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An Investigation into the Impact of Latin Pop Music on Second Language Acquisition among Third-year Students Pursuing a BA in Spanish at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

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Abstract

Due to the process of globalization, second language acquisition has become an indispensable skill. For this reason, this study explores the use of music as a language learning strategy that would benefit native English-speaking students who are pursuing Spanish as their second language. The work focuses specifically on the effectiveness of Latin pop music as a tool to enhance vocabulary acquisition/retention and grammatical acquisition/accuracy, the learning experience and the listening comprehension and conversational skills of adult language learners. Through the examination of distributed questionnaires and a quiz, the work establishes that the shared physiological traits of music and language together with the repetitive structure and melody of Latin pop music positively influences vocabulary retention, acquisition, and grammatical acquisition/accuracy, thus enhancing second language acquisition. It has shown that the use of Latin pop music in the classroom is effective in removing affective filters of anxiety which enhances the receptiveness, motivation, and confidence, and thus enhances the learning experience of adult learners. Furthermore, Latin pop music was found to increase one's vocabulary register, expose students to various Hispanic accents and provide practical examples which enable students to improve their listening comprehension and conversational skills. Hence, supporting its inclusion in the Spanish language curriculum. However, the effectiveness of Latin pop music as a learning strategy to enhance listening and comprehension may prove to be more effective for aural learners.

Keywords: Second Language, Spanish, Latin pop, Learning Strategy, Acquisition, Retention

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	I
ABSTRACT	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
LIST OF FIGURES	IV
LIST OF APPENDICES	V
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
CHAPTER TWO: PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS.....	22
CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	29
CONCLUSION	33
WORKS CITED	35
APPENDIX A.....	40
APPENDIX B.....	48
APPENDIX C.....	49
APPENDIX D.....	50
APPENDIX E.....	51
APPENDIX F	52

List of Figures

Figure 1: bar graph indicating how frequently Spanish is spoken in the home of the respondents.....	23
Figure 2: pie chart representing respondents' exposure to the Spanish language outside the classroom.....	24
Figure 3: bar graph highlighting the quantity of respondents who acquired new vocabulary/grammatical structure by listening to Latin pop music.....	26

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Sample questionnaire.....	40
Appendix B: Classification of Students Exposure to Spanish Outside the Classroom.....	48
Appendix C: Highlighting what Students Thought was the Most Challenging Component when Learning a Second Language.....	49
Appendix D: Categorization of Respondents Opinion on the Effectiveness of Latin Pop Music as a Second Language Learning Strategy with regards to Vocabulary and Grammar.....	50
Appendix E: Categorization of Respondents' Opinion on the Effectiveness of Latin Pop Music as a Second Language Learning Strategy with regards to Listening and Conversational Skills.....	51
Appendix F: Classification of Respondents' Feelings towards the Inclusion of Latin Pop Music in BA Spanish Programme.....	52

Introduction

Certainly, there is no shortage of agreement that due to globalization, bilingualism is progressively becoming a skill that is necessary for one's ability to thrive in the current socio-economic environment. To put simply, having a second language is an asset that is recommended or even required in international and regional commerce, telecommunications and banking as well as for the purpose of strengthening valuable relationships at a bureaucratic and individual level. For this reason, a plethora of native English speakers are pursuing Spanish as a second language. The Spanish language can be traced to the Indo-European family of languages which was first recorded approximately 5000 years ago (Penny 2). This is further broken down into a subcategory referred to as Latin which eventually evolved into a series of correlated dialects known as Romance languages (Penny 3). Spanish together with other Romance languages such as French, Portuguese and Italian are commonly known for their melodic qualities and unique rhythmic nature.

Presently, the Spanish language is one of the most spoken and understood languages in the world, especially within the global north due to its prominent use in South America and the Caribbean. In the context of the Caribbean, native Spanish speakers exceed the number of native English speakers by a ratio of 1 to 4 (Huber). In fact, approximately 64% of the Caribbean population are native Spanish speakers whereas a mere 14% are native English speakers, this is mainly because the Hispanic region of the Caribbean has a relatively larger population than the English-speaking region (Huber). The close geographical proximity between the English speaking and Spanish speaking islands put forth another valid reason for the inclusion of the Spanish language in the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in islands such as Trinidad and Tobago. It is also worth considering that the current Spanish

language programme can be enhanced by utilizing music as a learning and teaching strategy. This is best explained by Radocy & Boyle who indicated that music has "positive effects on language development, reading readiness, and student verbalization" (77). For this reason, one can assume that an effective method to learn as well as teach the Spanish language is to expose learners to genres of Hispanic music including Latin pop. This genre of Hispanic music first emerged on an international scale during the 1960s (Young). It has a distinct rhythm created from Latin percussion instruments and is influenced by salsa, bossa nova, tango, and Tejano (Young).

Not only does it introduce students to the respective culture, which is a vital element for language learning, but it also aids in highlighting the structure of the language in terms of its syntax, morphology, vocabulary and phonology. Even though students may excel with the introduction of music as a language learning strategy, the educational system in Trinidad and Tobago tends to cater to traditional methods of learning and does not consider that students may be aural learners or a mixture between aural and another category. Hence, this study seeks to determine whether Latin pop music is an effective learning strategy to enhance the communicative and listening skills, vocabulary acquisition/retention and grammatical acquisition/accuracy and the learning experience of third year BA Spanish students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

Rationale

Globalization plays an integral role in bridging the geographical and cultural gaps around the world. A vital element in this process is the acquisition of foreign languages to improve communication for business and personal purposes. The Spanish language can be considered as one of the “languages of the future” (“Spanish: the global”). Learning Spanish as a second language is especially important because it is one of the most spoken and understood languages in the world with a total of 580 million speakers and studied as a second language by 22 million people in 110 countries, according to a study by the Instituto Cervantes in 2019 (“Spanish in the World”). Similarly, there is a high demand for Spanish as a second language in Trinidad and Tobago due to its proximity to Venezuela and the commercial relation between Trinidad and Tobago and Latin America.

Therefore, this study may prove to be crucial in determining a more effective approach to teaching and learning Spanish that educational providers can adopt for the purpose of enhancing students' ability to understand and converse in the language. This is relatively important since engaging in practical conversations in Spanish proves to be challenging for a preponderance of Spanish majors because they may not have sufficient opportunities to speak and listen in Spanish, outside the classroom. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that investigate the effectiveness of music for students learning Spanish, as the majority of previous studies were focused on ESL students. However, this study would focus on Spanish Second language students whose language learning experience may vary from ESL students. Investigating the impact of Latin music on the acquisition of Spanish as a second language may offer a better understanding of using songs to teach language, subsequently proposing more suitable, authentic and engaging teaching materials to encourage students to learn the Spanish language.

