Enhancing the Use of Music in Language Learning through Technology

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Abstract

Music is a rich source of authentic aural input frequently underused in the world language classroom. More than engaging background noise, the artistic usage of language found in the lyrics can provide a powerful teaching tool. In this article multiple song-based activities for promoting proficiency are presented, addressing each mode of communication: interpretive, presentational and interpersonal. A difficulty in incorporating music into instructional tasks is the time required for preparing them. Lyricstraining.com is a free website that pairs music videos with their lyrics to engage students through karaoke-style presentations of the captioned music videos, fill in the blank or multiple choice comprehension activities of varying difficulties, or teacher-created cloze activities. Links are provided to lyricstraining.com examples for each of the activities presented. Lyricstraining.com is an excellent tool for enhancing the use of music in the world language classroom through technology.

Music in the Classroom

Research supports the claim that music is “a means of lowering anxiety and diminishing tension, and inducing the state of relaxed alertness considered optimal for second language acquisition” (Krashen, 1982, p. 145). Simply playing music in the background has been linked to alleviating student anxiety (Haynes, 2003), thereby lowering affective filters (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). Furthermore, background music has also been linked to increased retention of target language vocabulary (de Groot, 2006) and improved performance on language learning tasks such as writing in the target language (Cho, 2015; Kang and Williamson,
However, the power of music goes well beyond engaging background noise. The power of music truly lies in its integration into instructional tasks.

Songs provide a unique text and context for language and culture learning. They are short, repetitive, rhythmic, catchy, authentic and engaging. Generally they tend to tell a short story, which limits them to some degree to a specific grammatical tense. These characteristics are suited for integration into instructional tasks. A prime example is Manu Chao’s Me gustas tú (I like you) which includes close to 50 simple statements expressing what the singer likes, covering the three most used conjugations of the verb gustar (to like). One could easily create a worksheet out of the lyrics, blanking out all of the gustar conjugations (see Appendix 1). Similar to a traditional worksheet geared toward grammar concepts, this activity requires students to fill in the blanks with the correct conjugations of the verb. However, this worksheet could serve other purposes as well.

For example, it could serve as a listening comprehension activity, asking students to fill in the blanks as the song is playing. Following the listening comprehension task, students engage in an inductive grammar task, hypothesizing when and why to use the different conjugated forms. The teacher could also use the same worksheet as a pronunciation / speaking activity, asking students to sing along. Among other possibilities, the teacher could use the song as a springboard for student conversations focused on likes and dislikes. Because the worksheet is based on a song, students will be more engaged in the learning process in spite of the repetitive nature of the lyrics.

Research and theory have linked engaging students with song-based instructional tasks to: the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structures; improved listening comprehension ability; the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills; enhanced cultural awareness; and increased interest in and motivation to learn a second language (Brown, 2006; Lems, 2001; Medina, 2002; Sağlam, 2010; Ward, 1991). Moreover, because the repetition is paired with the melody of the song, students will be more likely to remember what they have learned (Mora, 2000).

Incorporating music-based instructional tasks into the classroom can significantly enhance language learning. Integrating instructional technology takes these activities to another level.

Multimedia Videos

Multimedia presentations are videos that combine visual and aural input. Garza wrote in 1994, “As a medium for presenting a foreign language teaching text, video offers language instructors and students a highly-accessible and manipulatable product” (p. 106). Video can be easily stopped, rewound, and fast-forwarded, allowing for user-control over the input. The use of videos in the world language classroom has been linked to enhanced comprehension and increased motivation (Lynch, 1998). Captions, where the spoken text is transcribed onto the video, can increase student attention, improve processing, reinforce prior knowledge, and enhance learning (Garza, 1994; Gernsbacher, 2015; Winke, Gass & Sydorenko,
2010). Finally, with current technology, multimedia videos are easy to create, edit and share.

