

AUTHOR: MUNTEANU NICOLETA DANA

INTEGRATING SONGS AND GAMES IN EFL TEACHING: A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH



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THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

As we all know, nowadays we live in a society where the students' interest for learning is more and more diminished. We, as teachers, are asked to integrate not only games but also songs when teaching a foreign language in order to draw the students' attention on the subject. It is a truism that, even since kindergarten, our students are often interested in other areas apart from the information they are offered through teaching. That is why, teachers have to use different methods and strategies, interesting activities that will make the students be interested in what they need to learn and assimilate at school.

Taking all these facts into consideration, the present paper examines the use of communicative activities such as songs and games when teaching but also when learning a foreign language, in our case, English. Furthermore, I want to see if this alternative way of teaching, learning and also evaluating has a long-term efficiency and if the students come to consider games and songs not only energizers but also efficient learning tools.

Moreover, after a thorough research, this paper wants to incorporate a small data base which will include different categories of games but also songs that can be successfully used when teaching English for secondary-level classes, as well as when learning different grammar or vocabulary lessons that are more difficult to be grasped. I underline the fact that all these tools will be tested and analyzed, pointing out their efficiency or inefficiency, how they are received by the students, how much preparation they imply, etc.

First of all, it should be mentioned that the research started from the idea that a child expresses himself through games, develops his/her personality through singing and playing and also improves his/her mental activity. Playing games is one of the most loved activities among students of all ages. Even if they are at kindergarten, middle school or high school, students like playing. When they are told that they need to solve some exercises they become reluctant but, as soon as they are announced they are going to play a game they become excited and they want to take part in the activity. This way, their curiosity is satisfied, their imagination is developed, and their motivation is increased.

Being engaged in an activity that involves playing a game, students do not feel that they need to learn something that they do not want to, or something difficult which implies hard work. The assimilation of knowledge becomes a relaxing activity and, why not, a way to have fun. Playing games or singing a song are creative and attractive activities through which our students become

involve in the topic, and the information is easily assimilated in the learning process. A cheerful mood is essential when teaching a foreign language and games are an efficient way to educate the students, to help them grow, to help them learn.

All things considered, even though our students' interest in school activities is very low, integrating games in teaching English can be a factor which attracts and implicates them. For this to be possible, we, the teachers must change not only our way of thinking, but also our working style when we prepare an English lesson plan. Throughout my eight-year activity as a teacher, I could come to the conclusion that activities which involve games also give the student an opportunity for further study. There is a wide range of didactic games and other entertaining activities that help students learn English. These will become a valuable material which I will use during my English lesson in order to analyze and organize them for the purpose of this research paper.

I. THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

It seems worthwhile, first of all, to briefly clarify the concepts on which the present approach is based, or its principles, method and technique, which are mutually and hierarchically related. They represent, in fact, three levels of analysis and bear upon the decisions a teacher makes with regard to how English should be taught and learnt in the foreign language class. An approach or strategy is the most abstract of all three concepts and refers to the linguistic, psycho- and sociolinguistic principles underlying methods and techniques. Actually, every teacher has some kind of theoretical principles which function as a frame for their ideas of methods and techniques. A technique is, on the other hand, the narrowest of all three; it is just one single procedure to use in the classroom. Methods are between approaches and techniques, just the mediator between theory (the approach) and classroom practice. Some methods can share a number of techniques and, though some techniques have developed autonomously, the most important ones start from the main methods.

Approaches to teaching foreign languages in the 20th century went hand in hand with the changes in the face of society, the basic pedagogical concepts of the age and the characteristic needs of the students. According to the teaching methods devised by educators, we can distinguish several successive approaches:

- The grammar-translation method(GTM)

- The audio-lingual approaches (ALA)
- The communicative approach (CLT)
- The post-communicative turn(PCT)

Each of these was contested and rejected by the generation that followed, which, in its turn, proved to possess almost as many flaws as the previous one. However, each method has its obvious strengths and, if their techniques and procedures are used judiciously and in combination, they can prove very successful.

1.1 Principles and types of activities used in a communicative language teaching approach

The communicative approach to teaching foreign languages emerged due to the changes in the British language teaching tradition in the late 1960s, as a broad set of ideas generally accepted as good teaching practice rather than a structured method. Its development derives from general dissatisfaction with the linguistic theories – the British Situational Approach and the American Audio-lingual Approach, both of which focus much more on the mechanistic aspects of language learning and language use through pattern drills, rote memorization and repetitive practice. Characterized by its pedagogical emphasis on engaging learners in communicative interaction and meaning negotiation, CLT has marked a drastic shift from the traditional language teaching approaches which lay stress on the language usage of linguistic structures and forms to the communicative view on language teaching which focuses on meaningful language use in social contexts. Communicative Language Teaching therefore opens up a wider perspective on language teaching and learning.

The communicative approach was adopted by teachers in class, adapted and upgraded in order to meet the students' needs. Although it began as a British innovation, it was soon embraced by the educational systems of other European countries.

Although, is not always immediately apparent, everything we do in the classroom is underpinned about the nature of language and about language learning. In terms of learning it is generally accepted that we need to distinguish between “learning that” and “knowing how”. In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and appropriately when communicating.¹

¹ David Nunan, *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*, Cambridge University Press, 2001,p.12

According to Harmer, trying to define the communicative approach (CLT), could be rather difficult because, nowadays, it means different things to different people. However, “one of the things that CLT embraces is the concept of how language is used. Instead of concentrating solely on grammar, pioneer such as David Wilkins in the 1970s looked at what notions language expressed and what communicative functions people performed with the language.”²

The spoken functions are taken into consideration as much as written grammar and also when and how it is appropriate to say certain things. When teaching a foreign language it is important to remember that no area of skills or language systems exists in isolation; there can be no speaking if you do not have the vocabulary to speak with; there is no point in learning words if you can’t do something with them. “The purpose of learning a language is usually to enable you to take part in exchanges of information; talking with friends, reading instructions on a packet of food, understanding directions, writing a note to a colleague, etc.”³

Thus, the communicative language teachers teach students to invite, and apologize, to agree and disagree alongside with making sure that they use the grammar structures correctly.

A major strand of CLT centers around the essential that if students are involved in meaning-focused tasks, then language will take care of itself and that plenty exposure to language in use and plenty opportunities to use it are vitally important for the students’ linguistic development and skill.

Activities in CLT typically involve students in real and realistic communication, where the successful achievement of the communicative task they are performing is at least as important as the accuracy of their language use.

