with the	<i>Language capacity: action</i>	30 minutes.

	<p>passage); Warm-up (questions for discussion); Contextualizing (questions on the history of the song).</p>	<p>topic of the lesson; To check students' background on the song/ band; To infer meaning from the title of the song and make students aware of the context of production of the song.</p>	<p>capacity; <i>Language abilities:</i> reading, speaking, listening, writing, cultural, and sociopragmatic</p>	
Unit 2	<p>Gap-filling activity; Correction of the gap-filling activity through a lyric video; Questions (working with the structure).</p>	<p>To familiarize students with the lyrics of the song and with the structure of songs in general and this one specifically.</p>	<p><i>Language capacity:</i> discursive capacity; <i>Language abilities:</i> listening, reading, writing, cultural and sociolinguistic</p>	25 minutes.
Unit 3	<p>Questions (working with the lyrics).</p>	<p>To work with informal language in a contextualized way; To infer meaning from the song; To arouse reflection and discussion on social and linguistic issues.</p>	<p><i>Language capacity:</i> discursive-linguistic capacity; <i>Language abilities:</i> reading, writing, speaking, listening and sociolinguistic; <i>Criticalness.</i></p>	50 minutes.
Unit 4	<p>Wrap-up & Language Awareness (questions).</p>	<p>To promote final considerations about the song/ band; To arouse reflection and discussion on language awareness/adequacy concerning register and context.</p>	<p><i>Language capacity:</i> action capacity; <i>Language abilities:</i> reading, speaking, listening, cultural, sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic; <i>Criticalness.</i></p>	25 minutes.

Table 2 – Didactic Sequence.

Source: The authors

To start **Unit 1**, teachers ought to ask students to read a paragraph on the topic of the lesson: the song *A hard day's night*. Since a movie and an album of the band has the same name, it is a good point to start making students not only familiar with the context of production of the song but also with the movie and the album.

Following it, there is a warm-up activity with five questions, through which the teacher will be able to know the background the students have concerning the song, the band, and their first impressions of the title of the song. For that, students are to work in pairs/trios and, taking turns, they should read the questions aloud for the other student(s) to answer and start a discussion. This activity enables students to practice their reading, speaking and listening in the English language. Something important to keep in mind is that considering teachers may have varied realities in their classrooms when it comes to students' level of English, the use of the mother tongue in these moments of discussion should be allowed when necessary, since the discussion itself is of great value to the fulfillment of this type of activity.

The last exercise in the first unit is named *Contextualizing*. Still in pairs/trios, students are to access a link which provides the history surrounding *A hard day's night* in the format of written text and audio. They should read and listen to the text preferably simultaneously, and then answer, in writing, three questions involving more specific information about the context of production, drawing from students how the phrase which later became the name of the song came up, what the principal reason for the song to be written was, who wrote the lyrics and what the acceptance of the song was. Between the link and the questions there is a tip explaining to students that even though they may not know all the words in a text, the context can help them understand its message and the meaning of these words. However, an online dictionary is provided in this part of the DS in case students are not so confident about their comprehension during the activities. The idea is that students develop a feeling of confidence to infer meaning from content they do not know and have autonomy to look up for words whenever they deem it convenient.

As for **Unit 2**, it starts with a gap-filling activity prepared from the lyrics. Students are to access a link to listen to the song while following the lyrics available and fill in the gaps with the words required. They will probably need to listen to it more than once in order to complete the activity, so teachers should analyze the class to know how much time should be allowed for this activity to be done. As a form of self-

correction, the link of a lyric video is provided in the second exercise so that students can correct the first activity themselves. Thus, through these parts of the unit, they will have the chance to practice their listening, writing and reading skills and be acquainted with the lyrics as well as with the structure of the song.

After that, to close the second unit, there are three questions which students should, individually, read and answer in writing. The first one is meant to check students' background on the structure of songs by asking them to compare the structure of *A hard day's night* to how other songs they know are built, and then indicate similar characteristics among them. Questions number two and three approach specifically the song of the DS, telling students to find its chorus and underline some verses which rhyme. This activity, despite being simple, gives students a chance to realize how familiar they are with structural characteristics of songs, and then point out some of these features in the lyrics provided.

