Universidad Veracruzana

Dirección General de la Unidad de Estudios de Posgrado
Área Académica de Humanidades

MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Reporte del Proyecto Terminal de Aplicación Innovadora del Conocimiento

The use of songs to increase students’ vocabulary

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Xalapa, Ver., Noviembre 2014
Abstract

This research highlights the importance of using songs in the EFL classroom as a tool to improve students’ vocabulary. In order to know to what extent songs are useful in teaching English, an action plan was designed and implemented with teenagers in a Telesecundaria during four weeks. Three data collection techniques were used in order to gather data during the implementation of the action plan. The data show that songs are worthwhile not only for increasing vocabulary, but also for developing other language skills.

Key words: Action research, vocabulary, songs
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Chapter One: Introduction

English has become the most important language all around the world during recent years (Crystal, 2003). English is used in fields such as marketing, technology, and science. Therefore, it has become a necessity rather than a choice. People have to deal with the language for academic, educational and work purposes. This necessity to learn how to communicate in English has increased the demand for English teachers. As a result, English is taught as a foreign language in many countries. Thus, it is not surprising that nowadays there are more non-native than native speakers of English. It has become the lingua franca, which means that it is the most spoken language worldwide. As Crystal (2003 cited in Ahmed, 2012) points out “it is inevitable that a global language will eventually come to be used by more people than any other language” (p.2).

There is not only a need to learn English in non-English speaking countries, but also in countries where English is spoken as a native language. Hence, a difference has been made between these two teaching contexts. The first one is called Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) while the second one is referred to as Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (Krieger, 2005). One of the characteristics of the TESL context is that the teachers are usually native speakers, and the students can immediately put into practice what they learned in the classroom outside school. In this context, students are usually committed, since they have an immediate goal to achieve. TEFL is quite different. Students usually take TEFL courses because they are mandatory in the public or private institutions of countries where English is not spoken on a daily basis. Students in these contexts do not usually have many opportunities to practice what they have learned in the classroom. Although acquiring the language in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context is often thought to be easier than in an
English as a Foreign Language (EFL) one, this is not always the case. There are many factors that may influence the acquisition of a language. Variations will depend on the educational policies, social context, even historical factors and people’s backgrounds. Each context has its own characteristics. The Mexican context is one of them.

1.1 General context
Teaching English as a foreign language is not new in the Mexican context. In fact, English has been included in the curriculum as a subject of private and public education for many years. One of the reasons why it became even more important is globalization. Nevertheless, unfortunately, even though Mexico shares a border with the United States of America (an English-speaking country), English language teaching has not been very successful. In spite of the increased use of technology which allows listening to music in English, watching movies or the news in English, most people still do not speak English.

As mentioned before, for many years, English has been a subject in Mexico at the basic educational level (Educación Básica) which refers to primary and secondary education, but not kindergarten. However, plans and programs were only aimed at translation and structure; it was not until 1993 when the objectives of the plans and programs changed to more communicative purposes (Guía de trabajo SEP, 2006). However, even though efforts have been made to design syllabi that improve teaching practice in Educación Básica, not much progress has been made regarding this issue. According to Davies (2009), some factors have contributed to the failure of English classes, such as “low student socio-economic status, large group size, poor classroom facilities, and low teacher competence” (p. 8-9). He continues to mention that although this is the case for the majority of the students, some have managed to succeed.

One of the major reasons that have contributed to the failure of teaching/learning of English is the fact that the target language does not play an important role in students’ lives. The average student or citizen does not need the target language
in their daily lives (Broughton et al., 2003). There may be many other factors that influence learning and undoubtedly one of them is the school itself. Thus, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, some students succeed more than others. Therefore, it is not surprising that the English Proficiency Index’ website ranked Mexico, in 2009, as one of the countries with a low proficiency English.

1.1.1 Telesecundaria
When people talk about secondary education, they refer to different types of schools, that is, Secundaria Técnica, Secundaria General or Telesecundaria. According to the official website of the Ministry of Education (SEP), the first type is aimed at students who want to learn a profession, such as electricity, carpentry or cooking, so that they can enter the labor market after finishing secondary school. The second one is for students who want to continue studying higher education which is the reason why these schools focus on teaching all the subjects, including English. Telesecundarias aim at students of rural areas or of the low socio-economic class. In the case of the first two types of schools, there is a different teacher for each subject, but in the case of the last one there is one teacher who teaches all the subjects. Teachers use a television set to watch TV programs designed for the teaching/learning of each of the subjects.

The Telesecundaria system was founded in 1968 after analyzing how television had been used for transmitting some educational programs, and how they had worked in European countries, as well as in the USA since the 1930’s. This particular system was created owing to the lack of teachers available in rural areas, and the lack of economic resources. It is worth mentioning that before the implementation of this program, it was piloted in 1965. The results of the piloting were the basis for its implementation (SEP 2010 La Telesecundaria en México: Un breve recorrido histórico por sus datos y relatos).

Even though Telesecundaria is a system that is different from the other types of secundarias, there is no specially designed curriculum for it. There is only one curriculum for all the secundarias: Plan de Estudios, 2011. What is more, this
curriculum aims at the whole of the *Educación Básica*, that is to say, that it includes kindergarten, elementary school, as well as secondary school. Furthermore, there is no special section dedicated to the teaching of English in the whole document. This *Plan de Estudios* is supposed to be based on competences, a Learner-Centered Approach, as well as on a Communicative Approach. What is more, it is also based on life-long learning, as well as on Humanistic Approaches. The aim of this program is to provide students with the tools necessary for life.

English was implemented in universities in Mexico in the 1970’s, but more recently it has also been included in *Educación Básica*. As a result, the demand for teachers of English has increased. This demand has become more significant in the last twenty years. Therefore, in many states of the country, the interest of teachers to understand the teaching/learning phenomenon has also increased, with the result that they have felt encouraged to carry out more research in this field (Ramírez, 2013).

Although the teaching/learning of English in different educational levels in Mexico has received some attention, researchers have focused more on higher education. Ramírez (2007, 2010) coordinated a national study into the research in the teaching of foreign languages in Mexico between 2000 and 2006. The objective of this study was to discover more about the type of knowledge that researchers had generated in the last decade in most of the states of the country. It was surprising that most of the studies reported on higher education. Furthermore, Ramírez (2013) organized a second study, similar to the previous one, in which research studies were reported in most of the states of Mexico between 2000 and 2011. However, this document shows similar findings about the educational level that is most investigated. Researchers continue to concentrate their interest in higher education. It seems that basic education does not deserve to be investigated.

Ramírez (2010) reports over fifteen studies concerning basic education in ten states of the country. Some of these were carried out in kindergarten, in primary education and some others in secondary schools. Ramírez (2013) reports that about twenty studies were carried out in basic education between 2000 and 2011.
Even though both of Ramírez’ studies report investigations carried out in secondary school, there is only one which was carried out in Telesecundaria. Moreover, Davies (2009) carried out a study on basic and higher education in Mexico in which he mentions the situation in primary and secondary school, but seems to forget telesecundarias. In addition, in his article, where Davies (2011) reports on public, private, basic and higher education in Mexico, but again seems to forget the existence of telesecundarias.