Therefore, in order to organize and to perform in a communicative activity, the communicative language teaching approach relies on a series of principles that are used for the students’ development of knowledge:

1. The ultimate aim of foreign language teaching is to develop the learners ‘communicative competence that helps the speakers to interact linguistically thanks to their knowledge of society and of discourse, to their ability to interact spontaneously and cope with a variety of everyday situations;

² Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, 4th edition, Pearson Education, 2007, p.69.

³Jim Scrivener, *Learning Teaching: A Guidebook for English Language Teachers*, third edition, Macmillan Education, 2011, p.29.

2. Learning begins with imitation, but the learners must move on to the stage of free production in order to turn into long-term learning; teachers must allow students freedom and encourage their activity in producing their own language;
3. Developing language skills is more important than teaching content. The students must be equipped with tools for language performance in the real world, which will facilitate life-long learning, outside the school system. They need to be taught to use the language functionally and strategically to achieve real-world aims, the way people do in real life;
4. Meaning is more important than form; fluency of language is as important as accuracy. Learners must acquire confidence in their linguistic abilities and learn the language by using the language, by struggling to communicate. This way the students learn vocabulary and grammar in context.
5. Appropriacy of language is as important as linguistic accuracy. Taking into consideration the fact that communication takes place in a certain social and discursal background, establishing relationships between interlocutors, students must be taught to observe social conventions and adapt their language to the requirements of the social and discourse context, select their vocabulary and communicative strategies according to the situational context.
6. Active participation and affective involvement in the learning process motivate the students and enhance learning. The student must become a partner in the learning process, a negotiator between the self, the learning process and the object of learning. He/she must be able to personalize the topic and relate it to their own lives and interests; this way, the learning material becomes real and meaningful.
7. Spontaneous, improvised practice is more efficient than mechanical repetition. Ordinary communication is spontaneous and unexpected; memorized patterns cannot cover the wide range of real-life situations. The students must be encouraged to use everyday language, typical for ordinary communicative exchanges. Analyzing the needs of language learners in society, communicative teachers concluded that their students need primarily oral language skills but reading and writing must also be considered.
8. Language is a mere medium for communication; communication has a social purpose. Language must not be taught for its own sake but for the purpose of sending and receiving messages. Therefore, the learner must be given a purpose for producing language.
9. Language is basically interactive. Classroom activities must simulate real world interactions where the teacher must make the students share and negotiate information, the way people do

in real life, in social and discoursal contexts that imitate those in which real communication takes place.

10. Language learning should be task oriented; students must be made to perform tasks with the help of language, the way people do in real world.

11. Language must be learned with the help of authentic material. The textbook is just a framework for the teacher's lesson. The communicative teacher must free him/herself from the constraints of the textbook and use his/her imagination to improve it any way he/she can, according to the students' needs and interests. The teacher must use linguistic material similar to that learners may come across later in life: magazine articles, instructions of usage guidebooks, advertisements, literary texts.

12 The mother tongue is an important element of the students' world. The students' mother tongue should be used whenever explanations in the target language would be too time-consuming; translation is also accepted. However, the teacher should use the target language as extensively as possible.

13. Language should not be separated into its component parts and must be seen as a whole entity in which speaking, listening, reading and writing are integrated.

14. Create an agreeable and supportive learning environment. Different from conventional teaching methods through which many students have frustrating experiences of language learning, games present language learners with communicative or problem-solving situations that are enjoyable and relatively stress free. In game situations, the teacher encourages all attempts at communication in the target language rather than continuous error correction. In such a way, without fear of failure or public correction, students will feel emotionally secure and will be more confident to explore and take risks with new language, which further enhances students' active involvement as well as intrinsic motivation, and above all, leads to better learning.

Thus, "with the communicative language learning, the teachers' fundamental goal is the shaping of the learner's communicative competence and the development of his/her basic communicative skills, i.e. communicative language teaching targets the learner's communicative proficiency rather than his/her mastery of structures."⁴

⁴Adriana Vizental, *Metodica predării limbii engleze*, Editura Polirom, 2008, p.37.

Communicative teaching also relies on the understanding of the interdependence between language and communication. Unlike the structural approach of the previous generation, the communicative language teaching lays stress on the functional potential of the language, emphasizing the role of language as an essential tool for ordinary interaction. In opposition to the previous generations' insistence on form and structure, communicative teachers focus on meaning and interaction, with special stress on oral communication.

Communicative educators also understand that they can no longer ignore the social-cultural context of interactions, or learners' psychological world. Learning is a natural process that takes place inside the learner, as a result of the person's physical and emotional involvement in an activity. Therefore, language learning is more effective if the students are active participants in the process and if they participate emotionally in the act.

The modern language curriculum is also changed. If the traditional curriculum viewed the textbook as a set of lessons sequenced according to linguistic complexity that needed to be taught in the given order, the new type of curriculum rejects linear learning and promotes communicative textbooks that contain lessons of similar difficulty, built around a unifying idea or language function(e.g. greeting, apologizing, inviting, etc.) Each successive textbook, each new level in language learning takes up the same/similar linguistic or functional material at a higher level. This way, language learning becomes concentric spiral-like. The linguistic difficulty of authentic texts can hardly be controlled; therefore, the teacher may have to deal with some items only superficially and come back to teach it thoroughly during another lesson.

