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MID-TERM PAPER

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The role of music in the learning process.

I remember my first English class; our teacher told us to think of one reason why learning English was important to us. The idea was that we could rely on this particular reason if the thought of giving up on English crossed our minds. My reason? I wanted to know what the Backstreet Boys was telling me in their songs. I printed every lyric and translate them one by one. Sometimes I struggled because there were expressions but this main reason kept me on progressing in English. This is why today I think music is a really important thing in the process of learning a new language. With this paper, I will demonstrate that music needs to be used in classrooms for two main reasons: (1) music influence the way we learn (2) music is an integral part of modern students' life.

In the first place, listening to music influences the way we learn, not only to learn languages but in many other areas. For example, in New York City there is a program called LEAP (Learning through an Expanded Arts Program) where they integrated music to many classes. In the mathematic class they play “musical math’ in which the teacher incorporates rhythm with counting and gaining a grasp on the fundamentals of math” (Olson, 1996). Wallace (1994) (cited in McCullough, 1997) mentioned that learning through singing facilitate learning because “the melody makes the text easier to remember [...] this increases if the melody is simple and repeated.” It is not only a matter of language but a matter of all knowledge that can be learned through music. In my first practicum, I sang a song in class with the students and the chorus was repeated a lot of time. At the end of the class, students had the song in their mind and were whistling the chorus. They only heard the song three times and unintentionally the song stays in their mind. Do you imagine if I had the chance to stay with them longer? The input of knowledge

(vocabulary, syntax, emotions from everyday life, etc.) is almost infinite with all the music available. Therefore, I strongly believe that the use of music in any classes can improve the learning of students.

In second place, nowadays music is more than ever part of kids and teenagers' life. With all the new technologies such as iPod, mp3, smart phones, etc. it is not rare to see students with earphones at school, in public transportation...everywhere! In a survey made by Roberts and Henriksen (1990) (cited in Roberts, Christenson & Gentile, 2003) over 80% of eleventh grade students listed music in their top three things that they would bring with them on a deserted island. Christenson, DeBenedittis and Lindlof (1985) (also cited in Roberts & al., 2003) said that younger children watch more television than listen to music but the pattern change at "the beginning of junior high school." Then it is important to incorporate music in our classes in secondary level as music takes more and more place in students' life. One of the most important reasons why high school students like music is because they can find difficult to discuss personal issues so they rely on music to express their feelings (Roberts & al., 2003). A concrete example is the group Simple Plan. They asked their fans to write them letters about how their music helped them in their personal life. The result; they composed a song on their new album called *This Song Saved my Life*. Here is a verse of the song:

"Sometimes I feel like you've known me forever
You always know how to make me feel better
Because of you my dad and me
are so much closer than we used to be
You're my escape when I'm stuck in a small town
I turn you up whenever I feel down
you let me know like no one else
That it's ok to be myself"

The idea of the song is to make us understand how important music can be for teenagers. My sister is a Simple Plan's fan since forever and when she heard the song she was crying like a baby and all the fans of Simple Plan that I know did the same thing. This proves that music really touches teenagers in a way adult may not understand. Even though teenagers are listening to Hip Hop, Rap, Heavy Metal, Pop, etc. there is a message that needs to pass and they pass it through music. I don't say every style of music has its place in education, but it definitely needs to be included because "it addresses issues that are central to their developmental stage – love, sex, loyalty, independence, friendship, authority – with a directness they often do not get from adults" (Roberts & al., 2003).

To conclude, many researches have been made about how music influences students' learning. All of them are agreeing that students who learn through music gave better results at the end than students who don't. Also many researches have been done regarding the importance of music in children and teenagers' life. Once again, all of them are agreeing that music is an important way for them to express themselves. As future teacher we definitely need to take those researches into consideration and rely on all the positive effects that music can bring to our students. It is our responsibility, as teacher, to keep our students motivated so why not include one of their most important things in their lives?

"The best music . . . is essentially there to provide you something to face the world with."
— **Bruce Springsteen**

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