



## Musical Input and a Multiliteracies Approach to Facilitate Intercultural EFL Learning

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### ABSTRACT

The current multicultural context has influenced how we learn languages. On the one hand, different models of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) have emerged to deal with the cultural diversity of narratives and promote heterogeneous identities. On the other, the need to consider other literacies has given rise to the incorporation of a Multiliteracies pedagogy into language learning curricula. Educators have employed numerous resources to engage students in intercultural communicative activities through this pedagogy. However, little has been analysed with respect to the effectiveness of musical input. Among the multiple reasons for its implementation is the possibility of exploring cultural contents from a critical and affective point of view. Therefore, this study seeks to propose a musical input-based approach in a multilingual EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning context which may serve as a guide to facilitate the development of ICC through a pedagogy of Multiliteracies. Moreover, this paper aims to illustrate the applicability of musical input to facilitate intercultural EFL learning through pedagogical suggestions.

**KEYWORDS:** Affectivity; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Language Learning; Multiliteracies; Musical Input.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of language teaching has changed greatly due to new technological advances and the ongoing process of globalization. This has led to better opportunities to explore the social and cultural dimensions in the language classroom (Dombi, 2021). The need to develop

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intercultural skills is even more relevant in our current multicultural and digital contexts. Students from different cultures have countless opportunities to communicate in international scenarios. In this sense, the virtual context is considered as “a culturally authentic context” (Dubreil, 2006, p. 248) in which language and culture influence each other. More recently, the recent COVID-19 outbreak has led to a rethinking of classroom practices and has been a turning point in the way we exclusively use technological devices for educational purposes.

Central to this study is the importance of integrating both language and culture in language learning programs (Modern Language Association, 2007). In this regard, culture and language are complementary elements because we understand a community better through language usage (Brown, 2007). Moreover, the need to promote intercultural communication among multilingual learners has resulted in the adoption of a more holistic approach in which language curricula highlight the significance of cultural skills. By participating in intercultural communication, learners become involved in individual cultural transformation, which can positively alter their beliefs and attitudes towards other cultures.

In parallel with the importance of developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the language classroom, there has also been a paradigm shift due to the emergence of more dynamic domains that go beyond traditional notions of literacy. This has led to a growing interest in a pedagogy of Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), whose overarching goal is to include experiences and promote cultural diversity. By engaging language learners in multimodal experiences, educators can facilitate the development of multiple literacies through visual, oral, gestural, auditory, spatial, or tactile modes (Adilbayeva et al., 2022). Similarly, implementing the principles of the pedagogy of Multiliteracies may serve as a means to empower voices from diverse cultures.

Among the pedagogical resources used in language learning, music has been one of the most effective tools for teaching intercultural skills (Kennedy, 2014). In addition, music has the ability to promote affective-social relationships among students. Likewise, the use of musical resources in the language classroom can significantly impact students' learning experiences by exposing them to values and culture of the target language (TL). Indeed, the content of these cultural experiences is critical to the development of ICC in the language classroom.

The rationale of the present study is to support, through an analysis of the significance of music in EFL learning, the creation of curricula to facilitate the ICC of multilingual students, taking into account the principles of a pedagogy of Multiliteracies. Likewise, this study attempts to emphasise the power of musical input to address cultural issues from an affective dimension and to make students aware of their critical thinking skills in order to sensitise them to cultural issues. However, this approach has not been considered in previous studies. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the theoretical relevance and possible practical applications of a

pedagogy of Multiliteracies to address ICC in the EFL classroom through musical input. This study will hopefully fill this gap in language teaching research.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Interculturality in language learning

Whereas earlier cultural approaches to foreign language learning focused on transmitting facts about the target culture in general terms, recent intercultural approaches give priority to the understanding and reflection of the target culture in terms of the learners' own culture. Luo and Grao (2022) emphasise the importance of encouraging learners to reflect on the similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture.

To reflect the complexity of interculturality, we have considered different conceptual positions. Fantini (2006, p. 12) describes interculturality as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself”. Byram and Fleming (1998) add that developing intercultural skills also involves showing interest and respect for the customs and values of the culture of the TL. Similarly, Kramsch (1993) describes a ‘sphere of interculturality’ in which learners recognize cultural differences and embrace them as knowledge for intercultural communication, suggesting a negotiated space referred to as ‘third place’ in which learners’ identities interact and enrich each other’s culture.

