



*The use of songs as a didactic resource to improve pronunciation in English
language learning*

*El uso de canciones como recurso didáctico para mejorar la pronunciación en el
aprendizaje del idioma inglés.*

*O uso de canções como recurso didático para melhorar a pronúncia na
aprendizagem da língua inglesa.*

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Summary

Music is recognized as a cognitive phenomenon with a high pedagogical potential that articulates linguistic and affective aspects, facilitating memorization and reducing communicative anxiety in learning English. The aim of this work was to analyze music as a didactic resource for improving pronunciation in the English language. The methodology adopted a mixed approach with a quasi-experimental design of pre-test and post-test applied to a sample of 42 nursing students, for six weeks, an intervention was implemented based on six songs selected for their rhythmic richness and phonological clarity, integrating didactic sequences of active listening, repetition and group singing. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out to collect the subjective perceptions and the degree of motivation of the students. The results demonstrate significant improvements in the dimensions of phonology, prosody, intonation and fluency. Students achieved greater accuracy in vowel differentiation and critical consonants thanks to rhythm-fostered phonological memory. The prosodic accent and intonation became more natural, increasing oral intelligibility and expressiveness, likewise, verbal fluency was optimized by automating structures and reducing the cognitive load during oral production. In conclusion, music not only acts as a motivating factor, but also as an effective pedagogical instrument that produces measurable and substantial changes in communicative competence.

Keywords: Songs; pronunciation; didactic resource; learning; English language

Resumen

La música se reconoce como un fenómeno cognitivo con un alto potencial pedagógico que articula aspectos lingüísticos y afectivos, facilitando la memorización y reduciendo la ansiedad comunicativa en el aprendizaje del inglés. El objetivo de este trabajo fue analizar la música como recurso didáctico para mejorar la pronunciación en inglés. La metodología adoptada fue un enfoque mixto con un diseño cuasiexperimental de pretest y postest aplicado a una muestra de 42 estudiantes de enfermería. Durante seis semanas, se implementó una intervención basada en seis canciones seleccionadas por su riqueza rítmica y claridad fonológica, integrando secuencias didácticas de escucha activa, repetición y canto grupal. Además, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas para recopilar las percepciones subjetivas y el grado de motivación de los estudiantes. Los resultados demuestran mejoras significativas en las dimensiones de fonología,

prosodia, entonación y fluidez. Los estudiantes lograron mayor precisión en la diferenciación de vocales y consonantes críticas gracias a la memoria fonológica estimulada por el ritmo. El acento prosódico y la entonación se volvieron más naturales, aumentando la inteligibilidad y la expresividad oral. Asimismo, la fluidez verbal se optimizó mediante la automatización de estructuras y la reducción de la carga cognitiva durante la producción oral. En conclusión, la música no solo actúa como factor motivador, sino también como un instrumento pedagógico eficaz que produce cambios medibles y sustanciales en la competencia comunicativa.

Palabras clave: Canciones; pronunciación; recurso didáctico; aprendizaje; idioma inglés

Resumo

A música é reconhecida como um fenômeno cognitivo com elevado potencial pedagógico, que articula aspetos linguísticos e afetivos, facilitando a memorização e reduzindo a ansiedade comunicativa na aprendizagem da língua inglesa. O objetivo deste trabalho foi analisar a música como recurso didático para melhorar a pronúncia em inglês. A metodologia adotada foi mista, com um desenho quase-experimental de pré-teste e pós-teste, aplicado a uma amostra de 42 estudantes de enfermagem. Durante seis semanas, foi implementada uma intervenção baseada em seis canções selecionadas pela sua riqueza rítmica e clareza fonológica, integrando sequências didáticas de audição ativa, repetição e canto em grupo. Além disso, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas para recolher as percepções subjetivas e o grau de motivação dos estudantes. Os resultados demonstram melhorias significativas nas dimensões da fonologia, prosódia, entoação e fluência. Os estudantes conseguiram maior precisão na diferenciação vocálica e na identificação de consoantes críticas graças à memória fonológica estimulada pelo ritmo. O acento prosódico e a entoação tornaram-se mais naturais, aumentando a inteligibilidade e a expressividade oral. Da mesma forma, a fluência verbal foi otimizada pela automatização das estruturas e pela redução da carga cognitiva durante a produção oral. Em conclusão, a música não só atua como um fator motivador, mas também como um instrumento pedagógico eficaz que produz mudanças mensuráveis e substanciais na competência comunicativa.