An excellent illustration of an effective multimedia presentation further enhancing the *Me gustas tú* example is provided by youtube.com user flor1666 (2009). Each verse of the song is accompanied with a PowerPoint slide which displays the captions and includes an image for the two things the singer likes. For the verse, "*Me gusta la guitarra, me gustas tú*" (I like the guitar, I like you), the accompanying slide splits the verse into its two clauses, displaying one on the left and the other on the right side of the screen (see Figure 1). Directly below the displayed captions is an image of a guitar and a couple in love, respectively. Flor1666 (2009) also edits out one verse referencing liking marijuana; a verse that would otherwise prohibit the use of the song in the classroom. Combining the song (aural input) with a video (visual input – images and captions) is a significant enhancement.

**Figure 1. Me Gustas Tú Multimedia Presentation (flor1666, 2009)**

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**Evaluating Multimedia Presentations**

When evaluating (and producing) multimedia presentations such as flor1666’s (2009) *Me gustas tú* video, it is important to remember that there is a fine line between providing too much and too little input. Derived from Cognitive Load Theory, Mayer (2009) developed eight principles for evaluating multimedia content. These principles were further developed by Moreno and Mayer (2010), adding five principles for evaluating the interactive components of multimedia presentations (see Table 1 on the next page).
Table 1. 13 Principles for Enhancing Learning with Multimedia Materials (Mayer, 2009; Moreno & Mayer, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles for Reducing Extraneous Processing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Eliminate irrelevant words, sounds, and symbols.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>Include cues to draw attention to important details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>Minimize multiple representations of a single concept.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spatial Contiguity</td>
<td>Pair corresponding images and text close together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporal Contiguity</td>
<td>Display corresponding images and text at the same time.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Principles for Managing Essential Processing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segmenting</td>
<td>Allow for user control over the pace of the presentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-training</td>
<td>Pre-teach essential concepts prior to viewing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Include aural and visual representation of key concepts.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Principles for Fostering Generative Processing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td>Ask students to build referential connections between audio and visual representations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>Foster a feeling of active participation, rather than passive viewing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guided Activities</td>
<td>Include interactive components.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Provide principle-based feedback based off student responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Prompt students to evaluate their understanding.</td>
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Based on Mayer’s (2009) principles for reducing extraneous processing (i.e., mental work required by ignoring irrelevant information), flor1666’s video follows the principles of coherence (i.e., reducing imagery to only relevant information), redundancy (i.e., not including multiple representations of a single concept), spatial contiguity (i.e., pairing corresponding text and images closely together), and temporal contiguity (e.g., displaying text and images together as the corresponding verse is sung). Applying Moreno and Mayer’s (2010) principles for managing essential processing (i.e., mental work required for attending to relevant material), the multimedia video illustrates segmenting (i.e., users can pause, rewind, or fast-forward the video), and modality (i.e., essential information is presented aurally and visually). To improve the presentation, the target vocabulary presented visually, or dual coded (e.g., the guitar and you) could have been underlined in the text to draw viewers’ attention, adhering to the principle of signaling. Also, to ensure that viewers understand the concepts which are communicated, Mayer (2009) recommends pre-training, or pre-teaching before viewing the multimedia presentation. This would eliminate the ambiguity of some of the images. For example, the image representing “ocean” is that of the ocean meeting a beach which also includes an image of a starfish. In this case, without pre-training the target vocabulary word could be potentially misunderstood as either the beach or the starfish.
Evaluating flor1666’s (2009) video in accordance with the principles for fostering generative processing (i.e., mental work required for organizing and integrating the material), is more difficult. As the YouTube video does not contain any interactive components, it does not directly engage students in generative processing. A teacher using the video would need to rely on a worksheet similar to Appendix 1.