However, developing intercultural skills also involves the intercultural engagement of individuals. According to Holmes and O’Neill (2012), intercultural contact alone does not necessarily promote ICC and may even reinforce cultural stereotypes. Therefore, encouraging students to reflect and think critically should be a prerequisite (Bennett, 2013; Deardorff, 2009). As a result, practices of critical observation and evaluation can lead to intercultural sensitivity (Hammer et al., 2003). Furthermore, thought processes such as introspection, self-reflection or interpretation play a significant role in promoting intercultural learning in a multicultural classroom. For this reason, language learning should consider a critical approach towards the cultural diversity of narratives and promote heterogeneous identities. A variety of theories, frameworks and models reflect this cultural awareness as a response to the current multicultural context in which language learning takes place.

Bennett (1993) developed the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) theory to represent the complex processes involved in ICC, using six orientations which consist of ethnocentric stages, namely *denial*, *defense*, *minimization*, and ethnorelative stages, namely *acceptance*, *adaptation* and, *integration*. According to this theory, the negative end of the spectrum reflects the inability to acknowledge cultural differences. By contrast, the final stage of *integration* represents the incorporation and representation of other perspectives into our own.

Byram (1997) proposes a four-dimensional approach that includes language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness and cultural experience. Within this approach, students are expected to address cultural differences from both their own and the foreign language culture, thus transforming a monocultural view of the world into an intercultural one. This model also suggests how to assess intercultural learning. Byram (2014) further develops a model for the FL classroom and proposes the notion of ‘education for intercultural citizenship in the foreign language classroom’, which allows students to identify with learners from other countries, challenging personal identities and enabling the development of transcultural identification. In this context, Byram refers to an ‘intercultural speaker’ who is able to interact with and mediate between others while being aware of cultural differences related to social justice or human rights. Regarding these topics, Byram et al. (2017, p. 252) claim that they ‘constitute an important part of intercultural citizenship education; they help students take a critical look at complex topics; and they motivate students to take action in their own intercultural and transnational intercultural communities’. This cultural awareness involves a critical evaluation of one own’s practices and culture, as well as the culture of others, and thus self-reflection in both language use and interaction.

Deardorff’s model emphasizes the importance of attitudes, knowledge and skills. The attitudinal element in this model is essential, as it focuses on appreciation of other cultures, an empathetic attitude towards other cultures and tolerance of ambiguity. Additionally, Deardorff (2006) highlights the cognitive aspect, which refers to the ability to construct meaning by relating to others; the behavioral aspect, which involves interacting with and adapting to people from other cultures; and the affective aspect, which refers to the ability to develop empathy towards people from other cultures.

As regards frameworks and guides on ICC, the Council of Europe (2016) launched the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* with the aim of providing guidance on democratic values to primary and secondary schools, as well as higher education and vocational training institutions, through various descriptors. Similarly, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies* (Council of Europe, 2016) aims to provide orientation for communication and interaction through multimodal texts, taking into account socio-emotional elements. In this regard, this framework includes transversal skills, such as managing one’s own emotions and those of others. In addition, the *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco et al., 2016) provides an analysis of how educators can integrate plurilingual and pluricultural competences into the language classroom.

However, language skills alone are not sufficient to ensure full cultural integration. Accordingly, we should also develop ‘soft skills’, which include values, resilience or teamwork. In this context, socio-emotional elements are also of utmost importance (Zembylas, 2023). As Moisi (2007, p. 9) put it, “emotions have become indispensable to grasp the

complexity of the world we live in”. Moreover, a positive attitude towards the culture of the TL is essential in intercultural communicative activities. Hernández et al. (2021) showed that a positive attitude of teachers and learners towards the cultural knowledge of the TL favours the learning process. As regards the mastery of emotional vocabulary, the cultural distance between the mother tongue (L1) and the TL can be an obstacle (Pavlenko, 2008). Nonetheless, educators should be aware that language learners need to acquire emotional concepts that are relevant to the culture of the TL (Lindquist, 2021). In a similar vein, Dewaele (2015) emphasizes that learners from more ‘distant’ cultures have difficulty recognizing emotions in the TL.

However, the absence of interaction among learners from different cultures hinders emotional and meaningful experiences. Nevertheless, the digital context in which we live today facilitates intercultural encounters. In this sense, Kramsch (2013) points out that computer-mediated communication (CMC) constitutes a new approach to teaching culture, fostering interaction in language classes. This results in the need to provide multilingual learners with digital multimodal resources so that they can engage in intercultural communicative tasks.