Palavras-chave: Canções; pronúncia; recurso didático; aprendizagem; língua inglesa

Introduction

Music has been recognized as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon with significant pedagogical potential; In the context of English teaching, its use as a teaching resource is presented as an integrative strategy that articulates linguistic, affective and sociocultural aspects (Almeida Luque, 2020). Studies in second language acquisition and educational psychology suggest that music facilitates memorization, the automation of prosodic patterns and the reduction of communicative anxiety, which makes it an ideal mediator to promote more natural and motivating learning processes (Lizaldes, 2021a).

From a theoretical perspective, the incorporation of music in the teaching of English is based on frameworks such as the theory of comprehensible input, the notion of the affective filter and multisensory learning proposals. (Bolarín & Porto, 2023) The melodic and rhythmic repetition of songs facilitates the internalization of lexical and grammatical structures; musical intonation and rhythm offer prosodic models that learners can imitate and automate; and the emotional dimension of music contributes to creating contexts of low anxiety that favor oral participation.

In this sense, teaching methods arise where (Piaget, 1974) He states that the different stages of the child's life differ not only in terms of the quantity of information acquired but also in the quality and understanding of it, therefore, cognitive development consists of the learning of new schemas and the ability to manage those already acquired (Briseño & Hernández, 2023). Therefore, the educational process has always seen the need to innovate in order to transmit teachings in a more effective way, thus applying teaching strategies that allow them to capture the attention of children.

In pedagogical terms, music provides concrete benefits in several areas of English learning: listening comprehension, through exposure to variations in accent and speed; oral production, through singing, dramatization and choral repetition activities; vocabulary and collocations, for lexical contextualization in letters; and sociocultural competencies, by introducing cultural references and communicative practices typical of English-speaking communities (Pacheco et al., 2022). In addition, music favours didactic differentiation, allowing tasks to be adapted to different levels of competence and learning styles, and promotes intrinsic motivation, a key factor for persistence and success in language learning (Vargas Delgado, 2024).

In this sense, music has been established as an effective didactic tool for the teaching of English, offering multiple pedagogical benefits, where studies show that music facilitates the development of communicative skills, improving oral comprehension, oral production, reading and motivation of students, with emphasis on pronunciation, songs generate notable improvements in segmental and suprasegmental sounds, including phonetic accuracy, intonation, rhythm, and accentuation (Barberán Álvarez & Reza Segovia, 2021).

Lara et al., (2022) They argue that music enhances the four skills of English (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and recommend its systematic inclusion in the curricula. Its implementation is effective in both urban and rural contexts, being especially relevant in environments with limitations of teaching materials (Tigrero-De la Cruz & Taro, 2025)

Finally, this work aims to offer empirical evidence and practical guidelines for teachers and curriculum designers interested in integrating music in an intentional and grounded way (Urieta Pérez & Nieto del Valle, 2025a). In order to analyze music as a didactic resource in the teaching of English through a systematic review of the literature and a qualitative analysis of the pedagogical potential of songs. By combining theoretical review, case studies and experimental data, it is intended to contribute to a more precise understanding of when, how and for whom music functions as a didactic resource in the teaching of English, as well as to propose replicable didactic recommendations and future lines of research that expand the knowledge base at this intersection between music, music, music, music, music, music, music, music, music, language and education.