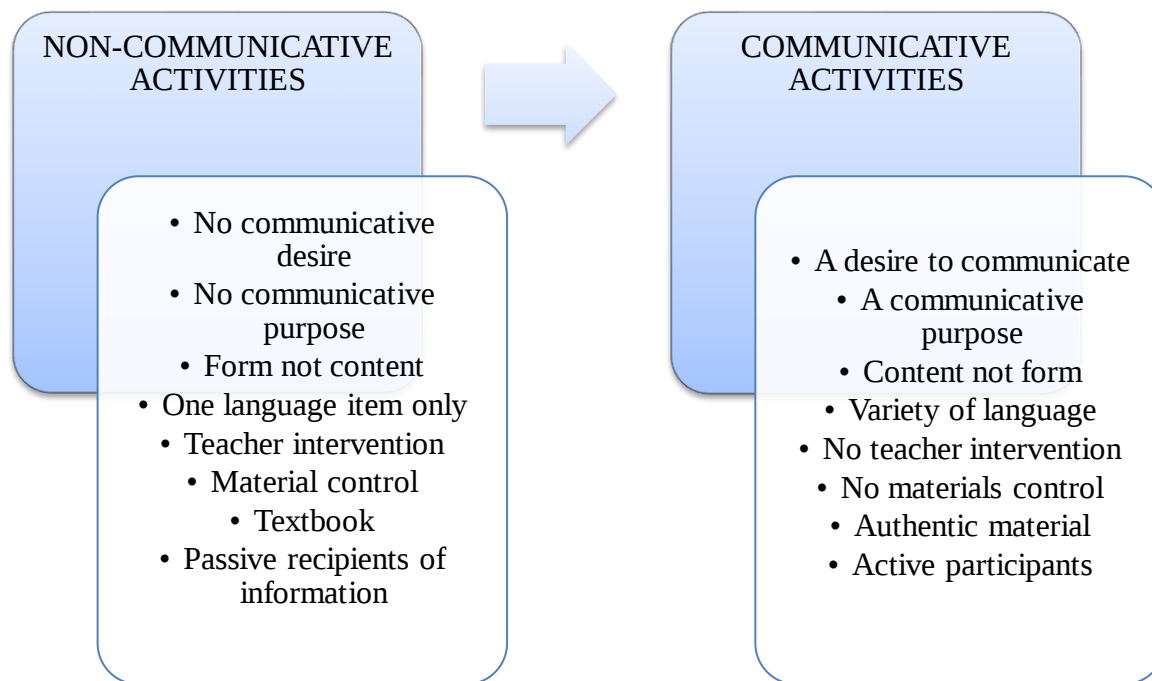
Emphasis on language functions shows that communicative teaching is competency-based (learners must show what they can do with the help of language) and task-oriented (learners are taught to perform practical tasks with the help of language, in situations that simulate and approximate those encountered in real life). To achieve these aims, the teacher must devise classroom activities that should simulate real-world linguistic situation.

In order for these activities to be truly communicative, students must have a desire to communicate something. When setting up a communicative activity, the teacher must give the students instructions on *what* the interaction is about(e.g. make a point, buy a ticket from an airline, writing a letter to a friend, etc.) . Also, it is important for the teacher to provide a *reason* and a *purpose* for the exchange. Unless the students understand *why* they should perform a certain task, they won't really put their heart into doing it. Purpose and situational context also determine the kind of

language the speaker must use, so that the students must focus not only on *what* is being said, but also on *how* it is said.

Furthermore, for the activity to be successful, the students must be motivated to communicate and to get actively involved in the task. They must be eager to express their thoughts and feelings. The students' involvement in an activity depends on the type of material they are using. The teacher must arouse their interest by choosing motivating texts and interesting exercises, as well as by selecting attractive audio and/or visual materials. Audio-visuals make lessons friendlier, stimulate the students' imagination, enhance the efficiency of the teaching process and facilitate learning.

All these features, in order to be understood better, are presented above as being in marked contrast to the non-communicative activities and a non-communicative learning-teaching approach.



With communicative classes, the teacher's and the student's roles are different from the traditional roles. Traditionally, the teacher was looked upon as being an unchallenged leader and source of information, while learners were viewed as passive recipients, supposed to digest and memorize the information provided. Nowadays, the communicative class is student centered and the teacher and learners are partners. "The teacher's new role is that of a needs analyst, an organizer and a manager of the classroom activities and, occasionally, an error corrector. The teacher must help the

students to link the learning materials to their own life experience and internalize it as personal experience, so that it should become meaningful and important.”⁵

For a communicative activity, the teacher creates a situation:

- sets a purpose for the interaction
- organizes the students (in pairs, groups, etc.)
- assigns the roles for each student in the classroom
- sets the activity in motion
- supervises the activity and allows the students to use their imagination in order to expand the context

In spite of the teacher’s “marginal” role, his/her importance is not diminished during the classes. No longer a central figure in the classroom, the teacher is still a source of guidance and help, a psychological support and, sometimes a co-participant in the communicative act. The teacher encourages the students to be creative and to communicate freely, to negotiate meaning and to solve problems. The classroom atmosphere is positive, relaxed and supportive, aiming to reduce the students’ anxiety. This way, the learners are taught to use the language as social individuals, and they gradually arrive at language autonomy.

Therefore, all these premises trigger the conclusion that, unlike form-based approaches which place stress on drilling particular language patterns, the ‘communicative activity’ intends to immerse learners in meaning making for a communicative purpose. That is, communicative language activities involving information gaps and opinion gaps are designed for learners to exchange information or express opinions through using the target language in order to complete tasks. More specifically, communicative activities in the form of games, songs, role-play, and other engaging activities that will be described in the following pages, create a context where learners are engaged in the use of the target language to negotiate meanings, share information and interact with others within meaningful contexts.

Here are a few examples of activity structures that, regardless of proficiency level or content, take into account the concepts of communicative language teaching outlined above:

⁵Adriana Vizental, op.cit.,p.40.

Information Gap Activities

These require students to communicate with each other in order to find all the necessary information to complete the activity. Each partner has information that the other does not. It is very important that students have the appropriate level of language in order to complete the activity. There is sometimes a lot of repetition in the communication as students try to narrow down the information. This can be very useful when the teacher wants the students to focus on a particular structure.

Information gap activities, as Jack C. Richards say, refer to “the act that in real communication people normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. If the students practice it in the classroom, in so doing they will draw available vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies to accomplish a task”⁶. This following exercise makes use of the information gap activities:

Students are divided into A-B pairs. The teacher has copied two sets of pictures. One set (for A students) contains a picture of a group of people. The other set (for B students) contains a similar picture but it contains a number of slight differences from the A-picture. Students must sit back to back and ask questions to try to find out how many differences there are between the two pictures.⁷

Jigsaw activities

These are also based on the information-gap principle. Typically, the class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity. The class must fit the pieces together to complete the whole. In so doing, they must use their language resources to communicate meaningfully and so take part in meaningful communication practice. The following are examples of jigsaw activities:

The teacher plays a recording in which three people with different points of view discuss their opinions on a topic of interest. The teacher prepares three different listening tasks, one focusing on each of the three speaker’s points of view. Students are divided into three groups and each group listens and takes notes on one of the three speaker’s opinions. Students are then rearranged into groups containing a student from groups A, B, and C. They now role-play the discussion using the information they obtained.

⁶ Jack C. Richards, *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 18.

⁷Ibid.

The teacher takes a narrative and divides it into twenty sections (or as many sections as there are students in the class). Each student gets one section of the story. Students must then move around the class and by listening to each section read aloud, decide where in the story their section belongs. Eventually the students have to put the entire story together in the correct sequence.⁸

Learning from each other gradually diminishes the need to try to out-perform each other because one student's learning enhances the performance of the other students instead of inhibiting it, as is usually the case in most competitive, teacher-oriented classrooms. Within this cooperative paradigm the teacher learns to be a facilitating resource person, and shares in the learning and teacher process with the students instead of being the sole resource. Rather than lecturing to the students, the teacher facilitates their mutual learning, in that each student is required to be an active participant and to be responsible for what he learns.