Unit 3 is the one which is focused on the lyrics of the song, and most importantly, this is the block of activities where IE is approached more deeply. This is possibly the most dynamic unit of the DS, as students are to read and answer ten questions in different settings: by themselves, in pairs/trios and in open group, and in writing and speaking. So, they will be able to have different moments during the unit, shifting from replying alone to getting answers from their classmates, debating and replying to questions together (this way the listening skill is involved in the exercises too). Besides, in a given question, students are to use their smartphones (or any other device) to search for examples of phrases with the reductions '*cause* and *gonna* in other songs, not restricting the view of such expressions to the song of the DS, also giving students leeway to work outside the lyrics. One more important point to be highlighted is that due to the way this unit was designed, multiple language abilities are practiced by students interchangeably.

Now, more relevant information is listed below concerning what is approached in the third unit:

- The use of IE in a contextualized way, including receiving and producing content;
- Activities which bring out students' reality and check their background, providing a more meaningful learning;
- The comprehension of the song as a whole and of some excerpts;

- Reflection/discussion⁶ on social issues present in the song in contrast with today's society;
- Language awareness/adequacy (through an excerpt containing the expression *on earth* in the last question).

At last, **Unit 4** was designed as a wrap-up of the DS. In this unit, students are provided with eight questions to be read and discussed in open group. Therefore, the reading, speaking, listening and other skills are supposed to be practiced here. The first question aims at getting from students if their idea of the song *A hard day's night*, after doing the activities of the DS, is similar to their first idea of it when they had just read its title in the first unit. The second one is basically a question to check if students would recommend the band/song to anyone and justify their answer.

From this point on, all of the following questions have the objective of promoting language awareness/adequacy, by asking students: in which situations it is (in)appropriate to use IE; if the relation between the people you are speaking/writing to interferes in the type of language to be chosen; the consequences of using IE (and formal language) in an unsuitable situation; how comfortable students are when choosing a certain type of language to use in different occasions.

This discussion serves as a very useful tool for the teacher to analyze how aware students have become concerning register and context, and to give them some support in case the teacher feels it is still needed (as suggested in the section **Hints to the teacher** available at the end of the DS).

To close the DS, students are to access the link to a live performance of the song by *The Beatles* so that they can listen to it and sing along, and an extra video is available with the version performed by *Skank*. This activity, besides training students' listening and speaking, is intended to make students assess themselves regarding the content learned through the lyrics and give them a sense of accomplishment for being able to finish this sequence of activities.

As a final consideration of the didactic proposal, there is a section with hints to the teacher at the end of the DS, as mentioned before. Aside from the tip previously commented, it is suggested that the teacher be prepared to answer questions about features of IE present in the lyrics which are not deeply approached in the activities

⁶ Critical standpoint endorsed in the EFL scenario (ZHANG, 2015).

proposed. Also, in case the teacher can play the guitar, it is a great opportunity to do a different activity, playing and singing with the students, instead of having students sing following the video(s).

CONCLUSION

At first, it is deemed necessary to restate that IE pervades EFL learners' everyday life more and more. In an era when access to information is at the tip of our fingers, and communication is established more easily and quickly, this language variation is exposed to people in multifarious forms. On account of that, the EFL classroom should be one more place where IE is found. Not approaching it in class would be the same as excluding an essential aspect of the English language from students' education. Moreover, there is a substantial paucity of studies whose foci are on informal English teaching. This is the reason why the aim of this study was to approach IE in EFL classes. More precisely, to propose didactic activities encompassing it to teachers and to use the 'song' text genre in the activities proposed.

After drawing on the theory presented in this study to come up with practical exercises for teachers to use in class, some challenges appeared, due to the fact that there exist numerous trends in modern foreign language teaching which must undoubtedly be thought of when preparing a set of school activities. Therefore, the challenge lies in the fact that a proposal of this nature is expected to encompass such multifarious trends, thus suggesting exercises approaching IE in a contextualized way, making good use of the genre (highlighting the importance of working on the language capacities), integrating multiple language abilities in a dynamic way and arousing reflection/discussion over language awareness/adequacy were top priorities in the construction of the didactic proposal.