Development

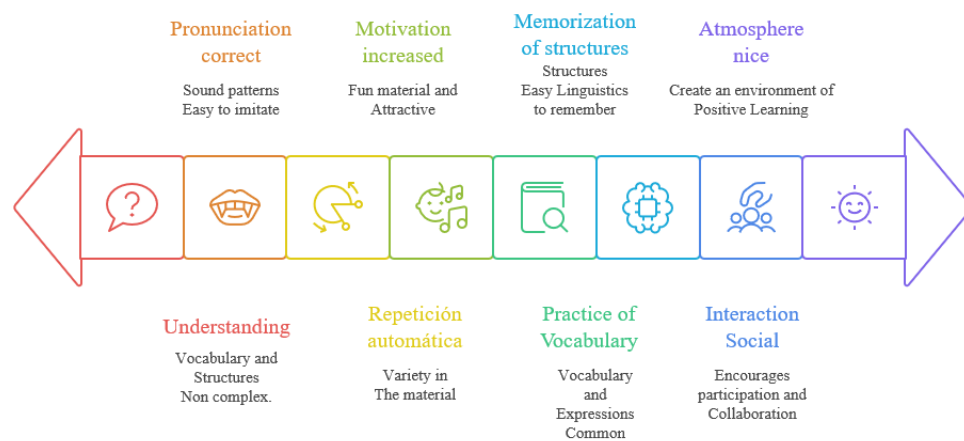
The use of songs in the teaching of English has established itself as an effective didactic strategy to work on pronunciation in a simultaneously playful and systematic way, although several authors report significant improvements in the articulation of sounds, intonation, oral fluency and communicative confidence when songs are integrated in a planned way in the foreign language class (Minchala & Argudo, 2023).

Singing is an activity that fuses both linguistic and musical information, involving both parts of the hemisphere through the corpus callosum, which is strengthened by transmitting messages between the hemispheres (Pulido Galindo & Olaya Mesa, 2024). Pronunciation, vocabulary growth and the

practice of grammatical structures stand out in this respect. Mosquera et al., (2024a) He assures that pronunciation is the most difficult thing to acquire in a language since there are many differences between the phonological elements of English and Spanish that make it different.

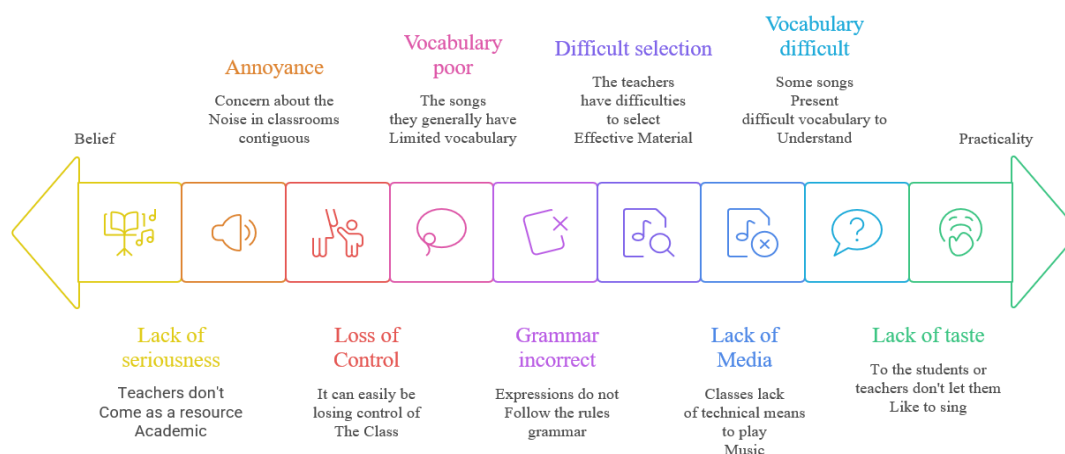
It is well known that motivation can explain many aspects of human beings, such as their acts or behaviors, by being composed of multiple definitions of motivation. For example Zandoná Bollis et al., (2025) They argue that "motivation is a set of factors that includes the desire to achieve a goal, the effort directed towards that achievement and the reinforcement associated with the act of learning". Rojas et al., (2025) They define motivation as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)". Therefore, the concept of motivation is closely related to education and, in the context at hand, it can vary depending on the degree of commitment of the teacher and the student in the teaching and learning of a second language.