When revising the topics that have been investigated, Ramírez (2010, 2013) states that the focus is on topics such as teaching methodologies, writing, learning, evaluation, culture, reading, autonomy, teachers and their characteristics among some others. However, only a few researchers are concerned with the learning of English, and very little attention has been paid to the acquisition of vocabulary. In both of the Ramírez studies, there are only about ten studies regarding vocabulary.

Moreover, in the School of Languages, Universidad Veracruzana, as listed in the Resource Centre, most of the research reports carried out by BA students and MA students in the last twenty years in the Teaching of English concentrate on higher education. There are only around ten studies that concentrate on basic education; of these only three studies concentrate on Telesecundarias. However, there are more than fifteen works that focus on the acquisition of vocabulary.

In conclusion, there seem to be few studies concerning the teaching of English in telesecundarias in Mexico. It seems to be an under-researched area that deserves more attention in order to understand what is happening in the classrooms in this specific context. What is more, vocabulary is also an area which needs to be more explored. Therefore, this study may make a small contribution to this specific area.

1.2 Research context
This action research project was carried out in a Telesecundaria in the outskirts of a city in the east of Mexico, where I work. In this public school, there are ten groups in total: four groups of first grade, three groups of second grade and three groups of third grade. All the groups have around thirty students and each group
has a teacher who teaches them all the subjects (about ten subjects). I am in charge of teaching the English class in first grade group D. Each classroom is equipped with a TV set, a DVD player, a computer and loudspeakers. Moreover, there is a projector that is available for all the groups, in case it is needed. Students are provided with a course book, which they use during all the academic year. The book is delivered by the SEP at the beginning of the academic year, which starts in August. As it is a Telesecundaria, students have to watch a TV program, which lasts about 15 minutes, for each of the subjects. These programs are transmitted by the SEP. Students take three English classes a week, each of which lasts an hour.

Furthermore, Telesecundarias aim to cover the educational needs in rural and poor areas. The school in which this research was carried out is located in a neighborhood which is not very far from downtown. However, many people who live there are of low socio-economic status. Moreover, many families are dysfunctional. As a result, most of the students who attend this school face a lot of economical and family problems. For example, students live in a society where many people, including some relatives or even parents, drink alcohol, or consume drugs. Apart from this, the students’ age is another very important factor to take into consideration; they are teenagers. Hence, it is not surprising that all these factors affect them while learning. Many students lack interest in their classes. They only do the activities that they really like and lose interest very easily. All teachers have to be prepared to deal with all these problems that affect teaching.

1.3 Participants
The participants were teenage students between 12 and 14 years old. They are in first grade: group D, which was the group that I was in charge of. The group was made up of 28 students, 18 boys and 10 girls. Some of the students had studied English in primary school, in fifth and sixth grade, but they had learned very little since they had classes only once a week. Some of them had not taken any lessons before they entered Telesecundaria and so were in touch with English in a formal setting for the first time. As a result, they were still beginners. Another very
important participant was the teacher in charge of all the other subjects in the group. Due to the fact that she is with the students every day, from Monday to Friday, I considered that she was very important as a participant in this research too. I believed that she could give me another viewpoint about the group that she knows very well.

1.4 Description of the problem
As previously mentioned, the curriculum in *Telesecundarias* is supposed to be based on the communicative approach and the humanistic approach as well. However, teachers who work in this program are not prepared to use these approaches since they have only received professional preparation to teach the subjects that students take (around ten). Some teachers are more specialized in one of the subjects than in the rest of them, for example, mathematics, Spanish or science. Very few teachers choose English as an area of specialization. The English subject is usually neglected by most of the teachers because perhaps they do not really know what teaching English implies. This results in lessons that only focus on translation. Teachers limit themselves and the students to watching the TV programs broadcasted by the SEP and to the lessons of the course book. Classes usually consist in translation of the lessons and some grammar explanations because teachers are not prepared to focus on the development of language skills. Another important aspect that teachers seem to forget is that students need to acquire vocabulary. However, when students do not acquire sufficient vocabulary, they find it difficult to develop other skills that help them to improve their learning of the language. Moreover, teachers teach only the vocabulary included in the textbook, but this is always insufficient. The book introduces very few words for each of the topics included. Thus, the vocabulary that students are usually presented with is very limited. As a result, students have very restricted vocabulary and they usually have trouble when it comes to solving the activities in their course book, or when they have to write or speak. They do not know enough words that they can use to develop their activities.
1.5 Objectives
There were basically two main objectives to achieve by means of this action research:

- to identify and understand a specific problem in my teaching practice.
- to design, implement and evaluate an action plan to try and solve the problem.

1.6 Research question
I wanted to discover how students’ vocabulary could be improved by implementing an action plan that included the use of songs in the classroom. Thus, the research question was:

- To what extent may the use of songs increase students’ vocabulary in this specific context?

1.7 Map of research report
The first chapter of this research report justifies the importance of carrying out this investigation. Moreover, it provides the reader with a description of the characteristics of the participants and the context in which this project was carried out. Additionally, it formulates the objectives and the research questions of the study.

The second chapter discusses issues closely related to the problem, such as second language acquisition, in particular, how the learning of a new language may be affected by the age of learners. Furthermore, it gives a description of what learner vocabulary implies. It also deals with some vocabulary learning strategies that students usually use. Finally, it examines the teaching of songs in the classroom, as well as some activities that can be used when using songs.
The third chapter of this report aims at describing the methodology used to carry out this research. Furthermore, it gives some information about the methods that were used in order to collect data. Later, this chapter provides the findings regarding the identification of the problem. The last part of this chapter describes the action plan that was implemented in order to try to solve the problem identified.

The fourth chapter reports the findings that resulted from the implementation of the action plan. The findings are divided into categories that emerged after the analysis of the data. In the first category students claim to like activities. In the second category students recognize song activities as useful to increase their vocabulary. In category three, students say that songs are a different, but valuable way to become familiar with the language. The last category shows, however, that even though the activities are said to be good, they are not enough to acquire the vocabulary that students need.

The fifth chapter provides the reader with a brief summary of the whole process of this research, some conclusions, as well as several implications for teaching practice. Furthermore, this section describes a few of the limitations of this project, some suggestions to improve the project, and finally, it provides the reader with some conclusions, as well as some proposals for a second possible cycle.

**Chapter Two: Vocabulary teaching/learning through songs**

The first section of this chapter deals with second language acquisition and how it may be affected by the age of the learners. Moreover, it describes the differences between acquiring a second language during childhood or adulthood. The second section provides the reader with a description of vocabulary and why students should learn it, as well as what it means to learn vocabulary. The following section describes some useful strategies to acquire vocabulary. The last section of the chapter deals with the advantages of using songs in the classroom, as well as some aspects that have to be taken into consideration when using them.
2.1 Second language acquisition and teenagers
The understanding of factors that may affect the learning process of language learners is an issue that has been considered as an area of study for some years. This area can be studied from different perspectives such as social, psycholinguistic, linguistic and psychological aspects (Ellis, 2000). However, due to the nature of this study, there is a focus on the linguistic area. Hence, it is necessary to define second language acquisition. It is the study of how people learn a language that is not their first one. The term “second” in this case does not only refer to a second language, it could also be a third or a fourth one, and this learning process can take place in a formal or informal setting (Saville-Troike, 2006). According to the author just referred to, there are several factors that affect the learning process such as age, sex, aptitude, motivation, cognitive style, personality, and learning strategies.