Alternatively, teachers could use free Web 2.0 sites for adding interactive components to YouTube videos such as zaption.com, educannon.com, and edpuzzle.com. While a full review of these websites is not within the scope of this article, each of these allows the user to import a video from YouTube and add interactive components, such as multiple choice and open-ended questions. When watching, the video pauses at the teacher assigned point and requires viewers to respond to a prompt before continuing. Reflecting on Moreno & Mayer’s (2010) principles for fostering generative processing, this added interactive component could be used to address the principles of multimedia (i.e., asking students to build referential connections between aural and visual representations of the target concepts), personalization (i.e., fostering a feeling of active participation among viewers), guided activities (i.e., including interactive components), feedback (i.e., providing a principle-based feedback based on viewer responses) and reflection (i.e., prompting students to explain or evaluate their learning). An attractive feature of these Web 2.0 sites is the ease with which these principles for fostering generative processing are added; and, while the current article focuses on the enhancement of music in the world language classroom, it is important to note that any YouTube video (music or not) may be imported into these sites and augmented with these interactive features.

Returning to flor1666’s (2009) \textit{Me gustas tú} video, creating this exemplary application of Mayer’s (2009) eight principles for evaluating multimedia materials was labor intensive. First, an individual slide for each of the verses was created in a slideshow program, such as Google Slides, PowerPoint or Keynote. Next, a screen recording program such as the free software Screencast-O-Matic or the Google Chrome extension Screencastify was used to record the presentation synchronized to the music. Then, a video editor such as the free Web 2.0 site WeVideo was used to censor the inappropriate verse before finally uploading the finished product to YouTube. While certainly feasible for some, for many this requires an overwhelming amount of technological savvy to accomplish. An alternative to creating one’s own multimedia presentation to enhance a song can be found in enlisting a song’s official music video.

\textbf{Music Videos}

Official music videos accompany the vast majority of the songs dating back to the 1970s. These professionally produced short films significantly enrich songs by visually communicating the message of the music. In the world language classroom, these additional cues provide valuable information which enhances a song’s comprehensibility (Sağlam, 2010). The result is an authentic text that is both
more engaging and more culturally relevant than the song alone (Burke, 2012), as the videos display authentic imagery from the target culture.

Benefits aside, it is important to note that the advent of the music video has drawn multiple investigations into the negative impact inappropriate imagery can have on society in general and on adolescents in particular. Topics of inquiry include drug use (DuRant et al., 1997), violence (Sherman & Dominick, 1986), race (Brown & Campbell, 1986), gender roles (van Oosten, Peter & Valkenbury, 2015), sexual permissiveness (Strouse, Buerkel-Rothfuss & Long, 1995), and self-perceptions of body (Mischner et al., 2013) among others. When considering the use of a music video for instructional purposes, a teacher should take into account not only the instructional value of the lyrics, but also the content of the video itself. Table 2 presents criteria for selecting music videos to be incorporated into instructional tasks.

Table 2. Criteria for Selecting Music Videos

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>Music videos should be culturally relevant to students: catchy and fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible</td>
<td>Music videos should be understandable: proficiency-level appropriate and clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Music videos must be school appropriate: lyrics and imagery.</td>
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First, music videos should be engaging for students. The song selected must be something students want to hear and can relate to (Beasley & Chuang, 2008). The best song selections include catchy, fun, repetitious lyrics which produce the “song stuck in my head” phenomenon (Murphey, 1990), facilitating long-term retention. The imagery in the video should captivate the viewer’s attention. Second, teachers must select music videos which provide comprehensible input. Language used in the lyrics should be proficiency-level appropriate and clearly heard over background noise (Lems, 2001), and imagery used in the videos should clearly communicate the song’s meaning. Finally, both the lyrics and the imagery of the music video must be school appropriate. While the term appropriate lends itself to grey-area interpretation, teachers should err on the side of caution.

In terms of Mayer’s (2009) eight principles for evaluating multimedia content (see Table 1), authentic music videos may not be as effective at reducing extraneous processing and managing essential processing as teacher-made videos. Speaking to the comprehensibility of the music video, attention may be overly drawn to extraneous information included in the video, reducing student ability to attend to the essential information (i.e., the instructional objective). However, the increased level of engagement generated by authentic music videos may overcome a decreased level of comprehensibility. This interplay between comprehensibility and engagement is relevant when selecting a music video. An alternative to culturally authentic music videos is a growing body of high quality teacher videos, such as our flor1666 (2009) example. While the Manu Chao official music video may be significantly more engaging, the imagery in the video does not directly communicate the meaning of the lyrics nearly as effectively as the PowerPoint presentation pairing target vocabulary words with images.
The quality of learning will depend heavily on the principles for fostering generative processing incorporated into the instructional task (Moreno & Mayer, 2010). Like the flor1666 (2009) example teacher-made video, music videos do not actively foster generative processing. As mentioned, Web 2.0 tools exist which enhance videos with interactive features. One tool designed specifically for use with music videos is lyricstraining.com.