Parameters

Chronology:

This study will be conducted within the 2021-2022 Academic year which begins from September 2021 and ends in April 2022. These months were specifically chosen because it is the period in which the target population would attend classes. Therefore, it is more probable that they would interact with the Spanish language during this time frame, learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures. Thus, it is the opportune time to identify the possible connection between music and second language acquisition. It further allows for an investigation of the hypothesis that Latin pop music can be utilized as an effective learning method for third-year BA Spanish students at UWI.

Geography:

This study will be conducted in Trinidad. Moreover, it will be carried out at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus for the purpose of accessibility. The process of primary data collection would be easier because the researcher also attends the University as a third-year BA Spanish student. This study was purposely conducted at the tertiary level because there is a lack of research done on this topic in relation to adult learners or University students.

Theme:

The cultural form that the study will focus on is Latin pop music due to its popularity on mainstream media including several local radio stations. Hence, it is more likely that students would be exposed to this genre of music as opposed to other forms such as Bachata. Additionally, these songs entail phrases, vocabulary and grammatical structures that are typically used in conversational Spanish. This enables the researcher to determine if Latin pop music enhances listening and conversational skills of the third-year BA Spanish students. Moreover, it

can potentially expose students to the various Spanish/Hispanic accents that exist throughout the Spanish speaking region.

People:

The accessible population for this study will be third-year BA Spanish students who are enrolled in the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. In consideration of the time constraint, a relatively smaller target population would be more appropriate since it reduces the time spent to sample. Furthermore, the accessible population may be smaller because only 42 students were enrolled in the core Spanish courses (SPAN 3001 & SPAN 3002) that were available to year 3 students during the period of September (2021) to April (2022). Narrowing the target population will allow for a practical collection of data as the researcher would not be able to include all persons relevant to the study. Nonetheless, it still allows for the findings to be generalizable to the larger population.

Objectives

- (1): This study seeks to investigate whether Latin pop music has a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition/retention and grammatical acquisition/accuracy.
- (2): This study seeks to examine the extent to which Latin pop music enhances students' listening skills.
- (3): This study seeks to evaluate the impact of Latin pop music on Spanish language students' motivation to learn, their enjoyment and confidence in their ability to speak and produce Spanish pronunciation.
- (4): This study aims to identify the role of Latin pop music as a learning strategy for Spanish language students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.
- (5): This study aims to outline the efficiency of Latin pop music as a learning strategy for the purpose of encouraging educators to include it in the school curriculum to enhance academic learning.

Methodology

Purpose of study:

The purpose of this study is to highlight the possible use of music as a language learning strategy that would benefit native English-speaking students who are pursuing Spanish as their second language. Correspondingly the study would provide additional primary and secondary data that illustrate the role of music in the progression of cognitive skills and language acquisition. This would further support the inclusion of music in the BA Spanish program at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. This study will examine the following research questions:

1. What effect does Latin pop music have on vocabulary retention and grammatical accuracy/acquisition?
2. To what extent does Latin pop music enhance students' listening and conversational skills?
3. To what extent does Latin pop music affect BA Spanish majors' motivation to learn, their enjoyment and confidence in their ability to speak Spanish?

These questions will be answered through a combination of primary and secondary research.

Data collection:

Primary data was collected through questionnaires which were distributed via google forms due to limited interactions as per Covid-19 restrictions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section contained twenty-three (23) questions, fourteen (14) of which were closed questions and the other nine (9) were open-ended questions. The questions were structured to obtain specific information from the students' including their exposure to Latin pop music and if it was ever employed as a learning strategy, facilitated vocabulary acquisition/retention and grammatical acquisition/accuracy, or enhanced their listening skills and ability to converse in Spanish. The closed ended questions aided the researcher in identifying the possible connection between music and language acquisition skills. These questions also tested whether Latin pop music would be able to effectively remove the affective filter in the classroom and encourage learning. The open-ended questions encouraged free responses which allowed the researcher to analyse the personal facts and the experiences of the students. This is essential because the research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Latin pop music as a teaching and learning strategy that improves the learning experience of Spanish language students. For the purpose of this study, the students' learning experience was tested based on the following factors: their motivation to learn, confidence in speaking the language and their level of relaxation.

The second section of the questionnaire contained four 4 multiple choice questions that were structured to test students' ability to retain vocabulary and grammatical accuracy by presenting students with the lyrics from four (4) Latin pop songs and asking them to fill out the correct missing lyrics. The researcher specifically chose songs that were popular, contained repetitive lyrics and were dated; each song was released during the period of 2013-2018.

Popular songs were chosen to increase the probability of the student being exposed to the song, Latin pop songs that had repetitive lyrics were chosen because according to Murphey's SSIMH phenomenon, a requirement of retention is repetition (Ayotte 47). As such, older songs were chosen to test students' ability to retain and retrieve vocabulary and spoken recall in the Spanish language. Additionally, the researcher utilized lyrics to test learned grammatical structures such as verb forms, the proper use of the verb 'to be' (ser/estar) and the use of subjunctive mood in the if clause.

Furthermore, the questionnaire assisted in providing information that is free from bias because it ensured the anonymity of the respondents. This gave the respondents the confidence to be honest about their responses even when presented with opposing views. Thus, it ensured the presentation of objective information. Additionally, the researcher opted for convenience/purposive sampling by distributing the questionnaire to fellow classmates because they met the requirement of being third-year BA Spanish students. Hence, they would have the personal knowledge that the researcher was interested in analysing. The sample size consisted of both male and female BA Spanish students between the ages of 18-25 years. This facilitated the generalization of findings so that it could be applicable to the target population.

Secondary data was sourced from peer reviewed articles that were written and reviewed by academic professionals. These were chosen for the purpose of adding credibility to the research. Journals were also utilized because they are regularly updated with relevant information by experts, thus it provides authentic data that is current. This ensures the accuracy of the sources as well as contributes to the degree of validity in the research. Books were useful because they offered information that gave the researcher a greater understanding of the connection between music and language acquisition as well as to put it into context with the

work done by other researchers that are crucial to the field. The researcher retrieved data from published sources that were proven to be authentic because they were written by formidable publishing companies. Data was collected from websites that are regulated by governments or private organizations that are responsible for collecting and presenting authentic data for public use. Authentic websites are easily recognizable as they generally have either .edu, .org or .gov attached to its URLs. Thesis and dissertations were useful because they granted access to experiments and unprocessed data that were relevant to the study. This enabled the researcher to make a comparison between various experiments and identify existing trends and patterns. In addition, it offers sufficient evidence to support the analysis and make conclusions that are based on an adequate supply of accurate information, adding to the depth of the research.