## 2.2. Towards a multiliteracies pedagogy in language learning

The new approaches and techniques adopted in language learning opened up new possibilities for intercultural encounters among multilingual students. Thus, an intercultural approach to language learning can reflect narratives from other cultures; therefore, putting an end to literacy practices that usually reflect the dominant culture. In this regard, Street’s (1984) model emerged as a reaction to dominant literacy practices. As a result of these new insightful discussions on new literacies, a new wave of literacy studies emerged. The shift in these New Literacy Studies towards an appreciation of literacy as a social practice can also be linked to a critical approach to language learning that aims to urge language learners to question social and cultural beliefs (McLaren, 2003).

Moreover, the language-content divide that has always existed in language learning has been overcome by a shift towards a more diverse approach that emphasises new technological advances and great cultural diversity. The move towards a pedagogy of Multiliteracies in language learning has resulted in the adoption of a notion of literacy that goes beyond traditional ones (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; NLG, 1996; Paesani & Allen, 2012). Among the most important features of this pedagogy is that it highlights the role of different semiotic modes in meaning-making, such as linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial or gestural.

The New London Group (1996) coined the term *multiliteracies* to represent the multiple changes that were occurring in literacy, technology and cultural issues. The emergence of new multimedia technologies and text forms allowed educators to approach

language learning from multiple perspectives. To accomplish this, students use available designs as a starting point to create new meaning by considering a series of curricular components consisting of *Situated practice*, *Overt instruction*, *Critical framing* and *Transformed practice*. Throughout this process, educators guide students through various knowledge processes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The knowledge process of *experiencing* consists of two sub-processes, namely *experiencing the known*, which refers to the expression of personal opinions on a particular topic, and *experiencing the new*, in which students engage with original texts. The knowledge process of *conceptualising* consists of the sub-processes of *conceptualising by naming*, which involves defining and classifying elements in a text, and *conceptualising with theory*, which refers to the act of connecting elements in the text through concepts. The knowledge process of *analysing* consists of *analysing functionally*, which involves explaining the reasons why a particular meaning is conveyed in a text, and *analysing critically*, which refers to the act of evaluating one's own perspective and that of others on a particular topic. Finally, the knowledge process of *applying* consists of *applying appropriately*, which allows students to use their new knowledge to produce texts or solve problems, and *applying creatively*, which requires students to use this new knowledge in original and innovative ways.

Moreover, among the principles underlying this pedagogy are the significance of a multimodal and student-centered approach. This pedagogy is also related to *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL), which considers multimodality and whose main principles are the multiple means that exist to represent and express meaning (Mohammed-Ahmed, 2021). Integrating multimodal meaning-making beyond print-based texts into education seems to fill a gap in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Translanguaging is also a common practice whereby students use a variety of semiotics while learning from each other in an intercultural space (Wei, 2013). In this way, individuals are ineluctably developing multiple cultural identities that coexist in a complex educational context that extends beyond the traditional classroom and includes virtual scenarios. In these virtual scenarios, students expose themselves to a myriad of information and communication technologies such as “Web logs (blogs), word processors, video editors, World Wide Web browsers, Web editors, e-mail, spreadsheets, presentation software, instant messaging, plug-ins for Web resources, bulletin boards, avatars, virtual worlds, and many others” (Leu et al., 2004: 1571). Comprehending these types of technologies requires the knowledge of multiple literacies.

### **2.3. Musical input in intercultural communicative activities**

Modernist perspectives in the development of ICC have long considered concepts of Big C Culture, such as art, literature or music, and Little C Culture, represented by beliefs, traditions or habits. Nevertheless, our current digital and multicultural context has led scholars to consider a postmodernist approach that emphasises cultural interactions. Among the

possibilities that new technologies offer for language learning, music stands out as an effective medium through which to exploit the resources needed to facilitate ICC (Ludke et al., 2014). Likewise, music is a tool for social and cultural cohesion (Kelly, 2016). In this sense, music is a communication tool that every culture uses to express its values and traditions. Therefore, the use of songs in the language classroom is an effective means of illustrating relevant cultural aspects of the TL (Kennedy, 2014). It seems reasonable, then, to employ music in the language classroom to help learners understand cultural aspects of other societies.