**Lyricstraining.com**

Lyricstraining.com is an engaging free online educational resource that pairs music videos (embedded from YouTube or Vevo) with their lyrics, creating captioned music videos. The lyrics are time-stamped to the video, meaning that individual lines of the lyrics will progressively scroll up from the bottom of the screen as the video plays. Users can interact with the videos in three ways: karaoke mode, game mode, and exercise mode (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Interactive Modes of Lyricstraining.com**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karaoke</td>
<td>Displays captioned music video. Users may pause video by clicking on it, or repeat a line by pressing the backspace button.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Random words are blanked throughout the lyrics. Users fill in the blanks or select the correct word from a list. Users may pause the video by clicking on it, repeat a line by pressing the backspace button, or skip a blank by pressing the tab button. Points are awarded for speed and accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Selected words are blanked throughout the lyrics. Users fill in the blanks or select the correct word from a list. Users may pause the video by clicking on it, repeat a line by pressing the backspace button, or skip a blank by pressing the tab button. Points are awarded for speed and accuracy.</td>
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The karaoke mode plays the video and displays the lyrics. Two lines of the lyrics are displayed (the current and the following) in a queue directly below the video (see Figure 2 on the next page). As the video progresses, the lyrics advance to when the line was time-stamped to the video. This feature accomplishes spatial and temporal contiguity, principles for reducing extraneous load. Users are able to pause the video by clicking on it, or replay the current line of the lyrics by pressing the backspace button, allowing for user control over the pace of the presentation (i.e., segmenting, a principle for managing essential processing).

The game mode adds another layer of interactivity to the experience (see Figure 3 on the next page). Lyricstraining.com will randomly blank out words. Users must fill in the blanks by typing them in or select the correct word from a list. If the user cannot fill in the blank by the end of the line to which the word corresponds, the video automatically pauses. The user then may press the backspace button to replay that line of the lyrics, or skip the word by pressing the tab button. For tablet users, a ‘virtual keyboard’ can be enabled, displaying a keyboard directly under the queue of lines of lyrics. Points are awarded for the speed and accuracy with which the user fills in the blanks. There are four levels: beginner (10% of the words are blanked), intermediate (25% of the words are blanked), advanced (50% of
Figure 2. Lyricstraining.com – Karaoke Mode

Figure 3. Lyricstraining.com – Game Mode
the words are blanked) and expert (100% of the words are blanked). As points are awarded for the speed and accuracy with which users fill in the individual blanks, the total possible score for a song increases with the level (i.e., number of blanks). Users may create an account on the site which will allow them to track their points as well as participate in song-specific leader boards. Alternatively, if the user wishes, the points component of the game can be turned off by selecting “practice”, after selecting the desired level.

Based on the principles for fostering generative processing, the game mode provides personalization (i.e., the feeling of active participation, rather than passive viewing), guided activities (i.e., interactive components), and feedback (i.e., principle-based feedback based off student responses).

The exercise mode allows a teacher (or a student) to select the words to be blanked out (see Figure 3). This is a significant enhancement which facilitates the creation of cloze texts. Users interact with the exercises similarly to the game mode, except that they are not able to select different levels, as the blanks have been predetermined. Users have access to a “practice option,” which does not record points. Teachers can decide whether to require students to type in the missing words, allow them to select from a word bank, or permit students to decide between the two. Should students not have access to devices, teachers could lead whole group instruction, or they have the option for printing the cloze texts as well.