The factor that this paper focuses on is age. For a long time, there has been a great discussion about the fact that children acquire a language more effectively than adults do. As it can be seen, there is a differentiation between children and adults regarding learning. According to Saville-Troike (2006), there is only a difference between younger and older learners (Table 1). Teenagers are considered as adults, too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Younger advantage</th>
<th>Older advantage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brain plasticity</td>
<td>Learning capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not analytical</td>
<td>Analytical ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer inhibitions</td>
<td>Pragmatic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaker group identity</td>
<td>Greater knowledge of L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplified input more likely</td>
<td>Real-world knowledge</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Table 1: Taken from: Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 82)
Both teenagers and adults share some characteristics. In Helder and Piaget (1958, cited in Krashen, 2002) claim that formal thinking has been developed by most people by the age of twelve. This means that teenagers, as well as adults, are capable of "verbally... manipulat[ing] relationships between ideas in the absence of prior or concurrent empirical propositions" (Ausubel & Ausubel, 1971, p. 63, in Krashen 2002, p. 35). Nevertheless, Elkind (1970 cited in Krashen, 2002), states that teenagers have a disadvantage over adults, which has to do with the fact that teenagers are more concerned about their “appearance and behavior” rather than other more important issues, and this makes them vulnerable.

According to Piaget (in Cook & Cook, 2005) human beings develop cognitive stages through life. These stages focus on mental processes, for instance, memory, paying attention, making decisions, solving problems and managing language. Even though Piaget’s theory on cognitive development has received some criticism, it is clear that it has been the most important and most accepted in the field of psychology.
As it can be seen from the figure above, teenagers are capable of acquiring a second language owing to their reasoning capabilities. Teenagers are analytic, they are more aware of the world, they also have knowledge of their mother tongue. These are some characteristics that they do not share with children. Nevertheless, teenagers are more easily distracted because they pay attention to behaviour and appearance, issues that may seem unimportant for adults.

2.2 Vocabulary

Learning a foreign language comprises some aspects that learning other subjects do not. To begin with, when learning a language, such as English, teachers have to take into consideration the four skills to achieve the goal of communication. These
skills are listening, reading, speaking and writing. People usually think of skills in isolation; however, they should be taken as a whole (Kurniasih, 2011). The skills are classified as receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing). Nonetheless, their importance will be mentioned separately now.

As previously mentioned, there are four skills while acquiring a language. Nevertheless, there are also some language skills such as grammar and vocabulary. All of them are very important since they are part of the language. None of them should be disregarded; otherwise, the learning of the language would be incomplete. However, I think that the most important is vocabulary, because I consider it is the basis of a language; without vocabulary we have nothing. This is very similar to what Wilkins (2002) claims: “Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p.2).

Some theorists have categorized vocabulary into three different groups: words of high frequency, the ones that are basic; specialized words, the ones that are used in specific fields of knowledge; and low frequency words, the ones that appear in texts and that people acquire gradually (Konza, 2011). There is another classification of vocabulary which divides it into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary is the one that a student is able to understand while reading or listening, and the productive is the one that the student can use while speaking or writing (HiebertAqui me quedo 01-0313& Kamil, 2005).

When learning vocabulary there are many things that have to be considered such as: the meaning(s) of the word, its spoken and written forms, grammatical behavior, collocations, its register, its associations, connotations, its frequency, and its word parts (root, prefix, suffix) (McCarten 2007; Burns & De Silva, 2001). Teaching all the characteristics of a word would be very difficult, especially when teaching low level students. Therefore, according to McCarten (2007) teachers should

...only introduce a little at a time, starting with the most frequent, useful and learnable vocabulary, and returning later to more
When learning a language, one will never stop learning. One never achieves to cover all the vocabulary that exists since words can have many meanings and functions depending on the context. As Stahl (2005, cited in Butler et al, 2010) claims, “Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition but also implies how that word fits into the world” (p. 2). Thus, it would be difficult to know when one really knows the meaning of a word.

Vocabulary is needed in order to develop all the four skills. According to Beck et al (2002; Schmitt, 2004) vocabulary is important when reading in order to understand the text. Moreover, the lack of vocabulary may lead students to fail when writing. It is one of the most important features that determine the quality of writing (Lee, 2003). Furthermore, there is no point in listening to something without understanding it. When a listener fails to understand the input, it will be hard to produce output. As a result, a number of students may feel frustrated and anxious, (Jones, 2003).

Additionally, students who learn English usually want to speak the language. Nunan (2000 cited in Juhana, 2012) states that the most important skill when learning a foreign language is speaking. However, it is one of the most difficult to develop along with writing. One of the reasons why students fail to speak is the limited knowledge of vocabulary. Smith (2011 cited in Juhana, 2012) argues that “vocabulary is the basic for speaking or conversational skill” (p. 65). The more words students know, the more they can say and understand, both orally and in writing.

As it can be seen, there are numerous reasons to teach and acquire enough vocabulary when learning a foreign language so as not to cause or feel frustration. Furthermore, vocabulary is necessary all the time when learning English; one can put aside anything else, but not vocabulary. The more students increase their
vocabulary, the greater their achievement will be in the following levels of English. This is similar to what Pikulski and Templeton (N/D) state:

…the greatest tools we can give students for succeeding, not only in their education but more generally in life, is a large, rich vocabulary and the skills for using those words. Our ability to function in today’s complex social and economic worlds is mightily affected by our language skills and word knowledge.

(p. 1)

In sum, vocabulary is the most important element that learners of English or any other language have to handle in order to achieve anything. When students lack vocabulary, they can do very little. Even though all aspects of a language are essential (grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking), I would dare to say that vocabulary is the most important since it is the basis of a language.

2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies

When learning a language, learners acquire vocabulary. However, most of the time this process is unconscious. Over time learners realize that they have learnt the new words in different ways. These ways to learn vocabulary are called strategies. Nevertheless, it is important to make clear what a vocabulary learning strategy is. Cameron (2001) states that vocabulary strategies are “the actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary items” (p. 92). Students are the ones who decide how to learn vocabulary, but they need to find an easy and practical way. What is more, Intaraprasert (2004) states that vocabulary learning strategies are

…any set of techniques or learning behaviors, which language learners reported using in order to discover the meaning of a new word, to retain the knowledge of newly-learned words, and to expand their knowledge of vocabulary

(p. 9)

It is clear that learning new vocabulary does not end when learners know the meaning of a word; learning vocabulary goes beyond that.
Gu and Johnson (1996 cited in Ghazal, N/D) group vocabulary learning strategies as metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies. According to them, metacognitive strategies are the ones in which learners decide what and when to learn. They state that cognitive strategies involve “guessing strategies, the skillful use of the dictionary and note-taking strategies” (p.85). The authors consider that memory strategies are the ones in which students have to make associations, use images, visuals, among some others. Finally, they claim that activation strategies are the ones in which students try to use the new vocabulary in different contexts.