Another argument in favour of using music in the language classroom is the effectiveness of music in exploring cultural content in many ways. According to Schippers (2010), musical analysis of cultural traditions can lead to the construction of meaning from multiple views. Luo and Gao (2022) conducted a study in which students from the United States and China discussed relevant cultural topics using songs in their languages with similar themes. The students in this study developed their ICC, especially their interest in learning about each other's culture. Needless to say, popular music is one of the pillars of modern culture that educators can use in the language classroom to teach cultural content. Sánchez-Vizcaino (2022) developed a corpus of songs in Spanish, highlighting different cultural representations through references to cities, popular dances or traditional musical instruments. A clear example of the effectiveness of popular music in language learning is the increasing interest in K-pop (Korean music), which has been recently experimented to integrate culture into Korean language teaching (Jung et al., 2022; Syahrin et al., 2022).

Students receive authentic input and learn to be aware of cultural diversity through idiomatic language and the different varieties within the same language, thus developing their intercultural competence (Failoni, 1993). The variety of a particular language and its use in certain songs conveys the inherent sociocultural elements of a society, as songs are a social and cultural product (Gold & Revill, 2006). In addition, song lyrics include a variety of content that educators can exploit flexibly across all levels and age groups so that language learners are exposed to authentic material (Fernández-García, 2023).

Discussing topics found in song lyrics is a type of communicative activity that is of great interest in language learning. Moreover, they can be a medium for discussion of cultural issues that reflect the values, customs, opinions or beliefs of native speakers. The overt messages which pervade song lyrics may even convey social norms that can help language learners better understand the culture of the language in question. Similarly, previous research has explored the significance of music videos as authentic resources for acquiring cultural knowledge in the language classroom (Sinyashina, 2022). Moreover, music videos can sometimes be compared to films. In this regard, film music can be a tool for fostering historical and cultural empathy, as well as developing critical thinking in students, as they make connections between auditory, visual and linguistic elements (Gilbert & Harris, 2017). Both songs and films are references of an intertextual design that includes "linguistic elements in vocabulary, metaphor, and information structure; audio meaning in music and sound effects;

visual meaning in backgrounding and foregrounding effects; spatial meaning in geographic, exosystemic, and architectonic design; and gestural meaning in body language, feeling, and behavior” (NLG, 1996: 23). Therefore, a multimodal experience using audio-visual resources seems to motivate students to participate in intercultural activities.

Furthermore, research points to a link between music and affect, suggesting that musical resources with highly emotional content can motivate students (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022). This is particularly relevant when engaging multilingual students in intercultural communicative activities, as the affective dimension seems to be an important component of ICC. Thus, music-mediated experiences seem to promote the development of empathy in language learning (Laird, 2015). Cores-Bilbao et al. (2019) conducted a study in a multilingual classroom and found that experiences mediated by audio-visual input can promote interpersonal skills as well as empathetic responses. The participants completed an analysis of various music videos to determine their appropriateness for class discussion. By encouraging students to participate in communicative activities in class, they also gain the confidence they need, thus reducing their anxiety levels. According to Kennedy (2014: 299), "playing songs in class and then asking students to comment on them can help overcome students' shyness and reluctance to expose themselves to criticism".

However, the use of musical or affective input to facilitate the development of ICC in language learning from a Multiliteracies approach is non-existent (Fernández-García & Sánchez-Vizcaíno, 2023). Therefore, the inclusion of musical input in a multilingual EFL classroom to develop ICC seems to be an effective tool. In addition, language educators could exploit musical input from a multimodal approach, as learners' familiarity with digital resources makes them an important asset in the language classroom.

### **3. MUSICAL INPUT-BASED INTERCULTURAL MULTILITERACIES APPROACH**

The approach presented here aims to provide language educators with some guidance on the development of ICC in a multilingual EFL classroom through a Multiliteracies pedagogy using different musical input as authentic pedagogical resources. This approach considers previous models of ICC that integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byram, 2014; Deardorff, 2006). Following Deardorff's (2006) model, the development of socioemotional aspects constitutes an essential component to achieve one's desired internal outcome. Moreover, the principles of a Multiliteracies pedagogy constitute the focus of the present approach (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; NLG, 1996).