**Figure 4.** Lyricstraining.com – Exercise Mode
Lyricstraining.com is a dynamic tool for enhancing the use of music through technology. The gamified nature of the learning activities (e.g., assigning points and including leader boards) has been linked to further increases in student interest, motivation, and performance (Hwang & Wu, 2012). The site categorizes the music videos, available in 10 languages (Catalan, Dutch, English, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish), into three levels of difficulty (easy, medium and hard). Songs are searchable by title, author and language.

Also, users themselves are the ones continually adding new songs. Hence, if a teacher is unable to find a specific song they wish to include in an instructional task, they have the opportunity to create it themselves. After doing so, users can submit their creation for review and eventual use by the lyricstraining.com community, or decide to keep their creation private, accessible only via a specific link that can be shared with students directly. While the site publishes official music videos only for the public, the ability to easily create learning activities from any YouTube, or Vevo video is important for two reasons. First, it opens the door for teacher-created music videos to be imported into the Lyricstraining system (e.g., flor1666, 2009). While these videos may be less engaging, they can be significantly more comprehensible, following Mayer’s principles for reducing extraneous processing. Second, this opens the door for teachers to use lyricstraining.com for the creation of captioned video activities outside of music videos. For example, a teacher could find an interview with an important figure in the target language on YouTube, transcribe the conversation and turn that into a lyricstraining.com instructional task.

**Lyricstraining.com Instructional Tasks**

The purpose of this final section is to illustrate how lyricstraining.com instructional tasks can enhance various aspects of language learning. It is important to note that good instructional design does not focus first on instructional tasks, but on the desired results, as defined by learning standards. While an extensive conversation on backward design is not within the scope of this article (see Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), for each of the examples an attempt is made at modeling best practices by identifying first a target world-readiness standard for learning languages (2015), next a NCSSFL ACTFL proficiency indicator for that standard (2013), and finally an instructional task aimed at scaffolding students toward accomplishing the proficiency indicator. Example instructional tasks are provided for each of the modes of communication (interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal). Links to these can be found in Appendix 2.

**Interpretive Mode of Communication**

The interpretive mode of communication can be understood as unidirectional. The learner is placed in the position of receiving aural (i.e., listening comprehension) or written (i.e., reading comprehension) input. Music is a natural source of input as it can be presented to students in both aural (i.e., song) and written (i.e., lyrics) form. A music video further enriches the quality of input through visual stimuli.
Figure 5 presents our first lyricstraining.com enhanced lesson plan. Addressing World-Readiness Standard (2015) 1.2 (learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics), the activity is geared toward students at an intermediate mid proficiency level. An example NCSSFL-ACTFL proficiency indicator (2013) for this level is: I can understand the main idea of what I listen to for personal enjoyment (e.g., a short YouTube clip).

**Figure 5. Instructional Task: Interpretive Mode of Communication**

*World-Readiness Standard 1.2: Interpretive Mode of Communication*
- Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

*NCSSFL ACTFL Indicator: Intermediate Mid Interpretive Listening*
- I can understand the main idea of what I listen to for personal enjoyment (e.g., a short YouTube clip).

*Lyricstraining.com Enhanced Lesson Plan*
- Hook: Karaoke Mode
- Input: Exercise Mode (Multiple Choice)
- Guided Practice: Exercise Mode (Fill in Blanks)
- Extended Practice: Game Mode (Multiple Choice)
- Wrap Up: Exit ticket

*A Dios Le Pido* (I pray to God) by Juanes is an example of an engaging, comprehensible and appropriate music video which can be incorporated into a lyricstraining.com instructional task to scaffold students toward this NCSSFL ACTFL proficiency indicator. As the song includes 35 instances of subjunctive mode, this example lesson would be well placed in a unit in which students are learning to express their desires (using the subjunctive), generally a third year learning objective.

To engage students, they first view the music video as a class in Karaoke Mode on lyricstraining.com. Remaining in the target language, the teacher then reminds students what *pedir* (to ask for) means and elicits from students the use of the subjunctive mode to express desire. Returning to the lyricstraining.com, the teacher then continues this focus on form by engaging the class in a lyricstraining.com exercise in which all 35 instances of the subjunctive are blanked out. Using the multiple choice interface, four options are displayed to the right of the lyrics (see Figure 6 on the next page). As the song pauses on each line with a blank until the correct word is selected, this offers an excellent opportunity for the teacher to clarify the key terms and review the mechanics of the subjunctive mode.