Data Utilization:

This study follows a sociocultural approach because it looks at the impact of culture on societal behaviour and development. More specifically, this study addresses the way culture affects individual learning and the development of cognitive abilities. The study would also be based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data because the questionnaire contains closed ended questions which yielded quantitative data, and open-ended questions which resulted in the collection of data that was more qualitative in nature. The secondary data was also a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher adopted a mixed methods approach for the purpose of sufficiently answering the research questions.

Firstly, qualitative research allowed for the collection of in-depth information and further exploration of the respondents' feelings, experiences and motivations. This was especially important to determine students if Latin pop music has a positive effect on BA Spanish majors' motivation to learn, their enjoyment and confidence in their ability to speak Spanish. The quantitative data makes it easier to understand the target audience since it gives them the opportunity to express their personal experiences. Thus, the researcher could form a conclusion on the effectiveness of Latin pop music as learning and teaching strategy. These research questions were also answered through quantitative data which was necessary for generalizability. Since the sample size was relatively small, generalizability may be more difficult with only qualitative research. Hence the reason for the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative research, with the latter adding to the external validity of the study.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one: Literature Review:

In this chapter the researcher will review previous studies that have investigated the relationship between music and language to determine whether it has a positive effect on second language acquisition, in terms of Grammatical acquisition/accuracy, vocabulary acquisition and retention and its use to enhance the motivation to learn and confidence in speaking a foreign language and listening comprehension. Additionally, the researcher will discuss the use of pop songs specifically to establish whether it is the appropriate genre for language learning. The researcher would also address studies on the physiological connection between music and language with emphasis on how they are processed by the human brain. Furthermore, this chapter will highlight the manner in which music complements linguistic memory.

Chapter Two Presentation of Data and Analysis:

Chapter two will contain the primary data that was collected from the sample group. The raw data from the questionnaire would be presented through a series of graphs and pie charts to provide a visual representation of the results. In this chapter the researcher will conduct a thematic analysis of the results to provide readers with sufficient information that would facilitate further comprehension for the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Three: Discussion of Findings:

In chapter three the researcher will provide a general discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter. The researcher analyses the data presented in the previous chapter and links the information found to previous academia to provide informed explanations and create valid arguments in this section.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Musician and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once stated that “music is the universal language of mankind.” (qtd. in Gottlieb). Music and language are two of our most dynamic and complex communication techniques. Decades of research on the neurological and psychological connection between music and language have led experts to believe that music has a positive impact on language development. For this reason, several language educators, linguists, and psychologists have supported the use of music in foreign language acquisition. They suggest that music, and more specifically songs, help second-language learners acquire vocabulary and grammar and improve writing, speaking, listening and improve their overall learning experience (Ayotte; Li & Brand; Moufarrej & Salameh; Huy Le).

Music and Grammatical Acquisition/Accuracy:

Ayotte, a foreign language educator, assumed that students who were exposed to songs and then completed song-related activities would execute more grammatical accuracy on a written exam than students who were not exposed (5). This hypothesis led to the design of one of the very few experiments concerning second language acquisition among college students. Ayotte conducted two independent experiments on third year and fourth-year French students with the intention to examine whether songs had any effect on the acquisition of verb forms, inclusive of present, compound past, imperfect, future and conditional tense. While all groups were exposed to the same language material, the lesson for one group (Group B) was conveyed using songs and the lesson for the other group (Group A) did not involve any music but a poem. Although the results did not indicate any statistically significant difference, the group exposed to songs performed better in two of the verb forms that were tested. The lack of statistically significant difference may be attributed to the students’ limited exposure to the song due to time

constraints. While the students were only able to hear the song once, the other group were given the opportunity to listen to the poem thrice. This further supports the inclusion of Latin pop music as a learning and teaching strategy because even with the limited repetition of the song, Group B (song) was still able to outperform Group A (poem).

Ayotte linked this result to Murphey's 'Song stuck in my head' (SSIMH) phenomenon, which suggests that the melody, lyrics and rhythm of music is constantly repeated (gets stuck) in the students' heads, and this enables them to retain the grammatical structures with more ease (47). Her study revealed that songs may enhance students' ability to retain grammatical structures and execute them more accurately on written tests (43). This study, however, will evaluate students' ability to retain grammatical structures and perform more accurately in the listening comprehension and conversational component.

A similar experiment to understand the effectiveness of pop songs (music & lyrics) on vocabulary acquisition, language usage and meaning, was conducted by Li and Brand on English language (ESL) students at the university level. Their research was more concrete than Ayotte's as their findings showed a statistically significant difference ($(7^2/103) = 5.25, p < .01$) in favour of the group that was entirely exposed to music (Li & Brand 80). They underlined that an ESL course that includes a substantial use of music/songs as a teaching strategy is highly effective in terms of achievement and attitudes (82).

These results are further explained by Murphey, a second language educator and linguist who highlighted that the tendency for songs to stick in our minds may be connected to the commonalities between songs and inner speech (59). He explained that research into *the discourse of pop songs* led to the discovery that they contain exceptionally high verb counts with several authentic referents for participants, time and place (Murphey 59). It can be assumed that

students would gain substantial benefits from the adoption of Latin pop songs (music & lyrics) as a learning and teaching strategy because it introduces students to unfamiliar grammatical structures as well as reinforces familiar grammatical structures (Ayotte 3). It should be noted that this is only possible if the song-related activity is properly prepared and adopted with a pedagogical intention in mind (Ayotte 3). The current study contributes to previous research by focusing on the acquisition of Spanish as a second language at a predominantly English-speaking University and explores the effectiveness of Latin pop songs (lyrics & music) as both a teaching and learning strategy by also focusing on the students' personal learning experience as opposed to previous research which only examined its role as a teaching strategy.

The Role of Songs in Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention:

There is a plethora of studies that have concluded that songs have a positive effect on vocabulary learning and retention in second language acquisition (Medina; Li and Brand; Moufarrej and Salameh). Several language experts and linguists have agreed that the key to second language proficiency is learning vocabulary. According to Klapper it was previously believed that grammatical knowledge took precedence over lexical knowledge but upon further research linguists have found that vocabulary is particularly important in L2 learning (159). In fact, researchers have suggested that vocabulary is superior to grammar structure in terms of second language acquisition (SLA) (Lewis; Willis). Correspondingly, Wilkins argued that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” (111-112).