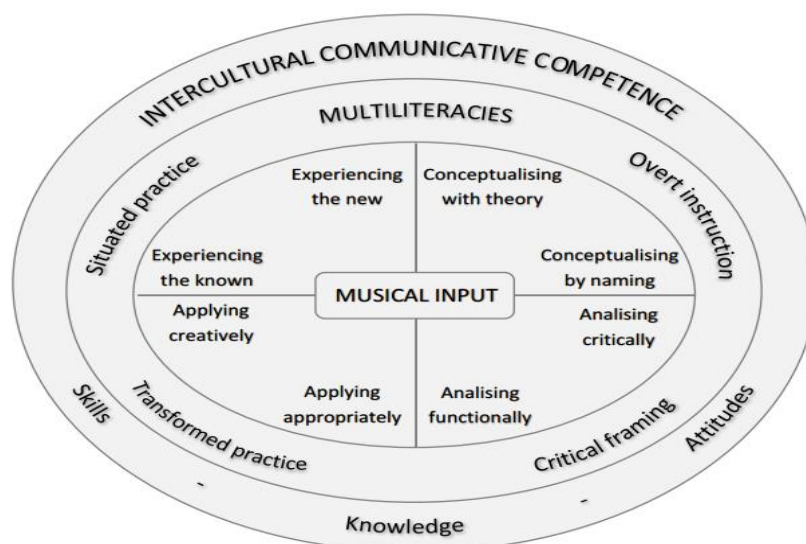
#### **3.1. Theoretical implications**

Although transposing the components of a pedagogy of Multiliteracies into pedagogical practices to engage EFL learners in intercultural communicative activities is a challenging



task, this proposal seeks to facilitate educators' steps to follow in developing this competence by taking into account musical resources. Using the original components of the pedagogy of Multiliteracies and the knowledge processes as proposed by Cope and Kalantzis (2015) in their *Learning by Design* project, the following proposal seeks to develop ICC in language learning based on musical input (Figure 1).

A further consideration is the potential use of musical input as an affective resource with the goal of building authenticity through cultural differences and affinity. We could achieve this by taking on an empathetic role towards other cultures and comparing cultural differences through song lyrics or music videos, therefore sharing affective states. In addition, we analysed musical input as popular culture and as a source of *Available designs*. These available texts can then be redesigned based on the principles of a Multiliteracies pedagogy through the integration of various modes of communication such as visual, linguistic or gestural. At the same time, we linked the different elements that make up ICC to these curricular components and integrated into pedagogical activities.



**Figure 1.** Representation of the development of ICC through musical input based on a Multiliteracies pedagogy. Source: own elaboration.

Given the numerous approaches to ICC, the present study is informed by multiple understandings of this construct, with the principal goal being to communicate effectively based on one's own intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The elements of ICC include the following: *Knowledge*, i.e., knowledge about the target culture, which includes cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge or sociolinguistic awareness; *Skills* such as active listening, observation of differences and similarities between the TL and the L1, analysis and interpretation of cultural issues or putting things into perspective; and *Attitudes* such as cultural attitudes to reflect notions of empathy, tolerance for ambiguity or respect for other cultures.

As for the implicit goals of this proposal, the following summarises what educators should expect learners to achieve by engaging in intercultural communicative activities based on musical input, considering the principles of the Multiliteracies pedagogy: to appreciate visual and musical input as a means of constructing meaning by discovering how this audio-visual input is processed to become expressive works of art; to engage in thought processes of introspection, self-reflection and interpretation through engagement with musical input; to develop cultural awareness through interpretation, evaluation and negotiation of one's own culture and that of others; to build an awareness towards cultural transformation in which learners understand how their attitudes and behaviours may change in the direction of cultural openness; to recognise and be able to label emotions across different situations using different modes of communication, namely visual, linguistic, auditory, etc; to recognise and be able to label original cultural products by considering the individual's circumstances relevant to a particular situational context, with learners participating in the reshaping of available cultural products; to exploit the linguistic repertoire of the multilingual classroom through techniques such as translanguaging or code-switching; and to reveal how creative agency may deconstruct perceptions related to race, gender or origin.

### **3.2. Applications in the EFL classroom**

The following pedagogical suggestions do not adhere to a single paradigm regarding the development of ICC, but rather are a combination of theoretical insights from various theories, models and guides. Likewise, we considered the principles and curricular components of the Multiliteracies pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; NLG, 1996) to provide a clearer picture of the necessary steps that may eventually contribute to the development of such competence.

First, language educators should be aware that they need to incorporate ICC skills into their teaching approaches in order to transfer this knowledge to their students. These skills include critical reading, research, ethnography and skills usually related to cultural studies. Only when they have achieved an appropriate level of cultural exploration will they be able to provide students with guidance so that they can move from an ethnocentric view to an ethnorelative one (Aliverti & Karras, 2021). In addition, educators should acknowledge that musical input-based activities may enable them to bring cultural issues into the language classroom with respect to cultural identity, global culture or cultural stereotypes.