Foreign Language Speaking Activities Using Pictures and Photos

An effective way of getting students speaking is to have them describe a picture or photo, but this can get a little old after a few times. There are many paired and group activities that students can do with an image beyond a simple description.

Role-playing is an important communicative activity. It allows the students to practice the target language in a safe environment where mistakes are not taken into consideration. The learners will get a feel for what it is like wielding the language in different situations and contexts. Assigning scenes to student pairs is the first step in a role-play activity. The scenes can be anything, but they have to be relevant for the learners in order to engage in the conversation. The complexity of the dialogues will depend on whether the students are beginners or advanced learners. With advanced learners, the teacher can just assign the students roles or a situation and let them perform the task. The teacher's role then will be to provide live commentary and correction.

For beginners, it will be a lot different. The teacher can give each pair of students their lines or write the whole dialogue on a piece of paper. Another task for the teacher is to write the lines in the target language first, followed by their English translations. This will be very helpful in letting beginners know what the dialogue is all about.

⁸Ibid., p. 19.

For the next stage, the teacher visits each pair in their practices and monitors their progress. It is very important that the teacher explains the context of the dialogue. What's the motivation for the characters? Why are they acting that way?

Task-completion activities: puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

Information-gathering activities: student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

Opinion-sharing activities: activities in which students compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance that they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.

Information-transfer activities: These require learners to take information that is presented in one form and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

Reasoning-gap activities: These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc.

Most of the activities discussed above reflect an important aspect of classroom tasks in CLT, namely that they are designed to be carried out in pairs or small groups. Through completing activities in this way, it is argued, learners will obtain several benefits:

- They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group.
- They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities.
- Their motivational level is likely to increase.
- They will have the chance to develop fluency.

Teaching and classroom materials today consequently make use of a wide variety of small-group activities.

1.2 The communicative versus non-communicative approaches in teaching English as a foreign language: advantages and disadvantages

Analyzing the communicative approach of teaching English, we can come to the conclusion that this teaching approach has obvious strengths but also many flaws. Combining the approaches of previous generations, such as the grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual approaches with the communicative approach during the class, the teacher can observe throughout his/her activity with the students that reanalyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach he/she can understand their advantages and disadvantages and use them accordingly.

In order to speak about the different advantages and disadvantages of communicative versus non-communicative approaches in teaching English we briefly need to see which non-communicative approaches were developed before the communicative approach.

The grammar translation method, also known as “the classical method” is one of the oldest methods used by teachers all over the world. As the method suggests, the grammar-translation method relies on acquisition of language by learning vocabulary and grammar rules, with translation employed as the main operational technique. The approach has obvious strong points even in its traditional form:

- it teaches vocabulary and grammar thoroughly
- it provides the students with large amounts of information pertaining to literature, world culture and civilization
- it develops the students’ analytical and critical spirit

However, it also has serious shortcomings which brought about much criticism from learners and teachers alike. The method’s main focus fell on the text; on analyzing and learning its linguistic and informational subtleties, ignoring the real aim of the language: the use in the real world. Also, the absence of classroom interactions and, hence of communicative skills; the learners had no opportunity to dialogue and negotiate meaning, the way people do in ordinary communicative exchanges.

The less-than-perfect linguistic performances of grammar-translation students in the real world, made educators their method was not efficient and that significant changes were required to make language teaching operational. Teachers understood that they had to equip their students with a different kind of knowledge of the foreign language, one that should serve them as a useful tool in the

real world. That is why, the language teachers set out to develop a new type of approach to teaching foreign languages: **the audio-lingual approaches**. The methods aimed to endow language learners with a kind of competence similar to that of the native speaker of the language. As an answer to their observations concerning grammar-translation learners' inability to cope with actual communicative situations, supporters of the audio-lingual approaches focused on developing oral skills and considered reading and writing of secondary importance. Using the tape recorder and the record player during the lessons, the teachers were able to bring the voice of the native speaker into the classroom.

The audio-lingual approaches brought about considerable improvements to teaching of foreign languages:

- learning vocabulary in context
- a new type of teacher-student relationship
- focus on oral communication

However, with the further changing of society, the rather limited performances of the audio-linguists made this kind of learning inappropriate for the needs of the modern learner. Linguistic structures alone do not enable the speakers to express intentions, share thoughts, and convey attitudes and feelings. "Through their situational dialogues, audio-linguists had aimed at interaction, but had achieved none. Real world interactions are rapid and spontaneous, conditioned by time pressure: you never know what your interlocutor will say next, so that you have to decode his/her message, formulate your answer, and build up your answer not only fast but also appropriately, according to your interlocutor, the situational context and the activity type."⁹ The situational dialogues and pattern practice of audio-lingual classes could at best provide the learners with a number of clichés for certain situations; but such clichés prove insufficient or inadequate in most real-life contexts.

That is why, **the communicative approach to language teaching** emerged, relying on premises already presented in this chapter and on the communicative approach's ultimate aim of foreign language teaching, that of developing the learner's communicative competence. Human communication relies on much more than the interlocutor's linguistic competence. The fluent speakers

⁹Adriana Vizental, op.cit.,p.3.

are able to interact linguistically thanks to the knowledge of society and of discourses, to their ability to interact spontaneously and cope with a variety of everyday situations.

Taking into consideration the significant changes induced by the communicative approach to foreign language teaching improved teacher's performances considerably. Among the improvements that the communicative language approach brought about we can mention the following:

- a student-centered classroom, focused on the learners' needs
- the learners' active participation and affective involvement in the activities and in the actual process of language learning
- development of language skills (e.g. listening skills, speaking skills, etc.) and of the learners' communicative (not only linguistic) competence
- emphasis on the learners' confidence as language producers, on their creativity and imagination; on spontaneous production of language and on interaction
- emphasis on the functional potential of language; focus on the meaning of the message, rather than on the correctness of form
- emphasis on the fluency and on the appropriacy of the message
- use of authentic material and of task-based activities approximating real world situations
- focus on the social cultural context of the interactions, on the learners' psychological world

In spite of the improvements, language teachers soon realized that communicative teaching also incurs some serious shortcomings, such as:

- acquisition of bad linguistic habits: with communicative classes, grammar is explained and practiced only rarely; moreover, in their desire to encourage the students to speak and express feelings and attitudes, communicative teachers correct their mistakes only rarely;
- too little learning is achieved: many of the authentic texts used to provide little material worth remembering; even when the text comes from literature, it is rarely studied for its own sake, but as an excuse for some communicative activities
- while focusing on oral communication, communicative learning lays too little emphasis on writing, an important component of the educated speakers' communicative competence.