Krashen's “Comprehensible Input hypothesis” can be used to support the use of Latin pop songs to enhance vocabulary retention. Krashen hypothesis indicated that vocabulary could be incidentally acquired through listening and repeated exposure (qtd in Medina 1; Klapper 162).

Considering this hypothesis, Medina emphasized that vocabulary can be acquired incidentally through stories because recognizable vocabulary and syntax incorporated in the stories offer meaning to vocabulary that are less familiar and picture illustrations aid in interpreting the meaning of unfamiliar words (1). She then addressed how the acquisition of vocabulary through music is consistent with Krashen's hypothesis because when students listen to 'story songs' it is possible to acquire vocabulary similar to oral stories (Medina 2). She tested this possibility by undertaking a study on the effects of music on the acquisition of English vocabulary among second grade students with minimal English proficiency (Medina 5).

Medina's experiment on the use of both music and visual mediums such as story illustrations to supplement the students' auditory processing demonstrated favourable results for the role of music in vocabulary acquisition (5-6). This study will evaluate the role of Latin pop songs (lyrics & music) on vocabulary acquisition and retention for adult learners and will examine its role without the use of visual material for the purpose of obtaining data that is not compromised by extralinguistic support. This is because the researcher intends to focus on the role of music as an aural learning strategy in foreign language acquisition. Due to the nature of vocabulary learning which is an arguably independent learning activity (Klapper 174). It will focus on the acquisition of oral vocabulary.

Music in a Classroom Context (Confidence and Learning Motivation):

Foreign language educators have recognized that the inclusion of music in the classroom has created a favourable atmosphere for language learning by animating teaching and subsequently the classroom (Huy Le; Ayotte; Moufarrej & Salameh). Ayotte notes that the implementation of music in the classroom is not a novice concept but rather it has been introduced by Psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozanov in as early as the 20th century (8).

Lozanov proposed a pedagogical system referred to as Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT), also known as Suggestopedia (qtd. in Ayotte 8). He asserts that music will encourage students to utilize their subconscious resources and retain a higher quantity of vocabulary and structures (Lozanov 263; Ayotte 8). Suggestopedia is associated with relaxing learners which makes them more susceptible to learning the language as it reduces the affective filters such as sentiments of anxiety which may impede their ability to retain the material that they learned. Numerous studies have shown that music can be utilized to reduce affective filters in the classroom, thus creating a relaxed environment that is pertinent to language learning since it makes adult students more impressionable which is pertinent for language instruction (De Guerrero; Horwitz & Young; Fonseca Mora; Medina; Ayotte; Moufarrej & Salameh). Lozanov claims that instruction that is based on an artistic approach makes the lesson more pleasant, eliminates tiredness and stimulates students' motivation (276).

In like manner, Krashen in his "affective filter" hypothesis outlines that a setting that promotes low anxiety, high self-esteem and motivation is ideal for language learning because the level of linguistic input received from the environment is premised upon the learner's inner feelings and attitude (30). In this sense positive emotions, which can be attained with music, would result in a higher reception of linguistic input (Medina 3). Medina also reports "singing songs in unison produces a sense of community and increases student confidence in the second language." (3). Guy Cook suggests that the use of song in the language classroom increases individual language-learner motivation (qtd. in Moufarrej & Salameh 113).

Lastly, in a study conducted among university students learning Arabic as a second language, Moufarrej & Salameh observed that the singing group showed great motivation. Students had positive physical reactions to the music and the atmosphere of the class remained

relaxed even after the song related activity was completed (113). The data presented showed a definite preference for the inclusion of music in the classroom with 60 % of the students in the singing group requesting for music to be permanently added to the curriculum (114). This study will examine the extent to which Latin pop music enhances learning motivation and confidence in their ability to converse in the Spanish language.

The Use of Pop Songs to Enhance Second Language Acquisition:

Previous research revealed that pop songs may be helpful in second language acquisition. Firstly, in Murphey's examination on *the discourse of pop songs*, it was noted that the lyrics of popular songs contain language that is relatively simple (772). He stated that the relatively simple vocabulary used in these songs is appropriate for students learning English. The repetitive structure of the song lyrics and the song vocabulary which usually contains frequently used, short words with several pronouns are some of the reasons that pop songs enhance conversational and listening skills (Murphey 772).

Li and Brand highlighted that the language of songs is similar to real speech because it is conversational (75). In reference to Weikart the beat of songs helps English learners to grasp inner timing and enables children to speak or read in complete sentences as opposed to one word at a time (B-1; Li and Brand 75). Chen & Chen discovered that Taiwanese elementary students who learned English songs felt as if their English abilities, particularly their listening ability had improved (23). During their study on the benefits of songs in the acquisition of Arabic as a second language, Moufarrej & Salameh suggested that learning the songs may have contributed to fluency and assisted students with pronunciation in the language (113). On the other hand, the current study will focus on the effectiveness of Latin pop songs on listening and comprehension skills of adult learners whose brain development and capacity may differ from children. It will

also explore the extent to which Latin pop songs introduce colloquial terminology as previous studies did not investigate this area.

The Physiological Relationship between Music and Language:

There is substantial theoretical and physiological evidence for the inclusion of music in language teaching and learning. It was previously believed that the areas in the brain that are responsible for processing music and speech were domain-specific with the left hemisphere responsible for processing musical syntax and the right hemisphere tasked with processing language (Maess et al. 543). However, this belief was disproved by a group of neuroscientists who conducted a MEG study to investigate whether musical syntax is processed in Broca's area. Maess et al. discovered that musical and linguistic syntax processing occurs in the same area of the brain, and both are processed automatically (543). As a result, music functions may enhance speech functions due to the similarities in their neurological characteristics.

Music and Linguistic Memory (Vocabulary Retention):

Murphey's research on the "song stuck in my head phenomenon" has been supported by several studies that focus on the use of music to enhance linguistic memory and the facilitation of growth in L2 vocabulary due to subvocal rehearsal (Fonseca-Mora; Li and Brand; Rukholm et al; Moufarrej & Salameh). They examined how the repetition of lyrics and rhythm could be employed as an effective tool to improve vocabulary acquisition/retention among other skills that lead to language proficiency.

Singing has always been an easy method to remember something (Fonseca-Mora 150). Fonseca-Mora states that reciting information together with a tune helps persons to retain the information more efficiently (150). She states that the melodious sounds associated with music acts as a cue to extract the exact or accurate information that persons are attempting to retrieve

(150). Fonseca-Mora states “Music seems to leave a particularly deep trace in our memories; this could be due to the fact that it is related to affective and unconscious factors.” (150). Fonseca-Mora highlighted that songs are useful for various reasons. Songs usually contain lyrics that are repetitive, and this allows students to easily remember lexical phrases because they become stored in their mind (151). This is an effective way of retaining vocabulary since it can be conveniently retrieved during any oral interactions (Fonseca-Mora 151). Therefore, songs (music & lyrics) have a positive effect on the students’ language acquisition level (Fonseca-Mora 151). The results found in the study carried out by Moufarrej & Salameh show that songs can play a beneficial role in vocabulary retention among L2 Arabic learners at the tertiary level (110).