Figure 1. Advantages of using songs in language teaching, from belief to practicality.



Note: Own elaboration

Figure 2. Disadvantages of using songs in language teaching, from belief to practicality.



Note: Own elaboration

As we have pointed out before, songs as an educational resource allow us to work on very varied aspects in the classroom, in this sense, the selection of songs to teach English is a pillar of success as a teaching resource. In fact, songs can be selected to the point of satisfying the interests and needs of each student, but they should not be chosen at random, but the selection should be carried out in such a way as to provide specific teaching objectives in the teaching of the language (Torres Merino & Cajamarca Illescas, 2026).

Methodology

This research adopts a mixed methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques with the purpose of obtaining a comprehensive vision of the effectiveness of the use of songs as a didactic resource for the improvement of pronunciation in English language learning. With the aim of analyzing both the measurable changes in the pronunciation of the students and the subjective perceptions about the use of this resource, which enriches the analysis of the results and enables a deeper interpretation of the educational phenomenon studied (Balk et al., 2013).

A quasi-experimental design was used with pre-test and post-test applied to an experimental group, without a control group, which allowed observing the impact of the pedagogical intervention based on songs in a given period, this instrument evaluates by means of a Likert scale, three dimensions: Production of specific phonemes; use of the prosodic accent; intonation and verbal fluency, where the response items are 1=Insufficient, 2= Basic, 3=Proficient, 4=Excellent.

The sample was made up of 42 fifth-semester nursing students, who receive English classes. Participants were selected through intentional non-probabilistic sampling, considering as inclusion criteria their basic-intermediate level of proficiency in English, their availability to participate throughout the intervention period, and informed consent. All students received English classes as part of the regular curriculum, which allowed the intervention to be implemented within the distributed schedule, without altering the institutional academic structure.

For the quantitative phase, diagnostic pronunciation tests were applied at two times: before and after the didactic intervention with songs. These tests were designed to assess oral production of English-specific phonemes, appropriate use of prosodic accent, intonation, and verbal fluency.

The results obtained in the tests were processed through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, in order to identify possible significant improvements in pronunciation after the application of the strategy. As for the pedagogical intervention, it lasted six weeks, with a frequency of two sessions per week, each lasting 45 minutes, during this period, a selection of six songs in English was worked on, chosen based on their phonological clarity, adequacy to the level of the students, richness in rhythmic patterns and cultural relevance.

Each song was used as the basis for a structured didactic sequence that included active listening activities, repetition, sound identification, accentuation exercises, group singing and individual oral production. The activities were designed to focus students' attention on specific aspects of pronunciation, and were integrated into the framework of the communicative approach, promoting verbal interaction and participation.

The qualitative phase included the application of semi-structured interviews to a subgroup of 12 randomly selected students. This interview allowed us to collect information on the perception of the use of songs as a tool to improve pronunciation, the difficulties encountered during the process, the degree of motivation and the perceived impact on their confidence when speaking in English. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using open coding techniques and thematic categorization, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and the interpretation of the answers.