After finishing with the input phase, the students then individually complete the same exercise, by filling in the blanks (instead of multiple choice). This activity requires students to both listen for the correct word and produce the correct subjunctive form for each blank. As an extended practice activity, students use the Game Mode (multiple choice) to compete with each other to see who could get the
highest score. This requires students to match the words they hear to those they read, two functions of the interpretive mode of communication. Toward the end of the lesson, the teacher refocuses student attention to review the subjunctive and asks that students produce two original sentences expressing their wants / desires as an exit ticket.

Lyricstraining.com significantly enhanced this model lesson. It is utilized at the beginning to gain student attention, during the input phase to facilitate direct instruction, for guided practice to provide a grammar-based worksheet, and in the extended practice to allow students to engage in a game-based listening comprehension activity. While the focus was on the interpretive mode of communication, this lesson illustrates how lyricstraining.com can facilitate a focus on form.

**Presentational Mode of Communication**

The presentational mode of communication can also be understood as unidirectional. The learner is placed in the position of providing oral or written input. Music provides a further means of expression, as the rhythm elicits movement / dancing.

Figure 7 presents our second lyricstraining.com enhanced lesson plan. Addressing World-Readiness Standard (2015) 1.3 (learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers or viewers), the activity is geared toward students at a novice low proficiency level. An example NCSSFL-ACTFL proficiency indicator (2013) for this level is: I can recite short memorized phrases, parts of poems, and rhymes (e.g., a short song).

The song *Tengo una Familia Grande* (I have a big family) by educator Barbara MacArthur is an excellent example which could be integrated into the first week of a first year Spanish class. It contains simple, repetitive language including vocabulary for the family and numbers. Because it is teacher created, it is not
accompanied by a professionally produced music video. However, YouTube user Señora McPeak Spanish (2009) created her own much in the same way flor1666 (2009) did, syncing the music to a PowerPoint presentation. Importing the song into lyricstraining.com is a simple process (see Figure 8). Selecting “add lyrics” opens the lyrics editor. There, one searches for the desired YouTube or Vevo video, adds the details and the lyrics for the song, and timestamps the lyrics to the video. The process is quick and easy.

Figure 8. Importing a Song into Lyricstraining.com
In the hook of our example lesson, the teacher shows the video in Karaoke Mode. In the target language, the teacher then explains that the purpose of the lesson is to talk about members of students’ family. Returning to lyricstraining.com, the teacher displays an exercise created by blanking out all of the family members. Once again, it may be preferable to use the multiple choice option as a presentation tool for delivering direct instruction. As the song progresses, the teacher draws a family tree on the board to provide a graphic representation depicting the relationships among the new vocabulary. After multiple iterations of playing the Exercise Mode together as a class, next students use the Game Mode to help them memorize the song. Starting at the beginner level (10% of the words blanked out), students practice multiple times, increasing the degree of difficulty with each game.

As an extended practice activity, the teacher distributes a skeleton text of the lyrics, in which the number of family members for each relationship is blanked out (see Figure 9). Using lyricstraining.com, creating such an assignment is easy. For every song, you are able to select “print lyrics” and decide to either print the full lyrics or select words to be blanked out. Doing so in this example allows students to use the lyrics as a template for the presentation of their own family. As a wrap-up activity, the teacher could play the music video in Karaoke Mode and asks that the students sing along. However, instead of singing verbatim they sing the number that actually represents their family members. While students sing, they physically show how many of each relative they have with their fingers, adding a kinesthetic component to the song.

This example illustrates how lyricstraining.com enhances the use of music to facilitate a lesson focused on the presentational mode of communication in the first week of the first year of a world language class. While the lesson focuses on
scaffolding progress toward the presentational mode of communication, it starts with instructional tasks emphasizing the interpretive mode. Through music, students first learn vocabulary words for the family and then craft a personalized presentation modeled on the lyrics. An additional benefit to using music in the classroom is that students learn the vocabulary through the song, as they mimic the correct pronunciation of the words.