Chapter Two: Presentation of Data and Analysis

This study utilized a mixed method approach to collect data for the purpose of determining whether Latin pop music is an effective learning strategy to enhance the communicative skills, listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition/retention, grammatical acquisition/accuracy and motivation of third year BA Spanish students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. The researcher used a thematic analysis approach to summarize the qualitative data collected from the questionnaire and a descriptive statistical approach to describe the quantitative data. The results were calculated based on the percentage of people who gave a particular response to the set of fixed questions. Additionally, higher percentage values indicated that majority of the population agreed whereas lower percentage values were reflective of the minority.

Exposure to the Spanish Language:

The researcher investigated whether students' exposure to the Spanish language extended beyond the classroom environment (see fig. 1 and 2) and the ways in which the students are exposed to it (see Appendix B). This was investigated to determine whether students had sufficient exposure to the Spanish language.

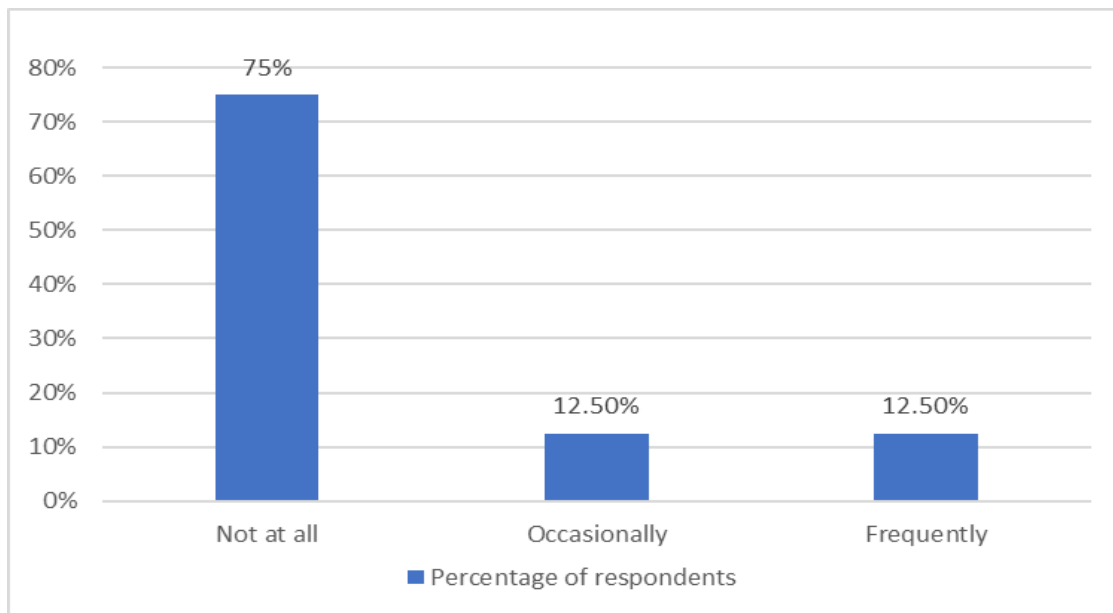


Fig.1. bar graph indicating how frequently Spanish is spoken in the home of the respondents

Seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents (students) illustrated that the Spanish language is not spoken in their house while the remaining respondents were divided in the middle with 12.50% claiming that they spoke Spanish occasionally in their house and the other 12.50% confirmed that the Spanish language is spoken frequently in their home. The data revealed that the majority of students do not have the opportunity to practice their Spanish conversational skills at home.

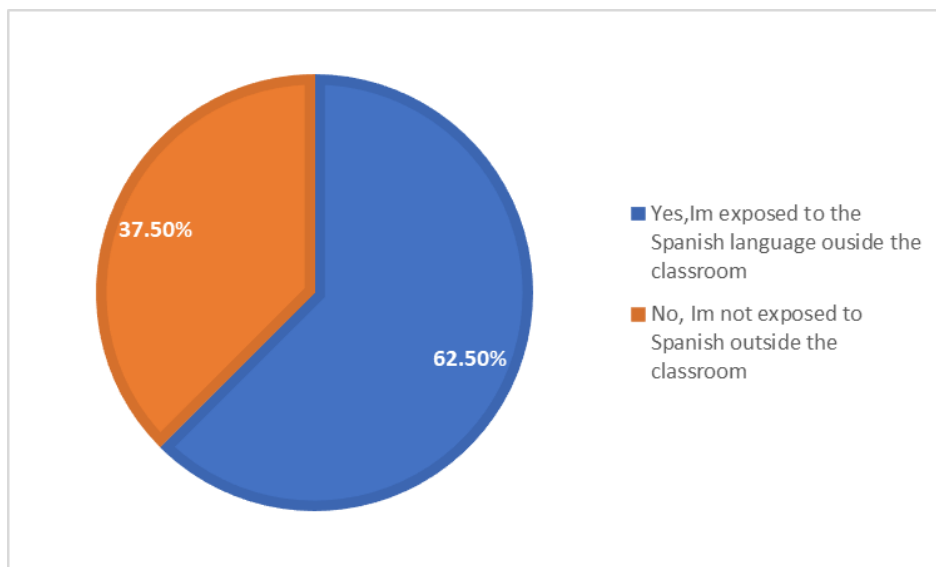


Fig. 2. pie chart representing respondents' exposure to the Spanish language outside the classroom

A majority of 62.50% of the respondents have been exposed to the Spanish language outside of the traditional learning environment. On the other hand, a minority of 37.50 % have relayed that the classroom is their only opportunity to engage with the Spanish language. Nonetheless, based on the data collected it is assumed that most students are exposed to the Spanish language outside the classroom. From the 62.50% of respondents who were exposed to the Spanish language outside the classroom, 37.50% were exposed to Spanish media which consisted of music and television shows/series (see Appendix B). Another 18.75 % were exposed through conversations with Venezuelan immigrants and the remaining 6.25% engaged with the Spanish language in their work environment (see Appendix B). Subsequently, the data conveys that the majority of respondents are exposed to the Spanish language through the use of Spanish media (see Appendix B).