After introducing the selected cultural topics through musical input, the next step is to engage learners in intercultural communicative activities, such as self-identity analyses, discussion of cultural stereotypes, cultural role-playing or debates about the role of culture in the TL compared to the learners' own culture. Learners can use available resources to create authentic scenarios in which cultural experiences take place. The opportunity to interact with other learners through social networking or other platforms contributes to the ultimate goal of

developing ICC. However, educators need to encourage students to apply the new knowledge outside the classroom by seeking other authentic venues.

The following pedagogical suggestions may serve as a guide for promoting ICC among multilingual EFL learners from a Multiliteracies approach. In the first phase, that of **Situated practice** or *experiencing*, a wide range of activities should encourage learners to share past experiences of intercultural encounters, either face-to-face encounters or mediated. In this way, learners can talk about their backgrounds and share their own experiences related to a particular topic that may arise from song lyrics.

When *experiencing the known*, learners may express their personal opinions and thoughts about cultural issues presented in song lyrics. We could approach this by means of brainstorming or personal descriptions. At this stage language educators could use national anthems as musical resources, which could serve as effective tools for introducing cultural issues such as values, or symbols, such as the Algerian anthem '*Kassaman*' ('*We pledge*'), the Bulgarian anthem '*Mila Rodino*' ('*Dear Motherland*') or the Polish anthem '*Mazurek Dabrowskiego*' ('*Poland is not lost yet*'). Each learner could introduce the anthem of their country and then, required to make some connections with anthems from English-speaking countries. In this way, learners would have the opportunity to engage in self-reflection processes whereby they acknowledge and become aware of the existence of other cultural representations and symbolisms. As a consequence, these practices could lead to intercultural sensitivity (Hammer et al., 2003). At the same time, they explore their cultural identity from the perspective of others.

When *experiencing the new*, learners can reflect on unfamiliar cultural themes addressed in musical resources such as music videos or, as in the previous example, national anthems like the American anthem '*Star Spangled Banner*'. The latter could serve as a starting point for introducing historical aspects from the United States by reflecting on the lyrics ('*the bombs bursting in air*'). In addition, educators could use various techniques such as Flipped Classroom to introduce a particular topic and ask learners to watch music videos, read song lyrics or watch videos on *TikTok* from a native user. This would serve to stimulate their curiosity and could lead the initiation of classroom discussions. As a result, learners may develop positive attitudes towards other cultural expressions.

The next phase, that of **Overt instruction** or *Conceptualising*, involves building knowledge by focusing on one's own culture and the culture of others. Thus, educators can introduce learners to other cultures and further culture-related concepts. Not only do students develop an understanding of values of the TL, but also interpersonal trust as they recognise the differences and similarities between their own culture and that of others. We could achieve this by paying attention to what is being represented, the meaning in a specific sociocultural context or the intended audience. Guided discussions can encourage them to think about the final products they need to produce.

On the one hand, *conceptualising by naming* may consist of tasks that include video captions with still images or classifying words into conceptual groupings using mind maps, visual techniques, etc. One activity may be to introduce and discuss customs in the target culture using visual aids other than music videos. These aids may complement the musical resources and may be in the form of posters, pictures or realia. Moreover, educators could ask students to introduce music-related concepts from their home country. For instance, the concept *malhun* in Moroccan culture refers to the poetic chant used by craftspeople. In southern Spain, there are different traditional songs such as *coplas andaluzas* or *cantes de trillas* which represent everyday topics. In the case of English-speaking countries, the *country* music genre of the United States may provide students with a wide range of cultural concepts related to linguistic style such as *twang* or *drawl*. As regards British culture, the concept of *Britishness* may be discussed through the most representative songs of *Britpop*. Consequently, learners consolidate their knowledge of the foreign culture using cultural concepts.

On the other, *conceptualising with theory* may include mind maps or deductive reasoning. These activities help learners consolidate their knowledge of the foreign language culture while learning other linguistic aspects. There is a variety of ways to present the tasks. For example, as learners watch or read song lyrics, they receive overt instruction to focus on a particular cultural aspect of the TL through scaffolded activities. In a follow-up practice, educators might ask learners to focus on the persona created for a specific song and explore their feelings, thus, developing cultural empathy. In this particular case, educators could give students explicit instructions on emotional vocabulary or use visual aids such as *emojis*.

In the phase of **Critical framing** or analysing, students have the opportunity to explore various aspects across cultures by comparing them to their own culture. At the same time, learners develop empathy towards otherness by reflecting on certain cultural issues of the TL, therefore taking on a critical role. As a result, these practices allow for tolerance for ambiguity, as learners find themselves in a position where they recognise things from different perspectives.