*Interpersonal Mode of Communication*

The interpersonal mode of communication can be understood as bidirectional. The learner is placed in the position of both sending and receiving aural or written input. The emphasis is placed on successfully negotiating a shared understanding in the target language.

Music is a natural source of input as it can be presented to students in both aural (i.e., song) and written (i.e., lyrics) form. A music video further enriches the quality of input through visual stimulus as well.

Figure 5 presents our first example instructional task. Addressing World-Readiness Standard (2015) 1.1 (learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions), the activity is geared toward students at an intermediate mid proficiency level. An example NCSSFL-ACTFL proficiency indicator (2013) for this level is: I can participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences (e.g., historical events).

**Figure 10. Instructional Task: Interpersonal Mode of Communication**

The song *Es war nicht alles schlecht* (It wasn’t all bad) by Die Prinzen is an example of how music can provide authentic input for facilitating cultural conversations. Throughout this semi-nostalgic song the singers express their lives growing up in the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. Deemed *Ostalgie*, this sentiment is shared by a large portion of the East German population.
The song is potentially accessible to an advanced second year German class, as it is sung with clear diction. The music video significantly enhances the song as the singers appear in a movie theatre where they view clips illustrating their memories. As the hook of the lesson, the teacher shows an image of the Berlin wall falling and asks the students to brainstorm how they envision life in East Germany. This occurs in a Think-Pair-Share activity, where students first brainstorm by themselves, then pair up to compare with a partner, and finally share via a class discussion conducted in the target language. Transitioning to the input phase, the teacher leads students through a lyricstraining.com Multiple Choice exercise in which the difficult vocabulary words are blanked out, allowing the teacher to check for understanding as the video progresses. Alternatively, the teacher blanks out the final word of every second verse, allowing for students to request for clarification as needed. After engaging once with the exercise, it is beneficial to utilize the Karaoke Mode, allowing students to watch the captioned music video uninterrupted. Using a handout, such as Appendix 3, students take notes on the singers’ opinions. During the guided practice segment of the lesson, students are asked to compare their opinions with those of the singers, exploring similarities and differences. The product, a short text, is the basis by which students engage in another Think-Pair-Share activity, in the extended practice segment of the lesson. After concluding the class conversation, the teacher shows the music video in Karaoke Mode once more as a wrap up to the lesson.

While this lyricstraining.com enhanced lesson is geared toward fostering interpersonal communication skills, it also involves elements of interpretive communication (e.g., deducing the singers’ opinions), and presentational communication (e.g., a short essay). Interacting with authentic input in all three modes of communication is a requirement of integrated performance assessments. Moreover, this lesson facilitates a conversation on the relationship between the products (e.g., music) and perspectives (i.e., beliefs and values) of the culture studied, World-Readiness Standard (2015) 2.2. This final point is important as it illustrates best practices in engaging students in the target language in cultural conversations using authentic input.

Conclusion

Carole Poppleton (2001) wrote, “The possibilities for using music and lyrics in the classroom are limitless” (p 26). Students benefit from songs because they are both educational and entertaining (Brown, 2006). Moreover, there is no minimal student proficiency required for utilizing music-based multimedia materials (Beasley, Chuang & Liao, 2008). While these are statements the majority of teachers agree with, it has been found that music is commonly underused in the world language classroom (Bravo, 2015).

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how the use of music in the world language classroom can be enhanced through technology. Lyricstraining.com, a site which incorporates authentic captioned music videos into engaging game-based practice, is highlighted as a powerful tool for accomplishing this effect without a significant time investment from teachers. Instructional exemplars
presented demonstrate the potential for developing lyricstraining.com lessons to foster all three modes of communication, a hallmark of integrated performance assessments, and to incorporate other World-Readiness Standards (2015). Lyricstraining.com is truly a must-have teacher resource.

References