As a result, it is truly believed that the didactic proposal of this paper can support teachers to approach IE in a way that will have students learn how to use informal expressions, and most importantly, know when to (not) use IE regarding the situations in which interactions in the target language may occur.

Finally, it is expected that this study contributes to the literature involving IE, regarding its theoretical framework and the pragmatic activities suggested herein. When it comes to the didactic proposal per se, teachers are not only provided with practical activities to put into practice, but also with ideas on how to address IE in class.

Therefore, this study suggests that teachers neither be afraid to include such language variation in class, nor think it is impossible to do so. It may not be simple to create didactic activities for this purpose grounded in some of the latest trends in language teaching, but the results in class will surely be worth the effort. Last, but not least, the more studies similar to this one are carried out, the more knowledge and practical references will teachers have to approach IE the EFL classroom.

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APPENDIX

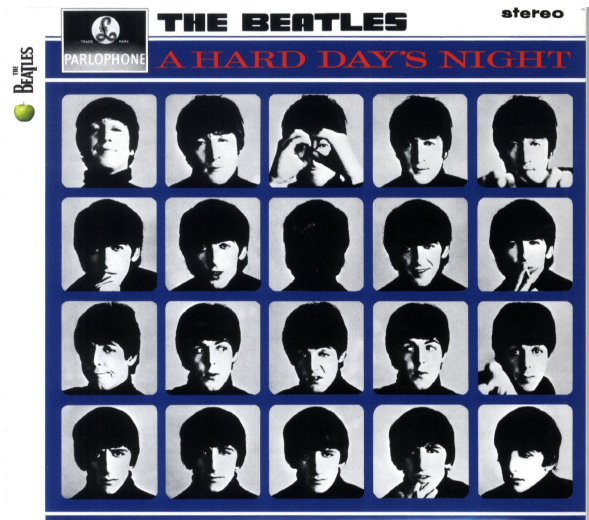
(Didactic Sequence: Learning Informal English Through Music)

LEARNING INFORMAL ENGLISH THROUGH MUSIC

UNIT 1

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

A hard day's night is a song by the British band “The Beatles” which was released in 1964 in the third album of the band. Seeing the potential of this album, a studio offered them a deal to make a movie out of it, and the members of the group themselves starred in it. Interestingly enough, the name of the song is the name of this album as well as of the movie, which was released in the same year.



WARM-UP

In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following questions:

- What do you know about “The Beatles”?
- Have you ever listened to any of their songs?
- How famous were they? Do you think they had an important contribution to pop-rock music? If possible, justify your answer.
- Have you ever listened to the song *A hard day's night*, be it in its original version or another version, such as the one by the Brazilian band “Skank”?
- Taking the name of this song into account, what can you infer from it? Can you figure out what the song may be about?

CONTEXTUALIZING

By accessing the link below, you will have access to the history surrounding *A hard day's night*. Still in pairs or groups of three, listen to the audio while reading the text and then answer the following questions:

<http://www.thebeatlessongbysong.com/HardDaysNightScript.html>

TIP: Even when you are not familiar with all the words in a text, the context can help you understand its message and the meaning of these words. However, if you are not so confident about your comprehension during the activities, feel free to use <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/> to help you out.

1 - How did the phrase *A hard day's night* come up?

2 - What was the main reason for the song to be written? Which members of the band wrote it?

3 - Which information from the text supports the idea that this song was a hit at that time?

UNIT 2

1 - Listen to the song, follow the lyrics and fill in the gaps provided below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMSiHdrHI0g>

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

**It's been a hard day's night
And I've been _____
It's been a hard day's night
I should be _____**

**But when I _____ home to you,
I find the things that you do
Will _____ me feel alright.**

You know I work all day
To _____ you money to buy you things
And it's worth it just to hear you say,
You're _____ give me everything.