Additionally, Schmitt (1997) recognizes two groups of vocabulary learning strategies. The first group involves determination and social strategies which take place when a word is encountered for the first time. Concerning the second group, it involves cognitive, metacognitive, memory and social strategies and takes place when the knowledge of an already-known word is being consolidated. The following chart summarizes these strategies.

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<tr>
<th>Vocabulary learning strategies</th>
<th>Determination strategies</th>
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<td>Social strategies</td>
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<td>Social strategies</td>
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<td>Discovery strategies</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Consolidation strategies</td>
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(Adapted from Schmitt, 1997)

It is very important that students adopt their own strategies when it comes to learning vocabulary. Moreover, they have to take into consideration the purpose for learning new words. Perhaps they just want to know a word to understand a sentence, or they may have to learn vocabulary for an examination. Also, there is the possibility of learning words just because they want to. Once students know the
purpose for learning new words, they will find it easier to choose or identify the strategy that best fits their objective.

2.4 The teaching of songs in the classroom

All people, undoubtedly, like to listen to songs, no matter what type of songs or language. Songs are a good way to convey messages because people enjoy listening to them. According to Lynch (2004) the use of songs in the classroom may create a relaxing environment. This is really helpful because students do not get stressed when they are learning. Furthermore, Saricoban and Metin (2000) claim that the use of songs helps students develop listening skills, speaking skills, cultural aspects and grammar structures that can ease the process of learning. Furthermore, Stanowski (2002) claims that songs are a means of introducing cultural aspects in an effective way.

Songs are a way to introduce vocabulary because of the significant context. Songs provide students with a natural sitation in which students can practice vocabulary (Salah, 2001). Griffe (1992) states that songs can also help develop memorization. According to him students learn better by chunks when they read or listen to the lyrics of a song. Carrier (2002) affirms that when students listen to a song, they keep it in mind for a long time. When students like songs, it is very likely that they feel motivated. At the same time, songs can enable students to be more participative (Griffe, 1992). What is more, the use of songs can give students and teachers an opportunity for a change when they become tired of the routine and lose interest. An important aspect to take into consideration is the fact that songs are authentic material. This allows students to feel part of a “native situation” when they listen to music in the target language (Bodadari, 2008).

Regarding the activities that can be used when using songs, Bahasa (2008) suggests some techniques, for instance:

- a. Gap fills
- b. Focus questions
Another way of looking at activities is by considering what kind of activity is needed, and when. This classification includes three stages: a pre-activity, a while-activity and a post-activity. These activities are similar, in a way, to the phases in Task Based Learning. According to Ellis (2006 cited in Córdoba & Nava, 2009), the pre-task takes place before doing the activity itself; it introduces the topic. In this activity students can read a short text, listen to an extract of an audio, watch a video, or ask and answer questions related to the topic. Ellis (2006) continues to claim that the while-task is the activity itself, and it offers various instructional options. The final task is the post-task in which students do follow-up activities related to the topic.

Even though there is a vast repertoire of songs to choose from, there are some aspects that have to be considered. It is practically impossible to pick a song at random to accomplish the main objective of the activity. Griffe (1992) states that the factors that have to be taken into consideration when using a song depend on the characteristics of the students in the class, as well as the time of the day in which it takes place. Furthermore, the purpose of the activity also has to be considered; for example, if it is used to introduce a grammar topic, vocabulary, cultural aspects, listening practice, etc. The song should not be too challenging or too easy for the students. Keskin (2011) suggests considering the age of students and the size of the class. Later, the author suggests the age of the teacher and the purpose of the activity as well. He continues to say that the teacher has to take into account the school facilities and the possibility to modify the lesson plan, if it were
the case. Finally, the teacher should consider whether the volume of the music is the most adequate.

In sum, the use of songs in the classroom may seem to be a simple issue, but it is not. There are many factors that have to be taken into account when a teacher has decided to use songs as a tool in their teaching practice. In fact, some teachers may become lost regarding the purpose of the activity. The goals or objectives have to be well established from the moment the idea of using a song in the class comes to the mind of the teacher.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter first describes the methodology that was followed in order to carry out this study. It then explains the methods that were used to gather the data, followed by the analysis of the data collected in the initial research. The fourth section gives details regarding the findings of the initial research. The fifth section of this chapter describes the action plan that was implemented in order to try to solve the problem identified in the initial research.

3.1 Action research

In order to carry out this research project, action research was used. However, it needs to be stated from the beginning what action research is. According to Burns (2010), action research is a critical and systematic reflection on one’s practice as a teacher in one’s context. Burns (1999) claims that, “the major focus of action research is on concrete and practical issues of immediate concern to particular social groups or communities” (p. 24). This type of research was considered due to the fact that the improvement of the teaching practice is the goal of all teachers. What is more, according to Koshy (2005) action research:

- involves researching your own practice – it is not about people out there;
- is emergent;
is participatory;
constructs theory from practice;
is situation-based;
can be useful in real problem-solving;
deals with individuals or groups with a common purpose of improving practice;
is about improvement;
involves analysis, reflection and evaluation; and
facilitates changes through enquiry.

(p. 10)

Regarding the collecting of the data, Burns (1999), states that the data is obtained by methods that are common to qualitative research such as interviews, observation, and field notes, among others. These methods helped to gather the data to understand the nature of the problem of this research project, and they were used to collect the data for the first cycle of the research.

Burns (2010 based on Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) proposes that there are four phases in a cycle of an action research inquiry.

Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988)
The cycles may be repeated until the outcomes of the research are suitable for the practitioner. The four stages are:

- **Planning**: In this phase, the researcher identifies the problem and develops an action plan in order to improve the specific area of practice. In the planning stage, the researcher thinks of the kind of research that is the most suitable as well as of the possible improvements.

- **Action**: In this second phase, the researcher puts into practice what has already been planned. It involves some reasoning regarding the current teaching practice which enables the teacher to consider different ways of teaching.

- **Observation**: The third phase comprises the observation of the action plan; everything has to be documented; the opinions of students. The researcher has to be very careful to obtain all the information about what is happening.

- **Reflection**: The last phase involves the reflection and evaluation of the results of the action to make sense of what is happening in order to understand the current situation. The researcher may decide to do a further cycle to improve even more.

Based on these phases of an action research, there is the possibility to implement as many cycles as possible in an attempt to continue improving the teaching practice. The process that action research follows has to be systematic since it is the way in which results are taken as valid. This is the main reason why this type of research was chosen to carry out this project.

### 3.2 Data collection methods

In order to identify the problem for this action research project, some data collection methods were used. There are many ways to collect data; however, for this purpose only three of them were used: participant observation, semi-structured interview, and focus group interview. The three methods are described below.
3.2.1 Observation

Cohen et al (2011) state that, “observation is noting systematically (always) people, events, behaviors, settings, arte-facts, routines and so on” (p. 456). The authors suggest that observation may be structured or less structured. Gillham (2004) claims that “observation has three main elements a) watching what people do; b) listening to what people say; c) sometimes asking them clarifying questions” (p. 45). Gilham (2004) further identifies two main kinds of observation: participant (the observer is involved) and structured or detached (watching from outside in a specific moment and way). In participant observation, the researcher is part of the context, which may be a disadvantage since the findings could be subjective. Non-participant observation is less subjective; it involves observing actions and interactions from a corner of the classroom. The observer has to keep quiet, but be aware of what happens (Koshy, 2005). Furthermore, Holly (N/D) observes that observation could be participant or non-participant, as well as structured or non-structured.