*Analysing functionally* include tasks such as evaluating word choice or analysing images typically used in musical resources such as music videos. Reflecting on the impact of certain messages may lead students to recognise the consequences these may have on different cultures. The language that we can find in these resources and how it interacts with its social and cultural context is also of the utmost importance. For instance, educators could ask students to go through the lyrics of a song and look for metaphors or idiomatic expressions and compare them to the meaning in the students' L1. They could achieve this by creating a list of idiomatic expressions and reflecting upon possible translations so that learners can use techniques such as translanguaging or code-switching. Once learners have shared their own responses, they can decide which is more appropriate in a particular context. Learners could analyse cultural stereotypes using song lyrics, for example, highlighting word choice and its

impact on a given culture. As a follow-up task, educators could encourage students to analyse the hidden and encoded meanings behind song lyrics by reflecting not only on the words, but the cultural moment too. By analysing the contextual aspects of song lyrics, students can appreciate other cultures from different perspectives, deconstructing perceptions related to gender or race. In this sense, traditional songs can be an effective way to analyse history at a particular point in time such as ‘*Ring a ring o’ roses*’, a British nursery rhyme about the Great Plague. ‘*Rio de Avenida*’ is a Peruvian song that tells of the horrors of colonialism. ‘*Wòu Liańg*’ is a Chinese hymn about the story of Siddharta, later known as Buddha. On the other hand, we could also analyse song lyrics from an ethnographic point of view, as in the case of the 19<sup>th</sup> century rhyme ‘*Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Moe*’, whose earliest version included references to slave trade. Folk songs can take on a completely different meaning, so an encouraging task could be to discuss how songs can change their original meaning and be interpreted differently by people from other cultures. Likewise, educators could also pose questions about the interplay between a particular cultural issue and the choice of language. Exploring these questions in depth can lead to discussion of other subtopics. These topic discussions could encourage learners to think critically about issues related to social justice and human rights, therefore developing intercultural citizenship skills.

*Analysing critically* involves evaluating one’s own or others’ perspectives, interests and motives. For example, students could do some research to learn about the target culture’s preferences in musical genres, themes found in song lyrics or festivals. Similarly, assignments can consist of having students critically analyse an author’s point of view or debates about certain topics that are sometimes taboo in other cultures. For instance, the role of women is not the same in every country, so learners could take a critical gender approach by reflecting on songs that address these issues such as *La puerta violeta* by Rozalén. In the same vein, the issue of domestic violence is endemic in every country, but is treated differently in songs such as in ‘*Wait in the truck*’ by HARDY and Lainey Wilson or in ‘*Cherry wine*’ by Hozier. Another complex topic is that of immigration, which we can find in songs such as ‘*Immigrants (We get the job done)*’ by K’NAAN or ‘*Papeles mojados*’ by Chambao. These themes allow learners to make connections with their own experiences within a particular community or society. In this way, learners engage in an evaluative process that enables them to negotiate meaning in order to find common ground on specific topics. Meaning negotiation strategies may include translanguaging, code-switching or the use of other modes of communication such as gestures or visual aids. Additionally, educators could ask learners to reflect on their own feelings and beliefs about the persona portrayed in a song. In addition, they could find someone from a different cultural background on the Internet to better learn about their opinions on an issue presented in a song. To this end, learners can keep a journal of other people’s reflections. Similarly, students could watch music videos of popular music platforms and focus on the comments and reactions of other users. Educators could ask them to take a critical approach by thinking about how responses vary and how the narratives of the song lyrics affect their

daily lives. By making connections to other cultures, students open up new perspectives and worldviews that eventually crystallize in final products in the next phase.

The final phase corresponds to **Transformed practice** or *applying*, which is the action phase in which new meanings emerge as a result of the previous phases. Through the final products, students offer new perspectives on a particular issue and show their beliefs about cultural aspects, thereby engaging in new intercultural situations that may arise through projects, campaigns, etc. These new available meanings can contribute to existing knowledge and are at the disposal of those education stakeholders who may want to use them for a good purpose, such as inspiring others, broadening emotional experiences, raising cultural awareness or promoting pro-social actions.

In *applying appropriately* tasks, students use their learnt knowledge to solve problems. Examples include writing a song verse or changing the chorus or title of a song, recording a music video to raise awareness about certain cultural issues in their communities, giving an oral presentation using the conventions of a particular genre or creating infographics on a cultural topic. Additionally, the final product may consist of posters, podcasts, videos with subtitles in different languages or even a music video in response to another, showing particular aspects of a subculture. Digital video composing can be a powerful cultural practice that connects people through short clips, music videos, vlogs, etc. Movie-making software such as *MovieMaker* or *iMovie* are very effective tools that not only foster creativity, but also empower students.