Most Challenging Component of the Spanish Language:

The BA Spanish programme offered at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine is divided into three components that aim to enhance and test the grammatical (gramatica), reading and writing (Lectura y composición) as well as the listening and conversational (auditiva y conversación) skills of the students. Students relayed that there are several challenges that hinder their ability to maintain an excellent command of the Spanish language (see Appendix C). 25% of the respondents mentioned that remembering all the technicalities or rules to produce accurate grammatical structures and their lack of familiarity with the Spanish due to its novelty are the challenges that students gave for choosing the grammar component as most difficult (see Appendix C). On the other hand, 75% choose the listening and conversation component because of challenges related to retaining and recalling vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures, understanding certain accents and the syllable-timed speech of native Spanish speakers (see Appendix C). It was found that grammar, vocabulary context and accent/speech related issues presented a significant challenge to students' ability to listen and converse in the Spanish language.

Vocabulary Acquisition/ Retention and Grammatical Accuracy/Acquisition:

This is one of the supported links between music and its use as a teaching and independent learning strategy for second language acquisition. Respondents had a mixed response, with the majority encouraging the use of Latin pop music to acquire and retain vocabulary as well as accurate grammatical structures due to its effectiveness in enhancing memorization of vocabulary and grammatical structures, usefulness for recalling vocabulary

learned from past songs, acquiring new vocabulary by translating songs, learning colloquial terms and it presents an alternative to remembering grammar in isolation (see fig. 3 and Appendix D).

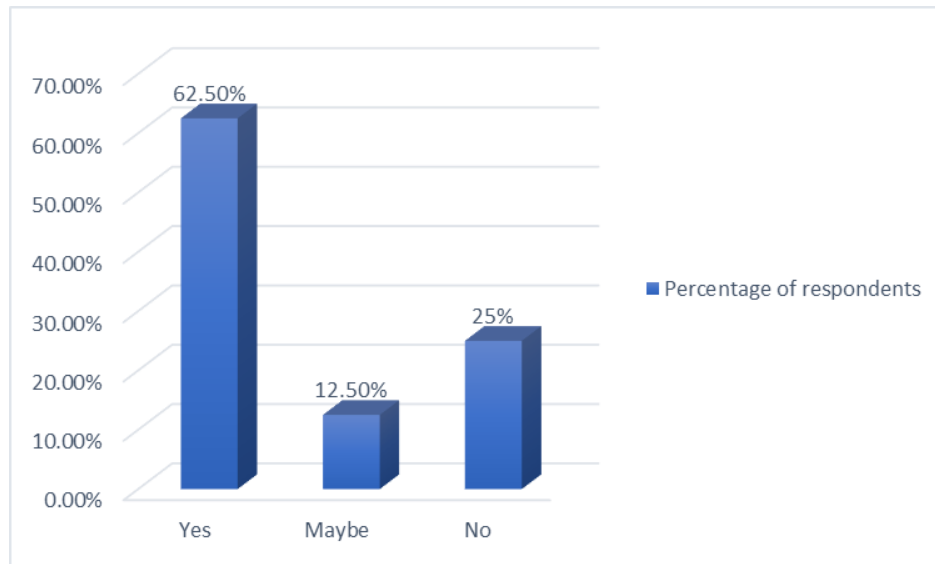


Fig. 3. bar graph highlighting the quantity of respondents who acquired new vocabulary/grammatical structure by listening to Latin pop music

The majority of respondents (62.50%) agreed that by listening to Latin pop music they were able to acquire vocabulary and grammatical structure. A minority of 12.50% of the respondents were unsure as to whether they were able to acquire vocabulary and grammatical structures through this learning method. Moreover 25% of the respondents were adamant that they did not acquire new vocabulary and reinforce grammatical structures by listening to Latin pop Music. Therefore, the data proves that Latin pop music is an effective learning strategy that enhances grammatical and vocabulary acquisition/retention.

The tabulated data (see Appendix D) describes the core reasons that respondents gave in support of the effectiveness of Latin pop music as a learning and teaching strategy due to its

repetitive lyrics, melody, colloquial terminology and acquiring vocabulary by translating the song lyrics from Spanish to English and then memorizing the phrases. However, an anomaly that was not previously considered was brought forth by respondents who stated that the vocabulary learnt from listening to these songs may not be understood entirely.

Furthermore, the quiz conducted on the second section of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) indicated that Latin pop music facilitates the retention of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy regarding structure and rules. The first question tested the rule/structure of the subjunctive in the if clause with 87.5% of respondents answering correctly and 12.5% incorrectly. The second tested the use of the verb 'ser and 'estar' with 87.5% answering correctly and 12.5% answering incorrectly. The third tested the retention of vocabulary with 100% of the respondents answering correctly and the fourth tested verb conjugation with 100% of the respondents answering correctly. The data supported that Latin pop music can enhance second language acquisition by facilitating the retention of vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures.

Enhance Listening Comprehension and Conversational Skills:

In accordance with the objective of the study students were asked to comment on how Latin pop music has been able to enhance their command of the Spanish language. Students responded that Latin pop music has a positive impact on their listening and conversational skills because it exposes them to the various Spanish accents found in the Spanish speaking hemisphere, enhance listening comprehension, they listen to topic related songs for listening and conversation classes, beneficial for aural learners, introduces them to the appropriate context to utilize particular phrases, provides real life examples of using these phrases and teaches them conversational Spanish including slang/colloquial terms (see Appendix E). Data showed that the

effectiveness of Latin pop music as a tool to enhance listening and comprehension may depend on the type of learners (see Appendix E).

Enhanced Learning Experience of Third-year BA Spanish Students:

The majority of respondents (third-year BA Spanish students) reacted positively to the idea of including Latin pop music in SPAN 3001/3002 courses. The most frequently mentioned reason that students had in support of its inclusion is its ability to provide an enhanced learning experience. This was further categorized into enjoyment/motivation to learn, confidence and relaxation (see Appendix F). All the respondents (100%) agreed that the inclusion of Latin pop music in the BA Spanish programme would make students feel more excited/motivated to learn, whereas half of the respondents (50%) believed that their learning experience would be enhanced because it would make them feel more confident to converse in the Spanish language (see Appendix F).

However, 12.50% of the respondents stated that it would make them feel less confident to speak Spanish (see Appendix F). A further 87.50 % of the respondents indicated that it would create a more relaxed atmosphere during classes (see Appendix F). None of the students felt as if the inclusion of Latin pop music in these courses would make them less relaxed or less excited to learn (see Appendix F). It is important to note that respondents were given the opportunity to choose more than one option, therefore a respondent could have chosen both more relaxed and more excited to learn as their response and because of this the accumulated percentage would surpass 100%. The data clearly reveals that Latin pop music would be an efficient learning and teaching strategy that enhances the learning experience (motivation/excitement, relaxation, and confidence to speak) of students.