3.2.1.1 Participant observation

One of the data collection methods used in this research project was participant observation. According to Cohen et al (2011), participant observation is carried out in “the participants’ natural setting, their everyday social setting and their everyday behavior” (p. 465). The authors continue to mention that the observer has to be empathic and sympathetic in order to access the group more easily. For Holly (N/D) in participant observation,

1) the observer participates actively, for an extended period of time;
2) it may require the observer to live or work in that area;
3) it assumes that the observer will become an accepted member of the group or community.

(p. 10)
Holly also mentions that, “historically field research has been associated most strongly with participant observation” (p. 10). What is more, according to Kawulich (2005) participant observation is:

The process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides.

(p. 2)

Taking into account what authors claim concerning observation and participant observation, this method was used since the beginning of this research project in order to know what was happening with the participants. It was participant observation since it allows the observer to be part of the group of participants and to observe them in their daily lives. Once the observer is part of the group, he can observe them in their natural setting. Participant observation was recorded by means of some notes which were taken during and at the end of the classes.

3.2.2. Interview

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.47) state that an interview is “a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening […] the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes”. The interview has been defined as a technique to discover and to try to understand people’s perspectives, individually or in groups (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p.62). Furthermore, interviews can be structured, semi-structured and non-structured. Moreover, the length of an interview session may vary, from five minutes to very long sessions.

An interview is an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data

(Cohen et al. 2011, p. 409)

An interview can be carried out in different participant combinations, for instance, teacher to learner, learner to teacher, teacher to teacher, researcher to teacher,
etc. Interviews can take place individually or in group; the first one can be more time-consuming, but in the second one the researcher can go further with the questions. It is advisable to record interviews in order to avoid missing details (Burns, 1999). According to Koshy (2005, p.2), the central objective “of conducting interviews is to gather responses which are richer and more informative than questionnaire data”.

3.2.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

For the purpose of this action research, a semi-structured interview was used (Appendix 1). According to Burns (1999), a semi-structured interview is open-ended, which makes the interview more flexible. The researcher usually uses a guide of prepared questions and bears in mind the objective of the interview. The guide can be used in a non-fixed order. Moreover, Gillham (2004) claims that this type of interview seems to be natural when it is carried out; it is usually fluent and can be a productive research tool. In addition, Wallace (1998) claims that in order to carry out a semi-structured interview, there is usually an agenda to follow, but questions are open-ended. He also observes that:

Semi-structured interviews therefore combine a certain degree of control with a certain amount of freedom to develop the interview. This is why it is probably the most popular formats for interviews.

(p. 147)

Furthermore, Hannan (2007) suggests that when carrying out semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares beforehand a list of questions to be asked. Moreover, the interviewer builds in flexibility in the time and the way that the questions are raised. Additionally, the researcher allows for some other topics to be built into the conversational exchange. What is more, Wengraf (2004) states that:

...semi-structured interviews are designed in advance to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open so that the
subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorized way. (p. 5)

In this inquiry, a semi-structured-interview was used to collect data. This interview was carried out with the teacher in charge of the group. By including open-ended questions, the participant was afforded some freedom when answering the questions. This interview was recorded and later transcribed.

3.2.2.2 Focus group interview
Finally, focus group interviews were used as the third data collection method. This technique has been defined as a type of group interview, “an interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.436). These authors mention that in focus group interviews, the researcher considers the point of view of a group rather than that of individuals. The participants share their viewpoints with each other rather than with the interviewer. The data emerges from the interaction among the people in the groups (ibid). According to Fabra and Domène (2001), focus group interviews refer to a group of people who talk about a specific topic. The discussion does not look for an agreement, but for different opinions or points of view.

Furthermore, Krueger and Casey (2010) call attention to some of the characteristics of focus group interviews:

a) in focus questions the interviewer focuses first on key issues and encourages groups to discuss the topics in more detail;

b) focus groups do not seek for agreement, as it is better to gain a variety of viewpoints and experiences rather than one unique answer;

c) the environment should be comfortable, which means that participants should know that there are no wrong answers. Additionally, they have to know that the interviewer is willing to listen to all the answers, as participants have to feel free to express their ideas, feelings and opinions;
d) participants in a focus group should be homogeneous, which means that the participants are related somehow to the research topic; the group size is reasonable, this is to say, that groups may be or four to twelve participants; it will depend on participants’ background as well as on the topic;

e) the group should be guided by a skilful moderator, which means that he or she should be friendly and kind with the participants and help them. Moderators should go smoothly from one question to the next to give participants enough time for discussion;

f) the analysis should fit the study, which means that it should be systematic and verifiable.  

Krueger and Casey (2010, p. 381) 

Focus group interviews were the last method used to collect data. They were carried out with the participants in the classroom. They were explained what the activity was about. This activity sought to discover participants’ opinions in order to understand the nature of the problem. Students worked in teams with some guidance from the researcher who tried to be as friendly as possible so that the participants would feel at ease.

3.3.3 Verification of data (triangulation) 

According to Burns (1999), the data collection techniques used by the researcher may be triangulated. According to her, triangulation is the gathering of data through different techniques and the comparing or testing of this data. By so doing, reliability and validity increase. This allows a comparison of the findings obtained by using the different techniques. Moreover, Cohen et al (2011) suggest that triangulation

...attempts to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint (...) it is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity

(p. 195)

Using only one technique to gather data might lead to biased interpretation. That is why it is necessary to use at least three different methods to collect data.
Furthermore, Mason (2002 cited in Koshy, 2005) claims that triangulation is a form to establish validity, which he describes as a way to obtain different points of view from the participants.

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) triangulation is also a means to improve the accuracy of the analysis; it usually comprises the data resources, multiple techniques of data collection and multiple researchers. In addition to this, Lietz and Zayas (2010) suggest that by means of triangulation, researchers can achieve “completeness” for the research question(s). They claim that by the use of different data collecting techniques, they can be sure that they do not miss any ideas and that there is consistency between the analysis and the findings.

Triangulation was carried out after collecting the data by means of the three methods mentioned in the sections above. The data gathered was, first, transcribed and analyzed. The second step was to compare and contrast the data. This process was in order to ascertain to what extent the participants had similar ideas. Finally, the data obtained led the researcher to a conclusion.

3.3 Outcome of initial research
After administering the data collection techniques: participant observations, semi-structured interview and focus group, the resulting data were analyzed, compared and contrasted in order to make data more valid and reliable. The outcomes of this triangulation process will be described in this section.

It was observed that students usually seemed to have many problems in understanding the instructions in their course books. Therefore, they did not understand the activities. They asked for the meanings of many words. Students asked questions such as: “teacher, how do you say ______ in English?”, “teacher, I do not understand anything”, “teacher, what does ______ mean? Additionally, several of the texts in their course book included some technical words which made understanding even more challenging for them. Moreover, they continually
asked for the meaning of words they encountered when playing video games, reading on the internet, listening to songs or when watching TV programs. In fact, some of them were very eager to learn new vocabulary. They were always asking for unknown words, class after class. Students always seemed to have the same problem. Although they had learned some of the vocabulary in their previous lessons, they still had the same problem. I became aware that they were willing to do the activities, but that they did not understand what to do and how to do the tasks.