In *applying creatively* tasks, students can invent an object or conduct a research project such as creating a corpus of songs that address cultural topics that students can relate to. In addition, groups of students from different cultures can prepare videos that include cultural topics about the TL, such as representative artifacts, origins or customs. Students can prepare questions about each other's culture after watching the introductory videos. Likewise, the final product may include a digital collage of images depicting global citizenship through musical pre-tasks or a poem with illustrations originally based on a particular musical representation. All of these products can ultimately lead to a cultural transformation of the individual and serve as already available texts that can help others experience such transformation.

To sum up, educators and students need to address culturally-based beliefs and issues that should affect everyone. The proposed activities should ask students to apply their previous and new knowledge at a deeper level and to think critically from a democratic intercultural standpoint. To this end, educators should give learners instructions on how to proceed in the final phase. In general, students engage in meaning-making once they renegotiate what is already available through a process of redesign.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Creating meaningful learning in the language classroom has become a priority in our current multicultural contexts. Likewise, addressing students' needs to make realistic connections in today's digital world is necessary. For this reason, the principles of the pedagogy of Multiliteracies seem to be an effective means to facilitate the development of ICC among EFL learners. In the same vein, musical resources are a pedagogical tool that educators can use to improve their intercultural skills while cultivating critical thinking. When adopting a Multiliteracies approach, language educators should be sensitive when choosing to use songs, music videos or song lyrics in the classroom. As long as we consider these musical resources as breakers of cultural barriers which encapsulate the principles that lead to the development of interculturally-competent individuals in the language classroom, any musical representation will serve its purpose.

In order to address the current multilingual scenarios in the EFL classroom, we proposed a musical input-based approach in the present study. Multilingual EFL learners can benefit from this musical input-based approach inasmuch as educators apply it in the classroom according to the principal curricular components of a Multiliteracies pedagogy. In addition, the importance of providing students with musical resources that are of cultural interest and can promote intercultural exchange is particularly emphasised. Such cultural and musical experiences should inspire students to engage in intercultural debates outside the classroom.

As suggested in the first phase of *Situated practice*, the early stages should consist of adopting multiple perspectives and reflecting on our own cultural identity and that of others through the various possibilities offered by musical resources. This is consistent with Kramsch's (1993) view of the importance of providing students with activities that lead them to engage with cultural experiences in different ways as an early step in the development of ICC. These pedagogical suggestions are also in line with those of Hernández et al. (2021), who point out the need to activate previous cultural experiences so that students become familiar with basic cultural concepts before engaging in intercultural communicative activities.

In relation to the second phase, that of *Overt instruction*, the cultural activities proposed here, based on musical input, can also promote an emotional understanding across different cultural situations through which students can engage in self-reflection and ultimately find common ground that may serve for meaningful communication. This is consistent with the studies conducted by Fernández-García and Fonseca-Mora (2022), which demonstrated a positive connection between emotional understanding and musical experience.

As indicated earlier, the phase of *Critical framing* can be approached from different perspectives and through various musical means such as music, visuals and emotional narratives, which can have a positive impact on students' ICC. In addition, students are also engaged in affective experiences through different media, broadening their traditional notions

of literacy towards multimodal and dynamic experiences. This is consistent with studies that argue that language curricula should incorporate more complex dimensions of multiliteracies to facilitate the skills students need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Adilbayeva et al., 2022).

Finally, the cultural practices that can emerge from these pedagogical proposals in the phase of *Transformed practice* correspond to what the New London Group (2000) meant by becoming ‘active designers of meaning’ that have the potential to change cultural conceptions of the world for the better. Furthermore, students have the opportunity to redesign their understanding of cultural and social issues. Their own products can become references of artificially designed otherness that offer a different approach to cultural issues. Unlike other relevant models on ICC that propose a portfolio to assess this competence (Byram, 1997), no specific assessment criteria have been presented here due to space constraints and the versatility of the activities presented.

In conclusion, a model of intercultural multiliteracies through musical input is a valuable element for language teachers to explore cultural content in multilingual EFL classrooms, as it can motivate students to participate more directly and create stronger affective connections with texts from the perspective of global citizens. At the same time, this approach would contribute to the recommendations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges as well as the Sustainable Development Goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda through learning situations which question the *status quo* of our multicultural societies.

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## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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