Chapter Three: Discussion of Findings

In spite of having additional exposure to the Spanish language (see fig. 2), students choose listening comprehension and conversation as the most challenging component in the BA Spanish programme due to challenges encountered with retaining vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures and understanding cultural elements (accents, context and syllable timed speech). This was supported by Donaldson, whose study mentioned that most foreign language students have not obtained a level of proficiency that qualifies them as ‘fluent’ by the native speakers because they are taught “standard, written language spoken aloud” rather than relevant “native speaker norms of conversation” (1). Additionally, Kurita highlighted that L2 students found listening comprehension to be difficult due to an insufficient vocabulary register and learner’s anxiety which restricts their self-confidence and motivation to access second language conversations (31-35). It should be noted that the study was subjected to the limitations of a smaller sample size and no pre-test and post-test experiments were undertaken to compare students’ academic performance before and after the use of Latin pop music as a learning and teaching strategy. Nonetheless, there was sufficient qualitative and quantitative evidence collected from this study that supported the use of Latin pop music, as an aural learning strategy, to enhance listening comprehension and conversational skills due to its ability to mitigate the challenges encountered by L2 learners.

It was discovered that 62.5% of the respondents had acquired/retained vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures by listening to Latin pop music due to its repetitive lyrics, melody, colloquial terminology and acquired vocabulary by translating the song lyrics (see fig. 3). This could be explained by Murphey’s ‘SSIMH’ phenomenon which states that repetitive lyrics, melody, and the rhythm of songs get stuck in students’ heads, thus enabling them to retain

accurate grammatical structure with more ease (59). This enhances grammatical accuracy because the lyrics would provide an accurate/model template of the grammatical structure. The data is also supported by Krashen's Comprehensible Input hypothesis which indicates that vocabulary could be incidentally acquired through listening and repeated exposure (qtd. in Medina 1; Klapper 162).

The student's ability to retain the vocabulary that they acquired by listening to Latin pop music is reinforced by Fonseca-Mora who stated that music and memory are related due to affective and unconscious factors (150). Notwithstanding the statistical findings of the quiz which demonstrates long term retention of vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures. Hence, in response to research question 1, Latin pop music has a relatively positive effect on the acquisition and retention of vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures because it enhances memorization. Ayotte advises that this positive effect would only occur if completed with a pedagogical goal in mind (3). This is reinforced by respondents who stressed that while new vocabulary is acquired by listening to Latin pop music, they are unaware of its meaning. As such students should take an extra effort to search for the meaning or if utilized as a teaching strategy, it can be supplemented with visual aids and song related activities.

Moreover, Lozanov suggests that instruction based on an artistic approach such as music, can remove the affective filters from the classroom by reducing learners' anxiety by stimulating enjoyment and relaxation, motivation to learn and boosting students' confidence (276). Correspondingly, the students stated that they would be more excited/motivated to learn (100%), relaxed (87%) and confident to speak (50 %) if Latin pop music was included in the BA Spanish programme (see Appendix F). Therefore, in response to the second research question, Latin pop music would significantly impact students' motivation to learn, enjoyment and confidence to

speak Spanish. This would be an efficient learning and teaching strategy that would enhance the learning experience of students by making them more receptive

The compiled evidence further substantiates the claim that Latin pop music would considerably enhance students' listening and conversational skills. Students gave several reasons for its efficiency in listening comprehension: it would expose them to the various Spanish accents found in the Spanish speaking region and introduce them to relevant vocabulary by listening to topic related songs for listening and conversation classes (see Appendix E). The importance of vocabulary knowledge for listening comprehension is emphasized by Kurita who indicates that vocabulary knowledge and listening skills share a directly proportional relationship (35). Students also mentioned that it would enhance their conversational skills by providing them with the appropriate context to utilize particular phrases, real life examples of using these phrases and teaching them conversational Spanish including slang/colloquial terms and recalling vocabulary (see Appendix E). This could be explained by Murphey who noted that the lyrics of pop songs contain relatively simple vocabulary, containing frequently used, short words with several pronouns which are some of the reasons that pop songs enhance conversational and listening skills (772).

Another explanation comes from Li and Brand who highlighted that the language of songs is similar to real speech because both are conversational (75). Fonseca-Mora also adds that the vocabulary learnt from these songs can be conveniently retrieved during any oral interactions. In response to research question three, Latin pop music has the potential to notably enhance students' listening and comprehension skills. For this reason, it would have a significant role in improving the listening and conversational skills of Spanish language students at the

University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Despite this, it should be noted that students who are aural learners may benefit more from this strategy.

Conclusion

In retrospect, Latin pop music is an effective learning and teaching strategy that enhances the communicative skills, listening comprehension, aids in vocabulary acquisition/retention, grammatical acquisition/accuracy, and motivation of third year BA Spanish students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. The catchy melody, repetitive lyrics, rhythm and repeated exposure of Latin pop music aid in memorization. This leads to greater (long term) retention of familiar vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures or the acquisition of new vocabulary and accurate grammatical structures. This is attributed to how similar the brain processes both music and language. In addition, music creates an ideal learning environment for adult learners because it aids in making them more receptive. Considering this, Latin pop music would be an efficient way to expand students' listening and conversational skills which are described as the most challenging components in foreign language acquisition. With respect to listening skills, Latin pop music allows students to attune their ears to different Hispanic accents and build a vocabulary register which is essential for listening comprehension as stated by Kurita (35). Latin pop music can also be employed to enhance listening skills because it would provide them with “native speaker norms” (Donaldson 1), by introducing them to the appropriate context, real life examples, colloquial terms and to easily recall vocabulary during oral interactions. While Latin pop music may be an effective learning and teaching strategy for Spanish language students, aural learners may benefit more from this method.

Recommendations:

Music is an effective educational tool that should be incorporated in the second language curriculum for adult and adolescent learners because it can be utilized to introduce or reinforce vocabulary and grammatical rules, enhance listening and conversational skills as well

as students' learning experience. Therefore, educators should familiarize themselves with this teaching strategy. However, the use of music as a teaching tool should be supplemented with visual aid to enhance learning and to accommodate students who are visual learners and reinforce language use meaning. Educators should also create engaging, music based, language - teaching materials and song related activities to utilize in the classrooms. In relation to vocabulary acquisition, further research should be carried out to determine its effect on language usage and meaning as well as the writing component. Additionally, further researchers should design a pre-test and post-test experiment to compare the academic performance of Spanish language students before and after the use of Latin pop music as a learning and teaching strategy.