Therefore, educators understood that they must improve the performances of communicative teaching so as to respond to the changed needs of the modern learners and to those of the new

millennium. A number of new approaches to language have appeared in the recent years. Although they cannot be described as a unified theory, the new methods show clearly that teachers have analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the previous approaches thoroughly and learned their lesson well.

The communicative approach prepared the ground for the fundamental changes in language teaching that occurred in the late 20th century, and many of the principles and techniques of **the post-communicative turn** have their roots in communicative teaching. However, a well-educated person needs more than sheer confidence in expressing thoughts and ideas. In order to equip the students with a kind of communicative proficiency a well-educated person requires, the performances of the communicative approach must be improved namely:

- grammar must be taught thoroughly
- writing must be practiced fully
- literature must be given its due role

Therefore, while relying basically on the principles and technique of communicative teaching, post-communicative teachers have learned to adapt the procedures of traditional teaching to their own needs. taking from each approach the methods that are the best suited for a given class, lesson or educational aim, post-communicative teachers exploit whatever strategy might trigger a positive reaction from the students. That is why, in teaching today we come across techniques and procedures borrowed from previous generations.

1.3 Communicative testing and methods of evaluation during the English classes

After offering a brief survey of the major approaches to foreign language teaching, it can be underlined the fact that, although reforms in testing are generally a step behind teaching reforms, testers also perceived the need for innovation and changes in testing soon followed those in the field of teaching. Since the 1970s, there have been considerable developments in the area of language testing. Various theories and practical testing models have evolved following the concept of

communicative competence. The aims and objectives of the communicative curriculum can never be achieved without a testing system that assesses the communicative ability of learners.

Communicative language testing is intended to provide the tester with information about the students' ability to perform in the target language in certain context-specific tasks. It has to be recognized that given the constraints of time and practicality, only a small sample of the students' language can be collected, and that however realistic the tasks may be intended to be, the testee's performance will inevitably reflect the fact that s/he was performing under test conditions.

Communicative tests, which cover the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are designed on the basis of communicative competence. According to Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "communicative competence involves linguistic competence (knowledge of linguistic forms), sociolinguistics competence (the ability to use language appropriately in contexts), discourse competence (coherence and cohesion), and strategic competence (knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies)."¹⁰

Understanding the model of communicative competence is necessary and helpful for developing communicative language, which involves formulating test objectives and considering the effects of the test on teaching and learning.

Communicative language tests should have high content validity. If they are to be used to make judgments about how an individual can function in a normal situation outside the test, the test has to be as accurate a reflection of that situation as possible. This means that the sample of language collected and the tasks the candidate is called upon to perform should be as representative as possible of the language and skills needed to function in the real-life context. Tests, therefore, need to be context-specific.

In response to the issues mentioned above, testers set out to develop a communicative approach to language testing to parallel and supplement the communicative approach to language teaching. There were several attempts to produce communicative tests, but they were limited in scope and limitation.

The first real communication test was devised by Keith Morrow, in 1977. Morrow also devised the first CUEFL (*Communicative Use of English as a Foreign Language*) tests, on the basis of which the series of prototypic communicative tests (as we know them today) were

¹⁰Michael Canale, Merrill Swain, *Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Languages Teaching and Testing*, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.1.

developed. Communicative testing- and improved subjective type of testing – aims *to approximate real-world language use*. Communicative tests must assess the learner's ability to translate the competence (or lack of it) into actual performance in ordinary situations, i.e. actually using the language to read, write speak or listen in ways or contexts which correspond to real life.¹¹

To meet the requirements of a communicative test, the following points must be taken into consideration.

- communicative tests must be integrative: in the real world, language comes in a continuous flow, not in isolated (discrete-point) items
- the learner's ability to use the language must be tested in “ordinary situations”, situations one may encounter in the outside world.
- communicative tests must test linguistic performance, and not merely the underlying ability; the learners must produce and functionalize language, not merely recognize appropriate forms;
- spontaneous production of language is essential for testing the learner's language of knowledge
- communicative testing must address all four skills; the task must activate simultaneously several of the learners' linguistic and communicative skills

As we can see, the communicative testing relies on tasks that simulate real-world linguistic exchanges. To achieve this, the teacher must set the interaction in a well-defined (situational, temporal) context, e.g. a birthday party, paying a visit, shopping for a present, visiting a museum. Also, as communication requires at least two *interactants/ interlocutors*, the student must know the roles of the interactants: his/her own role (what she/he pretends to be) and that of the addressee (who she/he is talking /writing to). These roles must be close to their life experience, so that they can identify with them. The interaction must also have a well-defined purpose (the learner must know *why* she/he is speaking /writing), and there must be *an information gap* (the speaker/writer knows something the addressee does not know, but might/need to).

¹¹Adriana Vizental, op.cit.,p.84.

Communicative tasks rely on *authentic input texts*: the reading materials are actually taken from newspapers, guidebooks, the Internet, or literature and are not simplified. Similarly, *the output text* (i.e. the text produced by the students, whether oral or written) should simulate authentic texts: e.g. a chat, a speech, a letter, or an article.

In order to achieve such aims, the teacher can use a wide range of *testing techniques*: role play, oral interview, letter writing, telephone conversation, group discussion to solve problems are typical communicative class activities. Such tasks are *skill-based*, and they exploit simultaneously several of the learners' language skills, both receptive and productive: e.g. their ability to decode a text and interpret its social and discoursal context, to formulate an appropriate response, to make inferences and "read between the lines." By using such techniques, the teacher/tester can also assess the students' *communicative effectiveness*, i.e. how efficiently they can use the various resources of the language to get their message through and attain their communicative goal.

Essentially, the *communicative / non-communicative* opposition is based on the *degree of realism* of each task, i.e. how likely it is we might encounter such situations /exchanges in real life.

II. SONGS AND GAMES, AN ATTRACTIVE AND EFFICIENT DIDACTIC INSTRUMENT WHEN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The number of English language speakers and the demand for English Language Learning is growing at an exponential rate. Music lyrics, songs and games not only provide tools to strengthen and reinforce vocabulary, comprehension, listening, speaking and writing, but also increase learning and grammatical variations with auditory skills and rhythmic patterns that stimulate brain activity and encourage imagination. Learning with music and games is supported by integrating complex interactive roles creating a positive environment with high levels of student achievement. Action research supports a connection between language and song, as well as actively engaging learners in stimulating activities and discovery.