Results

This section shows the results obtained through the pre-test and the post-test, applied to 42 students, which evaluates three dimensions: Production of specific phonemes; use of the prosodic accent; intonation and verbal fluency, where the response items are 1=Insufficient, 2= Basic, 3=Proficient, 4=Excellent.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test evaluation of Oral Production (EFL)

Ítems	Pre-Test								Post-Test							
	1		2		3		4		1		2		3		4	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I. Production of Specific Phonemes																
Vowel differentiation	16	36%	14	32%	8	18%	6	14%	1	2%	3	7%	15	36%	23	55%
Critical consonants.	22	52%	12	28%	6	14%	2	5%	3	7%	9	21%	14	33%	16	38%
Schwa Sound.	17	40%	11	26%	9	21%	5	12%	2	5%	6	14%	16	38%	18	42%
Morphological endings	19	45%	16	38%	6	14%	1	2%	2	5%	4	9%	9	21%	27	64%
II. Use of Prosodic Accent																
Accent of words.	18	43%	15	36%	5	12%	4	9%	1	2%	5	12%	8	19%	28	67%
Emphasis on Prayer.	21	50%	11	26%	4	9%	6	14%	2	5%	4	9%	9	21%	27	64%
Contrastive accent.	17	40%	15	36%	5	12%	5	12%	4	9%	5	12%	13	31%	20	48%
III. Intonation																
Types of questions.	16	38%	15	36%	8	19%	3	7%	5	12%	4	9%	12	29%	21	50%
Attitude markers.	23	55%	7	17%	9	21%	3	7%	1	2%	6	14%	16	38%	19	45%
Pausas de sentido.	18	43%	11	26%	7	17%	6	14%	3	7%	3	7%	14	33%	22	52%
IV. Verbal fluency																
Speech rate.	21	50%	16	38%	4	9%	1	2%	2	5%	4	9%	10	24%	26	62%
Connect final and initial sounds between words.	22	52%	12	28%	5	12%	3	7%	5	12%	7	17%	13	31%	17	40%
Use natural "filler words" without breaking the flow.	25	59%	10	24%	6	14%	1	2%	3	7%	5	12%	15	36%	19	45%

Note: Own elaboration

The analysis of the production of specific phonemes, there is a vowel differentiation, the students went from 36% in level 1 to only 2% in the post-test, while level 4 rose from 14% to 55%. In critical consonants, level 1 dropped from 52% to 7%, and level 4 rose from 5% to 38%, in the same way, in morphological endings, level 4 shot up from 2% to 64%, highlighting that the use of songs allowed a repeated and significant exposure to complex phonemes, which favored auditory discrimination and articulatory production. demonstrating that musical rhythm functioned as a phonological memory mechanism, facilitating the transition from frequent errors to a more precise pronunciation.

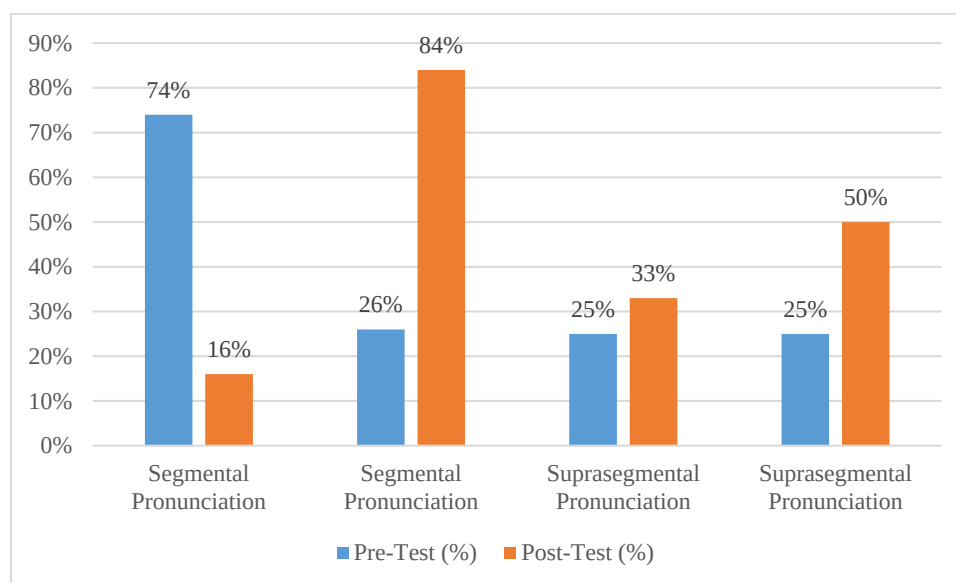
In the same way, in the use of prosodic accent the results show a notable change: in word accent, level 4 went from 9% to 67%, and in sentence emphasis from 14% to 64%; The contrastive accent also improved, with an increase in level 4 from 12% to 48%, which shows that the songs, being structured in rhythmic and accentual patterns, offered a natural model to internalize the prosody of English, in addition, the students learned to mark emphasis and semantic contrasts, which increases intelligibility and communicative expressiveness.