Moreover, the teacher in charge of the group claimed that vocabulary is very important for students, since she considered that it would help students to understand the language better. She considered that students had to acquire as much vocabulary as possible because

When students know a lot of words in English, they can translate and understand sentences and the real meaning of words in the target language. When they see an advertisement, they will be able to understand it.

(Cecilia /22/05/2014)

Furthermore, students mentioned that when they do not understand the meaning of some words, they feel helpless. They said that they have to know the meaning of words in order to understand sentences and texts and this would make it easier for them to acquire and learn more about the language. They also mentioned that if they learn English, they can get a better job. They said that it is interesting to know the language of another country and culture. Furthermore, students expressed that when they do not know the meaning of words, they usually ask the teacher or look them up in a dictionary, but what they prefer to do is to look them up on the internet. They claimed that they usually learn vocabulary from the internet, from TV programs, books, advertisements and songs (see appendix 2). They stated that they like to learn new vocabulary from songs since it is easy to learn because of the music and the rhythm.
Therefore, by considering the data gathered it was concluded that the main problem of these students was that they had a limited amount of vocabulary in English; they lacked enough words to speak or write in English. Although the teacher said that she focused her teaching on vocabulary, she admitted that the amount of vocabulary that they learned in class was not enough, so that they would have to continue acquiring new words.

3.4 Action Plan
After having analyzed and compared the findings obtained, the problem that was identified was that students in the Telesecundaria lack sufficient vocabulary. It was one of the main reasons why they usually were reluctant to work in class. As they had mentioned they liked songs, an action plan (see appendix 3) consisting in activities using songs was implemented in order to try to solve the problem. To choose the songs, the students’ opinions were taken into account. They mentioned a lot of singers and groups. However, it was also taken into consideration that the vocabulary and the pronunciation of the singer should not be too challenging for the level of these students. The aim was that each activity would introduce at least ten new words. Therefore, each song was first analyzed to discover if it was useful or not by taking these issues into consideration.

3.4.1 Rationale
The use of songs is an issue that has been discussed by researchers for some years. It has been proved that songs are useful in the classroom. According to Millington (2011), one of the biggest benefits of songs in the classroom is that classes can be fun, which may result in motivation over time. Shen (2009) adds that songs reduce students’ anxiety and foster their interest and motivation to continue learning the target language. Hence, students may find the process of learning amusing and relaxing. He continues to mention that songs can be used to teach listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Regarding vocabulary, the author mentions that when students like songs, they usually take a further step and try to understand the meaning of the song. By doing this, they will find it easy to remember the vocabulary learnt through songs. Furthermore,
Shaheen (2009) claims that songs are a useful tool in the classroom; students enjoy song-related activities, they feel motivated and interested in the class without feeling the pressure of learning a language. Moreover, students find it easier to remember what they hear in a song than when they hear “spoken” words. The sound and the rhythm of a song reinforce the learning of vocabulary and structures. The author also mentions that songs contain structures of any kind and also offer repetition.

Owing to all the benefits, songs should be considered when teaching English. They are a way to teach English and create an atmosphere where students do not become bored. Moreover, at the same time songs let the teacher and students have a break in the routine. Furthermore, students usually enjoy listening to songs. In sum, there are many reasons to continue in the search for more results regarding increasing vocabulary when using songs in the classroom.

3.4.2 Implementation of the action plan

The action plan lasted for four weeks and students worked with one song activity each week. The first song employed was called “Just the way you are” by Bruno Mars. The students were asked to listen to the song first and write down some of the words they had been able to identify in the song. They compared their list of words with that of a peer. Then, all the students’ words were compared. In the next part of the activity, students were given the incomplete lyrics of the song. They were asked to listen and fill in the blanks (Appendix 4). Then all the missing words were written on the board so that they would have options to choose from. In the last part of the activity, their answers were checked. Students were asked to identify the part of speech of the new words. When they had figured them out, they were asked to write sentences using the words that had been taken from the song.

In the second activity implemented, the students were given a list of words taken from the song “Can't take my eyes off you” by Diana Rose. They were asked to identify the part of speech and the meaning. After that, the song was played and students were asked to identify the words while listening. When they finished they
were asked to form teams of three students and were given the lyrics of the song divided into sentences, written on slips of paper. Students were explained that they had to read all the sentences first and then accommodate the lines according to the song. They listened to the song only twice and then the correct order of the slips of paper was checked. After that, they were asked about the meaning of the song. The activity ended with “the hot potato” game to check the new words.

The third song activity focused on adjectives. Students were told that they were going to listen to the song “California gurls” by Katy Perry while reading the lyrics. They were told to pay attention to the title and the lyrics and to discuss in pairs what they thought the song was about. When they finished, they were asked to observe that in some parts of the written lyrics, there were numbers followed by two words to choose from. Students were explained that they would listen to the song again and that they had to circle the word they heard in the song. They compared their answers with those of their partner and as a whole class. Next, they had to identify with a different peer the words that came before and after each adjective and identify the part of speech of these words. Finally, some students were asked randomly to say a sentence, using one of the adjectives just learned in the song.

The last song activity focused on nouns in the song “Everything” by Michael Bublé. First, students were asked to work with two classmates. They were given ten pictures that corresponded to ten nouns taken from the song. They had to observe the pictures and give the names of the pictures in English. Some words were easy for them, but not all of them. The teacher told them the words that they did not know and also helped them with their pronunciation. Then the students ordered the pictures as they appeared in the song (Appendix 5). At the end, the pictures were shown to them and they had to say the corresponding names. Moreover, the words were written on the board so that students also learned the correct spelling.
Chapter Four: Findings

This first section of this chapter describes the evaluation of the action plan by means of the data collection techniques. The second section deals with the information that emerged after analyzing the data. This section is divided into two subsections. First, the categories that emerged from the data in response to the research question. These categories reveal positive findings. In general, students claim that they found the activities with the songs appealing and useful in order to increase vocabulary. In addition, the participants stated that they became familiarized with the language in a fun way. Finally, the fourth category reports how the participants believe that the use of songs not only helped them increase their vocabulary, but also practice other skills. Despite these positive results, in the second section, some negative issues such as lack of time are presented.

4.1 Evaluation of the action plan and findings

In order to evaluate the implementation of the action plan, three methods were used. The first method was participant observation, described in chapter three of this research paper. This method was used throughout all the activities. Students were observed by the researcher and some notes were taken. These notes recorded the participants’ reactions towards the activities.

The second method used to collect data was the semi-structured interview, also described in chapter three of this paper (Appendix 6). It was carried out with the teacher who was in charge of the group, at the end of the implementation of the action plan. It was considered that this participant would be able to provide the researcher with a different point of view regarding the activities implemented.

The third data-collecting method was a focus group interview, described in the previous chapter. It was carried out at the end of the implementation of the action plan. By means of this interview, participants had the opportunity to express whether or not they had liked the activities, and why. This method gave the researcher a more objective viewpoint since the data emerged from the
participants themselves. The names of the participants in this report were changed to protect their identity.