2.1 Music: a constituent part of the English class

Music, particularly pop music currently plays an extensive part in everyday life of our culture. Billions of people, especially teenagers are surrounded with music on TV, radio, on the Internet, in

films, at public places , during culture events, etc. Such music is also an important part of commercials and spots. It is undoubtedly because of its impact, that the psychology of music is an extensive branch of psychology dealing with music's impact on health, mood and internal health. Researchers discover what people do with music in their everyday life. They do not have to be musicians, they do not necessarily have to play musical instruments or study music. Despite that, everybody listens to music and songs, many of them sing, hum, whistle, tap and snap fingers while they listen to them, which usually makes them less nervous. It can be a secondary activity during work or waiting. The following extract explains the principles of combining music and language from a neurobiological point of view:

The left hemisphere of the brain expresses thoughts in words, while the right hemisphere of the brain controls actions, problem resolution, memory, and emotions. Most learners use the right hemisphere of the brain to process music, and since most instruction relies heavily on left brain approaches, music opens an opportunity to learners who have a strong right brain orientation. Songs bridge the hemispheres, strengthening retention through a complementary function as the right hemisphere learns the melody, the left the words. That connecting bridge also mentioned by Claerr and Gargan (1984), who propose music's benefit as relaxing and motivating, a natural bridge between native and foreign languages, motivating students to increase language practice.¹²

Music is three dimensional. A song is more than words on paper. It conveys a message. Researchers have found that music trains the brain for higher forms of thinking. The use of music in first language acquisition is easy to see. Children learn to sing before they speak. An infant's communication is a series of coos that communicate hunger, fatigue, alarm or pleasure. Further, a child's mother can discern the child's need based on pitch. This poses a question; can music enhance the acquisition of a second language?

There are multiple reasons for the contemporary language educator to incorporate music when teaching English, whether in a traditional classroom setting or in technology assisted language learning of the digital age. Music strengthens the culture of English language learning for 21st century learners and provides a stimulating learning platform that encourages them to excel and provides a

¹² Claudia Smith Salcedo, *The effects of songs in the foreign language classroom on text recall and involuntary mental rehearsal*, Louisiana, LSU Doctoral Dissertations, 2002, p. 6.

change from traditional classroom routines. Numerous learning opportunities and widespread benefits exist for students, and incorporation of music has the ability to tie key components of language acquisition together resulting in outcomes covering a range of the learning activity spectrum. Music helps students to develop the skills that are needed for learning English in a creative and innovative way, motivating them and positively impacting learning.

By adding variety and creative thought to the learning experience, the capacity for language development is expanded and the brain is stimulated with unique and enhanced learning. Technologically creative students have the capacity to combine musical activities and merge them from the desktop to the digital world as interest and learning evolve. Music lyrics abound in the digital age and are easily accessible along with software and a variety of on line musical supporting activities.

Music and song are “instrumental” in lowering the influence of affective filters that interfere with language learning.

Stephen Krashen from the University of California suggests that optimal learning is impacted by emotional non-linguistic variables such as fear, anxiety or boredom. These affective filters serve as a screen to block comprehensible input by preventing information about the second language from reaching the language areas of the mind. The incorporation of music leads to a positive attitude about learning and supports expanded and creative opportunities. By minimizing the affective filter and providing a relaxing atmosphere, stress is eliminated and motivation can increase. Along with this environment, language acquisition is also achieved, often without concrete lesson objectives, but through self-directed learning that leads to exponential growth.¹³

Songs are suggested as an excellent method for promoting language learning. Throughout the years, and during the English classes, it was proven that songs can develop the four skill areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Learning is further increased when students have the opportunity to write their own songs and lyrics in an atmosphere that is comfortable, relaxed and conducive to language learning.

Besides being enjoyable and motivating, songs are also useful in language teaching because they:

¹³Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983, p.30-31

- Model English sounds, rhythm, and stress and intonation patterns
- Often repeat high-frequency words and expressions
- Can reinforce structures and vocabulary
- Are much easier to imitate and remember than language that is not set to music
- Play and music are a source of motivation, interest and enjoyment
- Constitute a context for language use for students. They become themselves when they play or sing
- Make it much easier to imitate and remember language than words which are just “spoken”
- Contributes to socialization (a song is collective)
- Appeals to the ear (one listens to himself while singing)
- Engenders pleasure (reproduction of a sound, enjoyment of the rhythm)
- Helps to develop an aesthetic taste (expressing feelings and sentiments)

Recognizing that language learning requires complex cognitive skills, song lyrics encourage and increase cognitive learning by integrating multiple dimensions that will engage students of varying abilities. Students retain more knowledge when reinforced through song and the integration of lyrics and language. By blending education and entertainment, approaches to learning are evolve and reinforced. Music infused throughout learning creates authentic interactions that are connected, flexible and often collaborative. Additionally, enjoyment and entertainment are realized as students incorporate music and song into language learning.

The four major language acquisition skills that are targeted include grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and listening, however learning a language to a high degree requires communicative competence as well. The relationship of theory to the constructs of language acquisition requires challenging and interesting tasks that will pique the interest of the learner and lead to retention of knowledge. Much has been written regarding the strategies for cognitive learning, but whatever best practices are employed, they need to be based on realistic expectations and hold the interest of the students. For example, idioms or idiomatic expressions, which are words or phrases that have a hidden and figurative meaning conventionally understood by native speakers, can be taught through song and humor. Karaoke can be used effectively with students and the subtitles reinforce the language learning. Singing feels much less threatening to many who are learning a new language. Catchy tunes that resonate with students of all ages are beneficial in promoting lasting learning. For years, people have tuned in to music on the radio featuring popular current songs that shape cultures and world

views. Simultaneously, they are strengthening and reinforcing language skills through extensive and intensive listening.

There are various ways of using songs in the classroom. The level of the students, the interests and the age of the learners, the grammar point to be studied for example, and the song itself has determinant roles on the procedure. Apart from them, it mainly depends on the creativity of the teacher.

For primary students, the best songs would be those that are either familiar to the children or those, though maybe not familiar, which have an international nature, such as Old MacDonald. Since there is not a strict teaching procedure, the teacher can mainly concentrate on what to teach rather than on how to teach. For instance, while teaching them individual letter sounds or spelling the words, the traditional camp song “Bingo” will be useful. In order to make the songs more meaningful and more enjoyable, motions can be added to the song which parallel the words of the song. Since most children enjoy singing fun and nonsensical lyrics, using easy children songs will be useful. Furthermore, choosing lively action songs through which they can dance or act while singing will ensure a lively atmosphere.