Likewise, with respect to intonation, in the types of questions, level 4 increased from 7% to 50%, and in sense pauses from 14% to 52%; attitude markers also showed progress, going from 7% to 45% at level 4, where intonation, one of the most difficult aspects for EFL learners, benefited from the melodic component of the songs, since, when singing, the students practiced tonal variations in a natural way, which was transferred to spontaneous speech and improved oral expressiveness.

In the dimension of verbal fluency, speaking speed showed a significant jump: level 4 went from 2% in the pre-test to 62% in the post-test; In the connection of sounds between words, level 4 rose from 7% to 40%, finally, the use of natural filler words without breaking the flow increased from 2% to 45% in the post-test. Showing that singing requires maintaining a constant rhythm and connecting sounds in a fluid way, which reduced unnecessary pauses and favored the continuity of the discourse, in addition, the repetitive phrases of the songs helped to automate linguistic structures, reducing the cognitive load during oral production.

This comparative analysis between the pre-test and the post-test reveals that the use of songs as a didactic resource produced substantial improvements in all components of oral production: phonology, prosody, intonation and fluency, where university students went from low to high performance, which confirms that music is not only motivating, but also an effective pedagogical instrument to overcome specific pronunciation difficulties in EFL.

Figure 3. Comparison of pre-test and post-test results in segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation (n=42)



Note: Data that show a positive effect on the use of songs in the improvement of pronunciation competence in the students part of the study.

Students' positive perceptions of using songs as a learning strategy

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews applied to the 12 students selected as a representative subgroup reveals that the incorporation of music transformed their phonological sensitivity and their disposition towards the language. The interviewees stated that, when listening to songs, they were able to identify nuances between similar sounds and phonemes that, in conventional teaching contexts, were confusing or unnoticed, allowing them to develop a more precise and natural pronunciation, based on the fixation of phonological structures in a non-invasive way.

Regarding verbal fluency, the testimonies of the students highlight that the constant rhythm of the melodies worked as a support to remember the sequence of key words. This rhythmic and repetitive structure made it easier for students to maintain a more natural cadence when speaking, reducing speech fragmentation. In addition, they noted that auditory memory was enhanced by the "sticky" nature of the letters, which allowed the correct pronunciation to be internalized without the effort required by traditional mechanical exercises.

A critical finding in the analysis of these interviews is the impact on the affective component, where the 12 students agreed that singing, especially familiar melodies, significantly reduced their communicative anxiety and provided them with the necessary security to speak in public, their reports show a transition from an initial state of nervousness and reluctance to an environment of freedom and empathy where they felt comfortable to explore the language without fear of judgment.

Finally, the students valued the creation of a horizontal and relaxed classroom environment, where error ceased to be a reason for individualized correction to become an opportunity for collective learning. This perception of dynamism and the playful component of the strategy generated such a high intrinsic motivation that the vast majority of participants expressed their desire to continue using songs as the main resource in their future English classes, considering it more effective than rigid grammatical explanations

Discussion

The effectiveness of music in improving phonetic accuracy is one of the points of greatest consensus among authors. The current study reported that in vowel differentiation, students went from 36% in the "insufficient" level in the pre-test to only 2% in the post-test, while excellence (level 4) rose from 14% to 55%. These data fully coincide with Barberán Álvarez y Reza Segovia (2021), who argue that songs generate notable improvements in segmental and suprasegmental sounds. Likewise, the fact that the "insufficient" level in critical consonants fell from 52% to 7% validates the position of Mosquera et al. (2024b), who states that pronunciation is the most difficult area to acquire due to the phonological gaps between English and Spanish, suggesting that songs are the necessary mediator to overcome this obstacle.