4.2 Findings
Although most of the findings were positive, some negative aspects were identified also. Students seemed to be very enthusiastic during the song-related activities. Students considered that the use of songs made them become familiar with the language. Moreover, they considered that songs were good to increase vocabulary as well as to improve other skills. However, participants agreed that although activities were good they were insufficient to cover the vast amount of existing vocabulary. Therefore, these are issues that need to be taken into account in future research cycles.

4.2.1 Positive response to activities
The participants claimed that the activities were appealing to them as students. The researcher observed that the students liked the activities because of their reactions. Students tapped their feet and/or fingers to the rhythm of the music. This is similar to Shaheen (2009) who claims that songs are a good tool to learn vocabulary because learners enjoy the song-related activities due to the rhythm. Moreover, one student, Rodrigo, expressed that he liked the activities, “teacher, we like this kind of activity, you should bring activities like this more often". What is more, the teacher also said that students seemed to like the activities, and that she: “was surprised when some of the students were trying to sing the songs, even days after they had listened to them”.

4.2.2 Become familiar with the language in a different way
Part of students’ positive response appears to be because the activities had given them the opportunity to learn the language in a different way. Previously, according to the teacher, the English class had included basically translation, and answering the course book. The students had little practice in speaking. In contrast, some students claimed that the action plan was “a different activity with no theory and it
is easier to learn”. This is in line with Lynch (2004) who claims that the use of songs provides the teachers and students with a relaxing environment to learn. What is more, students affirmed that “it is a dynamic way to learn and practice what we learn”; and that “the activities made us become familiar with the language in a dynamic way”.

### 4.2.3 Activities useful to increase vocabulary

The activities were not only appreciated by the students, but they also seemed to “have been very useful” for them. In particular, students said that the activities “helped us learn vocabulary”. This coincides with what Salah (2001) claims when he states that songs are helpful to learn vocabulary in a natural environment, and Griffe (1992) who claims that songs are a useful tool to acquire vocabulary. Furthermore, the teacher mentioned that the activities had enabled students to learn new words, “students had learned some of the words that had been introduced by means of the songs”.

### 4.2.4 Practice of different skills

The activities had been planned to increase the learners’ vocabulary, other aspects of the language had not been taken into consideration. Therefore, it was surprising that when students were asked about what they had learned with the activities, they mentioned other factors that had not been expected. In one of the focus group interviews, students said that the “activities helped us develop listening skills; it makes learning, listening and writing easier”. These students stated that they practiced their listening, as well as their writing skill while performing song-related activities. Moreover, another group of students said that one of the activities was complete because “we watched the images, listened to the pronunciation and also we learned the spelling of the words” (Appendix 7). These students also considered the use of the images important; for them it is not enough to listen to the words and see the spelling. They considered the images a useful tool to learn a word. Likewise, I observed that some students made an effort to pronounce the words correctly both before and after they had been introduced. Saricoban and
Metin (2000) claim that, the use of songs in the classroom, allows the teacher to practice vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, writing, and more. This was clearly observed during the implementation of the activities.

4.2.5 Negative factors: Insufficient vocabulary and time
Even though most of the findings were positive, some negative aspects were identified. The teacher believed that the activities were good, but they did not include enough vocabulary. She claimed that “students needed even more vocabulary. They need to learn much more than that”. According to her, more activities were necessary because introducing ten words every week was not a very efficient way given the amount of vocabulary that the students were supposed to learn.

Another negative aspect identified was the lack of time. The classes lasted less than an hour and sometimes, the last parts of the activities were done in a hurry. Furthermore, some students’ negative attitudes were identified. For instance, while carrying out the activities, Alan said: “I don’t understand anything, it is really difficult, the singer sings very fast”. Additionally, Francisco said, “the singer’s pronunciation is difficult to understand”. This led me to the conclusion that not all activities have positive results even when they are well planned.

Chapter Five: Discussion and reflections
The first section of this chapter is a review of the whole process of this investigation. The second section states some of the implications of this study for teaching practice. The third section describes the limitations of the action plan while it was being implemented. The fourth section of the chapter suggests some changes that could be made to the action plan if it were to be implemented again. The fifth section of this chapter provides the reader with the conclusions regarding this research. Finally, the last section of this chapter proposes a possible second cycle for this action research study.
5.1 Review of the process
This action research study was focused on discovering to what extent the use of songs can help students increase their vocabulary in a *Telesecundaria* in the East of Mexico. First, it was identified that students lacked vocabulary. This resulted in the design and implementation of an action plan which consisted in songs and activities. The implementation lasted four weeks; it was evaluated by means of three data collection techniques. These techniques were participant observation, a semi-structured interview and focus group interviews. After the analysis of the data gathered, it was concluded that the use of songs does help students to acquire new vocabulary. What is more; students claim that the activities also helped them to develop language skills that were not the main objective of this investigation. However, it was commented also that the use of songs is not a completely satisfactory means to teach vocabulary given the amount of words that students need to learn.

5.2 Implications
The results of this research demonstrated that the use of songs in the classroom has several advantages for teaching of English. The use of songs can be an effective way not only to increase students' vocabulary, but to develop other skills such as writing, listening and spelling; that is, the use of songs can help develop more than one aspect of the language at a time. Additionally, students see this practice as a fun, dynamic and different way to acquire the language. Furthermore, by carrying out these activities, students memorize the words and the songs more easily. Memorization is a strategy that is mentioned by Schmitt (1997) as useful for vocabulary learning. Moreover, students seem to remember the songs for a long time after they have listened to them.

Songs provide students with a way to be in touch with native pronunciation. Salah (2001) affirms likewise that students who are taught another language with songs feel part of the natural setting of that language. Moreover, students are able to hear the correct pronunciation which is sometimes difficult to achieve by non-native
teachers. From all the above, it can be concluded that songs are useful in the teaching of English. Smith (2002) seems to support this idea in a similar research project where she found that the use of songs in the classroom is an effective way to teach the language.

Songs should be implemented in the classroom as much as possible, but the teacher has to decide what they will be used for. It all depends on the students’ needs, and what the teacher wants to achieve. Activities with songs are in the “middle ground between linguistics and musicology, possessing both the communicative aspects of language coupled with the entertainment aspect of music” (Jolly, 1975, p. 11).

5.3 Limitations of the study and possible changes
Even though the findings of this research revealed that there were many positive aspects, there are some limitations that have to be considered. To begin with, the necessary equipment was not always available. It was difficult because I had to be sure that I was going to have a computer and speakers at least a day before the activities were orchestrated. Otherwise, I would have to take my own equipment to avoid asking the teacher to do so. Another limitation that has to be considered is that electricity is needed. If there is a blackout the activity has to be postponed. It should also be considered that material can be expensive and time-consuming. It can be expensive because the teacher has to make copies for all the students, sometimes in color, and it is time-consuming because for some activities it was necessary to cut slips of paper. Cutting the slips of paper was hard because there were around ten teams, so it was a lot of work. Therefore, activities can be carried out in teams so as not to make so many copies and cut less slips of paper. By doing this, money and work can be saved.