For teenagers in the intermediate or advanced level, it is better to use more meaningful or popular songs, which not only review or introduce grammar points but also reflect cultural aspects. At the primary level of singing the song, the prosodic features of the language are emphasized. At the higher levels, where the practice of grammar points is at the foreground, songs can be used with several techniques. Some examples of these techniques are:

- Gap fills or close texts
- Focus questions
- True-false statements
- Put these lines into the correct sequence
- Dictation
- Add a final verse
- Circle the antonyms/synonyms of the given words
- Discuss

A teacher’s selection of a technique or a set of techniques should be based on his or her objectives for the classroom. After deciding the lesson to be studied, and the song and the techniques

to be used, the teacher should prepare an effective lesson plan. Since songs are listening activities, it is advisable to present them as a listening lesson, but of course it is necessary to integrate all the skills in the process in order to achieve successful teaching.

With regard to lesson planning, the theme, the title, or the history of the song can be discussed as a pre-listening activity. By directing the students toward specific areas, problem vocabulary items can be picked up in advance. Before listening to the song, it is also beneficial to let the students know which grammar points should be studied if it is a lesson based on a grammar topic. At this stage, pictures may also be used to introduce the theme of the song. In the listening stage, some of the techniques listed above can be used, but among them gap filling is the most widely used technique. Through such gaps, the vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation are highlighted. This stage can be developed by the teacher according to the needs of the students and the grammar point to be studied.

In the follow-up, integrated skills can be used to complete the overall course structure. Since many songs are on themes for which it is easy to find related reading texts, it may lead the learner to read a text about the singer or the theme. Besides, many songs give a chance for a written reaction of some kind. Opinion questions may lead the learner to write about his own thoughts or reflections. Some songs deal with a theme that can be re-exploited through role plays. Acting may add enthusiasm to the learning process. Finally, some songs deal with themes, which can lead to guided discussion. By leading the students into a discussion, the grammar point could be practiced orally and, in a way, naturally.

As a consequence, the use of songs in language classrooms provides many advantages. They entertain and relax the learners while they are learning or practicing a structure, and they often eliminate the students negative attitude towards learning. Through providing authenticity and context they make the grammar points more understandable and easy. Song lyrics will stimulate phonetics, vocabulary and improve grammar. Students are motivated and the affective filter is lowered through song-based activities. Listening skills become more intense and focused. As language teachers, we can benefit from using songs, since our concern is to motivate the students and draw their utmost attention on the subject during teaching.

2.2 The importance of didactic games during the teaching-learning process

The latest concern of the foreign language teachers is to make the students use the language communicatively. After the realization of communicative competence, activities or techniques that are task-oriented and that lead students to use the language creatively have gained importance. Games

activities that include songs, which are task-based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech, are the examples of the most preferable communicative activities. Such activities highlight not only the competence but also the performance of the learner.

The didactic game has aims, objectives and results and in order to perform, students have to fulfill different tasks and say different things. Therefore, they have a reason to communicate and it is not necessary to repeat things without thinking what they say. Through playing activities, students are eager to learn more and become more confident in their ability to use the English language in communication. Using didactic games in the foreign language classroom, will determine the students to interact with each other and with the teacher and to be an active participant in the instructional-educational process.

Moreover, teachers have to take into consideration three main goals when speaking about a students' education:

- Help the students think on their own and formulate their own opinions regarding the information received
- Help the students pass the exams
- Built their confidence when speaking in a foreign language as well as writing and reading in it.

Didactic games help the teacher when they want to practice speaking with the students without neglecting listening, reading and writing as well. They develop context where students can practice language in a useful manner.

The benefits for using didactic games when teaching English in the classroom are numerous. According to A. Wright, D. Betteridge and M. Buckby, some that worth to be mentioned are:

- didactic games help and encourage the students because they are funny and interesting;
- they help teachers create useful context
- they assure an intense and useful practice of language
- they develop all four language skills(writing, reading, speaking and listening)in all stages of the didactic process (presentation, repetition, practice, etc.)and for different types of communication (engagement , approval, disapproval, explanations etc.)

- using games can engage pupils in different activities and it motivates them to interact on a given subject ¹⁴

Furthermore, other benefits can be identified during activities that involve games. Sugar S. and Sugar K. identify a multitude of these benefits:

- games are experiential
- they allow teamwork and pair-work
- they provide an educational alternative to the traditional methods
- revise what has already been taught
- develop abilities required to pass exams
- the games show how good the energy of a classroom is
- can be used to introduce a new or a difficult topic
- improve teamwork
- teach students to obey and follow rules¹⁵

Another key spin off from using games as a teaching methodology is the formative assessment element. Students are in a position to monitor their own progress and understanding of the subject material in a non-invasive manner. Games provide instant feedback for students and guidance in terms where to focus their learning effort and time. In addition to students receiving instant feedback on their learning, teachers are also able to see clearly where learning gaps exist and allow this to inform their next class or revision sessions.

When choosing a game for an activity, the teacher has to take into consideration certain variables such as: the age of the pupils, the level of the classroom, the pupils' interest. The teacher must have at his disposal a "repertoire" of appropriate techniques of the game, that could apply in different stages of learning techniques which means the concrete development of any teaching activity and precede any situation.

So, the teacher should:

- Prepare and have the appropriate materials as per optional didactics;

¹⁴Wright A, Betteridge D, Buckby M, *Games for Language Learning. Third edition*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 1.

¹⁵S. Sugar, K. Sugar, *Primary games: Experiential Learning, Activities for Teaching Children*, San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2002, pp. 6-8.

- The overall structure or activities differentiated according to students;
- To monitor progress on an ongoing basis, the specific difficulties that arise while working in the classroom;
- To develop new materials and organize activities differentiated to strengthen or compensate the gap.

The teacher must determine the overall objectives (grammatical, lexical, communicative, cultural, social etc.), will develop the skills (listening, reading, speaking or writing), different materials for the development the game, its duration, the team division. etc. After establishing these details, the teacher has to explain the rules to the students and once something is settled, she/he should stick to what has been said. Otherwise students will consider the teacher unfair and they will lose interest. Another task that the teacher has to fulfill is to encourage the students permanently and not highlight every mistake they make. She/ he should be fair and honest and also understand the fact that being fair is not about being authoritarian. The variety of techniques used in the classroom is very important when choosing the didactic games.