*So why _____ should I _____?
_____ when I get you alone,
You know I feel okay.*

When I'm home,
Everything seems to be right.
When I'm home,
Feeling you holding me tight.
Tight, yeah.

REPEAT PART IN BOLD
REPEAT PART IN ITALICS.

REPEAT PART WITHOUT GAPS

REPEAT PART IN BOLD

You know I feel alright, you know I feel alright.

2 - In order to correct the activity above, watch the lyric video of the song and make appropriate changes if needed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGhDszRb3VQ>

3 - Working with the structure of a song:

A - By analyzing the structure of the song *A Hard Day's Night* and other songs that you know, can you point out some similar characteristics among them?

B - What is the chorus of the song? Highlight it in the lyrics and explain why you believe this part is the chorus.

C - Underline in the lyrics three pairs of verses which rhyme.

UNIT 3

WORKING WITH THE LYRICS

1 - From your understanding of the lyrics, what is the song about?

2 - Taking the first stanza of the lyrics into account, what can you infer from it about his workload? Is he tired? Justify your answers.

3 - Comparing this man's workload to people's work-related routine today, have things changed? Why (not)?

4 - **To work like a dog / To sleep like a log:** based on the meaning of these expressions learned through the lyrics, ask your classmates if they work like a dog and/or sleep like a log. Find at least two people for each expression.

_____ and _____ work like a dog.
_____ and _____ sleep like a log.

5 - What is it that makes him feel alright when he gets home? How about you, what makes you feel alright after a hard day?

Now, ask your classmates about what makes them feel alright after a hard day.

6 - The verses *You know I work all day / to get you money to buy you things* indicate a situation which was common in a relationship at the time the song was written. Can you tell what it is? Pair up with a classmate, discuss, and write your opinion.

7 - In general, is this situation still common nowadays? If the verses above were said to a spouse today, what reaction do you think they would arouse?

8 - Do you think there are people in the modern world who feel okay by just receiving things from a spouse or parents, for example?

9 - ‘Cause and gonna are words that exist because of a reduction in the pronunciation of because and going to respectively. To put it simply, this change occurs due to the real use of the former words by people in informal conversations. (and the frequent use of these words orally made it possible to also use them in informal writing). Have you ever seen/heard these words before? If so, Where? In pairs or groups of three, use your smartphones to search for examples of phrases with these reductions in other songs.

10 - In the verse *So why **on earth** should I moan?*, which meaning/idea does the expression in bold add to the sentence? Do you think this expression could be used in this way in an email to the principal of your school, or in the professional environment? Justify your answer.

UNIT 4

WRAP-UP & LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Guiding questions for open conversation in group:

- Is the message of the song *A hard day's night* similar to your first idea of it when you had read just its title at the start of the lesson?
- Would you recommend the song/band to anyone? Why or why not?
- In which situations is it OK to use informal language/expressions, such as **workin' like a dog**, **'cause**, etc?
- In which ones isn't it OK to use them?
- Does the relation between the people you are talking/writing to and you interfere in the type of language you use?
- What are some consequences of using informal language in an inappropriate situation, such as in a job interview, in a scientific paper in the university?
- Thinking in the opposite direction, what consequences can one have by using formal language in an informal context, such as in a friends' group on Whatsapp or in a barbecue with family?
- Are you comfortable with choosing the type of language you use in different occasions?

TIME TO SING:

Watch the video with the recording of a live presentation by “The Beatles” and sing along and out loud! :D

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yjyj8qnqkYI>

Extra video:

For the ones interested, here is the version of *A hard day's night* recorded by “Skank” in 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngg8-AnhSAs>

→ HINTS TO THE TEACHER

- Other features of informal language are present throughout the lesson (*workin'*, *like*, questions without an auxiliary verb, and so on). Be prepared to answer questions regarding it, or even take the opportunity to make comments about it in class;
- If you notice the students are not really aware of when to use formal and informal language, give them some support.
- If you play the guitar, this is an excellent opportunity to do something different with the class: instead of playing the video for everybody to sing together at the end of the lesson, play the song yourself and sing it along with the students!
-

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