Furthermore, another important limitation is that there was not always enough time for the activities. Classes in telesecundaria last less than an hour therefore; some activities were not achieved as they had been planned. Moreover, the other time
limitation is that all the topics of the book had to be covered so it made it difficult to include more than one activity per week. It may have been better to have this type of activities, at least twice a week. Thus, a possible change could be to ask the teacher in charge of the group to have more classes a week so that the activities could be implemented more often and to ask for more than fifty minutes for each lesson.

5.4 Conclusions
From the findings of this action research study, it can be concluded that the use of songs in the classroom has a lot of advantages and that it enables students to develop more than one skill at a time. Even though students enjoyed the activities at times, they found some parts of the activities difficult. These activities were especially the pre-task activities where some students claimed that the songs were too difficult for them. Therefore, the teacher should try to help the students feel at ease. Furthermore, having songs in the classroom is not just a way to have fun, but also to learn. Unfortunately, as teachers we do not always take into account that there are some other ways to work in order to achieve the goals of a course book or a program. At the same time, this experience has enabled me to realize that I have to plan different types of activities so as to avoid routine and boredom. Nevertheless, the limitations previously mentioned should be taken into consideration in case the action plan is implemented again.

5.5 Ways forward
This research project focused on the increase of vocabulary through song-related activities. However, it was clear that not only vocabulary can be learned through songs. Therefore, it could be interesting to implement a second cycle for this project with different purposes, for instance, it would be interesting to implement it in order to improve pronunciation and listening at the same time. I believe it would have excellent results, considering the students’ responses during this implementation. Many students pointed out that they had developed these skills in
the activities carried out in this study. Therefore, next time it would be interesting to focus even more on the development of these skills.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide

Hola, ¿recuerda que le había comentado acerca de una entrevista que tiene que ver con las clases de inglés? Pero no quiero que se preocupe porque todo va a ser en español, nada en inglés.

Me gustaría que me platicara cómo daba usted las clases de inglés antes de que yo viniera a ayudarla.

¿Hay alguna habilidad (hablar, escuchar, leer, escribir) en la que se enfoque más cuando da la clase de inglés? Aunque también debe considerar que hay dos sub-habilidades que son gramática y vocabulario. ¿Por qué?

¿Cree que es lo más importante? ¿Por qué?

De acuerdo a lo que usted ha observado ¿cómo es que ellos aprenden más de esa habilidad a la que usted se enfoca más?

¿Y de qué otra forma usted cree que ellos pueden aprender o mejorar esta habilidad?

¿Y cuál considera que es la mejor forma?

Bueno, maestra creo que eso es todo. Muchas gracias por su tiempo. Le agradezco que mucho que me haya regalado unos minutos de su valioso tiempo, tomando en cuenta que tiene muchísimas cosas que hacer.
Appendix 2

Por qué es importante entender todas las palabras? R = Para aprender más y saber su significado.

¿Cómo hacen para entender palabras nuevas? R = Consultarlo en el diccionario, hacer preguntas a la maestra y anotarlo en el cuaderno.

De dónde sacan palabras nuevas? R = ...
En anuncios, canciones, películas, libros, productos, diccionario, TV, etc.

¿Por qué es importante entender todas las palabras? R = Para aprender más y para saber el concepto del vocabulario español-inglés.
¿Cómo hacen para entender palabras nuevas? R = Buscando su significado en páginas de internet o libros.
¿De dónde sacan palabras nuevas? R = De internet, canciones, programas de TV, libros, anuncios, Facebook, redes sociales, etc...
### Appendix 3

**The use of songs to increase students’ vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Break down activities</th>
<th>Evaluation of the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 1** | **Song “Just the way you are” by Bruno Mars**  
Activity: Filling the blanks  
This activity will be focused on Verbs | 1) T will tell Ss that they are about to listen to a song and they will try to catch some words and write them down in their notebooks.  
2) Students will compare their answers with their classmates’.  
3) Ss will listen to the song and try to fill in the blanks.  
4) T will write the missing words on the board and ask Ss to fill in the blanks.  
5) T will ask Ss whether they know what part of the speech the words are. | T will ask Ss to write some sentences using the new verbs just checked in the song. |
| **Week 2** | **“Can’t take my eyes off you” By Diana Ross**  
Activity: Jumbled sentences  
This activity will be focused on Nouns | 1) Ss will be given a list of words taken from the song and they will try to guess what part of speech they are.  
2) T will ask students to form team of three.  
3) T will give Ss the lyrics of the song written in slips of paper.  
4) T will tell Ss that they will listen to the song and will put the sentences in the correct order.  
5) The song will be repeated twice or three times. | By means of the game “hot potato” T will ask Ss some of the words they have just learnt with the song. |
| **Week 3** | **“California Gurls” By katy Perry**  
Activity focused on:  
Adjectives  
Ss will be given the lyrics of the song and Ss will listen and read it at the same time.  
Ss will be asked to discuss in pairs what they think the song is about.  
T will tell Ss that there are some parts of the song that are numbered.  
In each number they have to choose the correct option while listening to the song.  
Ss will be asked to identify the words that are before and after the circled word. | Students will be asked randomly to say a sentences using one of the words that they have already learned in the song. |
| **Week 4** | **“Everything” by Michael Bublé**  
Activity focused on:  
• Adjectives  
T will form teams of three Ss.  
T will give ten pictures to all the Ss (pictures correspond to words taken from the song).  
T and Ss will check together that Ss know the names of the nouns in the pictures. If they do not know the teacher will help Ss to know.  
T will ask Ss to listen to the song and accommodate the pictures in the order they appear in the song.  
Ss will listen to the song twice or three times. | T will show Ss the pictures of the words and Ss have to say what that is and the meaning of those words. |

This action plan will be evaluated by means of a focus group interview at the end of the implementation. Observations all throughout the implementation will be done. Moreover, the last instrument that will be used is the interview to the teacher so that she expresses her viewpoints towards the action plan as well as the Ss attitudes during the activities.
Appendix 4
Appendix 5
Appendix 6 Guía de entrevista para la maestra de grupo

Hola maestra buenas, tardes. Ya le había comentado que me regalara unos minutos de su tiempo. Y pues aquí estoy. Sólo es una plática acerca de los ejercicios que he estado haciendo con los alumnos, usted sabe los ejercicios de las canciones.

1.- Usted cómo vio que los alumnos reaccionaron con las actividades que realizamos con las canciones. ¿Cree que les gustaron? ¿Por qué?

2.- ¿Considera que fue una buena herramienta usar esas actividades en el salón de clases? ¿Por qué?

3.- ¿Cree que las canciones les ayudaron a aprender más vocabulario?

4.- ¿Pudo usted observar alguna falla en las actividades?

5.- ¿Cree que se puedan mejorar las actividades? ¿Cómo?

6.- ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia que me pueda hacer para la aplicación de las mismas actividades en ocasiones futuras?

Muchas gracias por su tiempo y también gracias por su apoyo en el salón de clases.
Por qué nos facilita el aprendizaje del vocabulario.

De las actividades realizadas la que nos gusto más fue:
* La de las imágenes, por que es la más completa, ya que visualizamos la imagen, escuchamos la pronunciación y aprendemos a escribir la palabra.

Por todo lo anterior nos gustaría repetir este tipo de actividades.

Aprendimos:
- Vocabulario
- Pronunciación