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APPENDIX A

Sample questionnaire:

4/1/22, 11:58 AM

Questionnaire on the use of Latin pop music as a learning/teaching strategy

Questionnaire on the use of Latin pop music as a learning/teaching strategy

I am conducting a study on Latin pop music as an effective learning strategy to enhance the communicative skills, listening, comprehension, vocabulary acquisition/retention, grammatical accuracy and motivation of third year BA Spanish students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Thus, I would like to know your experience with music as a learning/teaching strategy with emphasis on memorization, vocabulary retention, grammatical accuracy and motivation/confidence in learning/speaking the Spanish language. This Survey will take 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous and would only be utilized for this research. Please answer all questions honestly. Thank you for your participation.

* Required

1. Please state your age *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 25-30
- ☐ Over 30

2. Please state your gender *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

3. What year are you in? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Year 1
- ☐ Year 2
- ☐ Year 3

4. Is Spanish currently spoken in your home? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Not at all
☐ Occasionally
☐ Frequently

5. Are you exposed to the Spanish language outside of the classroom? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

6. If you answered yes to the previous question, please explain how you are exposed to the language. *

7. As a second language student, what component (Listening, Speaking, Grammar or Writing) do you find most challenging in learning a new language and why? *

8. How many hours do you listen to music each week? *

9. What genre of Music do you listen to? you can tick more than one *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Hip Hop
- ☐ R&B
- ☐ Latin pop music
- ☐ Classical
- ☐ Soca
- ☐ Reggae
- ☐ Dancehall
- ☐ Pop music/ contemporary

10. Have you noticed any connection between music and language learning? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

11. Have you ever acquired new vocabulary/grammatical structure from listening to Latin pop music? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

12. Do you think that music can be an effective learning and teaching tool for second language acquisition and why? *

13. Do you remember more effectively if you study with music in the background ? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Sometimes

14. Do you find it easier to memorize work through repetition? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Sometimes

15. Have you ever added a melody to your school work/turned your school work into a song to facilitate memorization? If so, please explain. *

16. Have you ever recalled work/vocabulary that you heard in a song? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

17. Have you ever used music (melody) to enhance learning and how? *

18. What type of learner are you? Please click all the options that apply to you. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Aural/Auditory (through listening)
☐ Visual (through visual aid)
☐ Physical/Kinesthetic (through movement or Hands-on activities)
☐ Naturalistic (relate to various objects and elements from nature)
☐ Intrapersonal (working alone)
☐ Interpersonal (working with others)
☐ Logical (through numbers)
☐ Verbal (good with words; heard and spoken)

19. If you choose other to the previous question then please specify.

20. Would you enjoy the inclusion of music/ song related activity in the SPAN 3001/3002 course and why? *

21. Do you suggest that music should be integrated more into the curriculum? Please explain. *

22. Would the inclusion of Latin pop music in the BA Spanish programme make you feel: *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ More confident to speak
- ☐ Less confident to speak
- ☐ More relaxed
- ☐ Less relaxed
- ☐ More excited to learn
- ☐ Less excited to learn

23. Have you ever listened to these songs ? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Dj Snake- Taki Taki ft. Selena Gomez, Ozuna & Cardi B
- ☐ Luis Fonsi- Despacito ft. Daddy Yankee
- ☐ J Balvin- Mi gente ft. Willy William
- ☐ Marc Anthony- Vivir mi vida

Section 2

Finish the lyrics.....

24. Finish the correct lyrics from the song Taki taki by DJ Snake ft. Ozuna, Selena Gomez and Cardi B. Báilame como..... *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ si fuera la última vez
- ☐ tu quieres
- ☐ una bailadora

25. Finish the correct lyrics from the song Despacito by Luis Fonsi ft. Daddy Yankee. Tú, tú eres el imán..... *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ y quiero saber más de ti
- ☐ y yo soy el metal
- ☐ y tu estas la chica de mis sueños

26. Finish the correct lyrics from the song Mi gente by J. Balvin, Willy William. Estamos rompiendo..... *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ la discoteca
- ☐ la calle
- ☐ en la fiesta

27. Finish the correct lyrics from the song Vivir mi vida by Marc Anthony. Voy a

*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ llorar
- ☐ cantar y relaja mi mente
- ☐ reír, voy a bailar

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APPENDIX B

Table 1

Classification of Students Exposure Outside the Classroom

Type of exposure	Percentage of respondents who were exposed to the Spanish language (%)
Spanish media (music and tv shows/series)	37.50
Conversing with Venezuelan immigrants	18.75
The work environment	6.25

APPENDIX C

Table 2

Highlighting what Students Thought was the Most Challenging Component when Learning a Second Language

Component	Challenges encountered	Percentage of respondents (%)
Reading & Writing (Lectura y Composición)	–	–
Listening and Conversation (Auditiva y Conversación)	• Recalling vocabulary during conversations • Thinking in Spanish • The pressure to conjugate accurately and refrain from making grammatical errors • Understanding certain accents • Spanish speakers utilize Syllable-timed speech (speaking fast) • Context	75
Grammar (Gramatica)	• Remembering all the technicalities/rules • Novelty of the language	25

APPENDIX D

Table 3

Categorization of Respondents Opinion on the Effectiveness of Latin Pop Music as a Second Language Learning Strategy with regards to Vocabulary and Grammar

Enhances	Reason for its effectivity	Reason for its ineffectuality
Vocabulary acquisition & retention	Repetitive lyrics aid memorization Melody • Enhances memorization • Translating song lyrics • Recalling vocabulary • Learning colloquial terminology	• the vocabulary utilized may not be understood
Grammatical acquisition & accuracy	• Alternative to using grammar in isolation • Aids Memorization	

APPENDIX E

Table 4

Categorization of Respondents' Opinion on the Effectiveness of Latin Pop Music as a Second Language Learning Strategy with regards to Listening and Conversational Skills

Enhances	Reason for effectivity	Reason for ineffectuality
Listening skills	• Exposure to various accents • Useful for listening comprehension • Useful for listening and conversation classes • Aural learner	• Not aural/verbal learner
Conversational skills	• Introduces context • Provides real-life examples • Teaches conversational Spanish	

APPENDIX F

Table 5

Classification of Respondents' Feelings towards the Inclusion of Latin Pop Music in BA Spanish Programme

Respondents' feelings	Percentage of respondents (%)
More confident to speak	50
Less confident to speak	12.5
More relaxed	87.5
Less relaxed	0
More excited to learn	100
Less excited to learn	0