As for prosodic accent, the results of the study show that the level of excellence in word accent shot up from 9% to 67%. This empirical finding supports the theory of Lizaldes (2021c), who argues that music facilitates lyrical visualization and the automation of prosodic patterns, allowing learners to imitate and naturalize accentuation in a rhythmic way. Similarly, the improvement in intonation (where level 4 in question types rose from 7% to 50%) supports the view of Almeida Luque (2020) about music as an integrative strategy that articulates the rhythmic and linguistic aspects of English.

Regarding verbal fluency, the data from the study reflect a significant jump in speech speed, with a level of excellence that went from 2% to 62%. This result is consistent with the recommendations of Lara Olivo et al., (2022), who suggest that songs enhance oral expression and should be formally included in the curricula. On the other hand, the improvement in the use of natural filler words from 2% to 45% at an excellent level is in line with what has been proposed by Pulido Galindo and Olaya Mesa (2024), who explain that singing involves both cerebral hemispheres and strengthens the corpus callosum, facilitating the transmission of messages and reducing the cognitive load during oral production.

However, authors such as Torres Merino and Cajamarca Illescas (2026) They introduce a critical nuance: success does not depend on music *per se*, but on an intentional selection that satisfies specific teaching objectives. This is in contrast to the idea of random playful use and reinforces why the current study was successful in selecting six specific songs for their phonological clarity and rhythmic richness. In this context, Pacheco et al., (2022) They add that music favors didactic differentiation, adapting to different learning styles, essential to maintain the intrinsic motivation that Vargas Delgado (2024) identified as key to student persistence.

Finally, the impact on the affective filter and the reduction of communicative anxiety (mentioned by the 12 students interviewed) is supported by Bolarín y Porto (2023), who claim that music creates contexts of low anxiety that favor participation. This state of "cognitive and emotional awakening" is what Rojas-Mera et al., (2025) They define it as the engine that leads to a conscious decision to act and strive for linguistic goals, transforming the classroom into a space for collective learning.

Conclusions

The integration of music as a didactic resource in the teaching of English is consolidated as a highly effective strategy that transcends the mere initial motivation of the student, by acting as a pedagogical mediator, songs facilitate the reduction of communicative anxiety and the affective filter, allowing learners to be involved in more natural and meaningful processes of linguistic acquisition. This multisensory approach not only captures attention, but also strengthens the connection between both brain hemispheres, which enhances phonological memory and the automation of grammatical and lexical structures.

As for the production of specific sounds, the systematic use of songs allowed students to overcome critical barriers in complex phoneme articulation and vowel differentiation, just as repeated exposure to rhythmic and melodic patterns works as a mechanism that facilitates the transition from frequent mistakes to a much more precise and clear pronunciation. The results show that, after the intervention, students achieve a remarkable mastery in aspects that are usually difficult to acquire, such as morphological endings and critical consonants, raising their performance from basic levels to levels of excellence.

Songs as a didactic resource generate notable improvements in prosody, intonation and verbal fluency in students of English as a foreign language, by offering a natural model of the rhythm of the language, allowing the correct accent to be placed in words and appropriate emphasis to be applied in sentences, increasing the intelligibility of the discourse. The melodic component facilitates spontaneous tonal variations, improving attitude and intonation markers in questions, in addition, the rhythmic demand of the song promotes constant speed and fluid connection between words, reducing unnecessary pauses and automating linguistic structures.

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