Analyzing the large variety of games performed during English lesson, we can identify two types of games: **competitive** (where the student tries to be the first one who finishes the activity) and **collaborative** (where students try to achieve the same goal together, they help each other)

Taking into consideration this classification, some of the most frequently used games in the classroom are:

- **Movement games:** are those types of games where the students are physically involved in the activity (for example, finding an object in the classroom of a certain colour and touching it, finding the partner, etc.) All students can take part in this activity and the teacher's role is to supervise the game. Movement games have clear rules and can be both competitive and cooperative. It depends on the teacher how she, he wants to organize the activity. Also, no didactic material is required for the movement games; for example, for the game called Directions no material is necessary. A blindfolded student is given directions from the other students in order to find someone or something. While playing movement games the students train all four skills. These types of games are usually used for beginners but also pre-intermediate and intermediate students.

- **Board games** are the games where the teacher uses any type of board(black, white, smart). One popular game used during the English classroom with the Romanian students is the Hangman. These games can be played in different types of groups and the teacher needs to prepare certain materials for these games. They can be competitive or collaborative and the teacher is the organizer, participant and facilitator of the didactic process.
- **Guessing games/identification games** are based around the principle that the student possesses a piece of information and another one has to guess what it is about (for example with a sheet of paper glued on his back or a clue-word written at the blackboard when the student is facing his colleagues). There are several versions of these games , where the teacher assumes two roles: participant or facilitator. Materials does not have to be prepared in advance and students have the opportunity to practice their speaking and listening abilities. They must follow the rules of the games which are not severe.
- **Grouping games** involve finding the pair. In order to organize this type of game, the teacher must prepare some materials in advance.

The guessing game can be topic based and used as a revision activity (for example pairs of fruits , animals, actions, etc.) Or just used as a warm-up activity with the ultimate game of grouping students. In this situation the teacher can just use coloured sheets of paper and ask the students to group themselves according to the colour they have chosen. Pupils cooperate in order to find the pair and solve the task as quickly as possible. The task can change the game from a collaborative to a competitive one, if they face time pressure. The game can be played individually, in pairs or teams. Pupils develop their reading and speaking skills and the teacher is the facilitator.¹⁶

- **Card games** are very much appreciated by both parties. Nowadays, publishing houses print didactic cards, but teachers can prepare them at home too.
- **Desk games** can be played as individual work (puzzle) or in pairs or team (scrabble). These games require material prepared in advance and are both collaborative and competitive. Memory games and scrabble are considered competitive while puzzles are collaborative. The teacher is the assessor of students' work.

¹⁶Alina Pădureanu, “ The importance of didactic games in teaching English to young learners”, *Journal plus Education*, ISSN:1842-077X, E-ISSN (online) 2068, Vol. IX, 2013, p. 123.

- **Role play** can be used as an independent game or part of other games. The student is actively involved in the game and some role plays do not require materials though they might be useful. The teacher gives the instructions and supervises the activity. Students train their writing, reading and especially speaking abilities.
- **Task based games** are very popular nowadays. Students receive a task and cooperate for its fulfillment. For instance, the game that involve “ I dare you “cards is a very loved game.
- **Computer games** are also popular among students. They can be played both at school in an IT lab or a multimedia room, or at home on the student’s personal computer. Students find them extremely attractive, because they contain pictures, colourful visual materials, sounds, and the assessment usually provides them with personal scores which is encouraging and in the same time challenging.

As seen, there is a wide variety of games that teacher can use in teaching English as a foreign language. After creating himself a wide repertoire to use during classroom, the teacher must answer one question: When to use games?

At school level, games have traditionally been used by teachers when there are some minutes left at the end of the lesson. However, there are many more different situations to use the games and benefit from their nature and their pedagogical value.

According to Lee “games should not be regarded as a marginal activity, filling in odd moments when the teacher and the class have nothing better to do” Hence, games should be integrated in the teaching syllabus as an essential and useful strategy to acquire the foreign language.¹⁷

As far as grammar is concerned, the following stages can be suggested in order to use games as a part of grammar instruction:

1. Before presenting a given structure, it can help the teacher to discover the pupils’ previous knowledge.
2. After a grammar presentation to discover if the pupils have achieved the content.
3. As a revision of a grammar area.

¹⁷Lee W.R Lee., *Language Teaching Games and Contests*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979,p.3

Before choosing a game, teachers should decide the purpose of the game in order to make them advantageous. We should consider whether the game-like activity is for children only to make the lesson more attractive and protect them from being bored or whether we tend to revise and practice some particular part of grammar, vocabulary, etc.

When the game is chosen, a fundamental aspect that teachers should bear in mind before explaining it is that the pupils should understand exactly how to play the game, because they might probably need to adjust them to the level and age of the pupils and that would be more difficult if the rules are not clear. The teacher should organize the games before the instruction, because to play certain games and use them as a resource to learn English, different materials and equipment may be required, and most of them might not be available in the classroom.

2.3 The advantages and disadvantages of using games and songs during an English class

While traditional methods of teaching English are very similar to the methods in any other school, music can bring another dimension in comparison with the spoken word while games can motivate the students in a manner that any other didactic method cannot. Music and games placement into English lesson can emotionally enhance the learning process. Working with songs and games can be a rather flexible activity. There are no strict instructions on how long the activity should be, whether the students should work individually, in pairs or in groups, or how frequently should a language be taught in through this method. In recent years, many teachers complained about the lack of students' concentration and this may be one of the ways how to attract their attention.

One of the main advantages for listening and singing songs as it was previously mentioned, is that the students can relax and forget about their worries. The tension and stress that they often feel during a class is released. The teachers can thus relax and train the students' vocal cords, and that it is beneficial for both sides. If the activity is well-done, the students are positively attuned for the following lessons and quite possibly for the rest of the day.

According to educational theories, one of the basic principles for successful following a new curriculum long term is its repetitive revision. In every pop-song there is at least one part that occurs in the song several times - mostly called *chorus* or *refrain*, which can be usually found there three or more times. And popularity of repeating is still growing. Plenty of songs currently contain also *verses* which are at least partially repeated.

There is huge amount of phenomena that can be taught through songs. If the teachers are creative and already experienced, they probably develop a sense for choosing suitable songs which may be effective to teach the actually discussed or taught phenomenon. The songs can be focused on new vocabulary, pronunciation, stress in multiple syllable words, grammar, and territorial differences, which may include accents, differences in vocabulary, etc.

Learning new vocabulary is probably one of the most frequent purposes of the song method. For the beginners, usually young children, there is the benefit in perceiving the words not only through listening and singing, but also to express themselves by integrating the whole body, for instance when there occur words as eyes, nose, head, the children can point to the pronounced body part or even touch it. Such songs are defined as TPR (Total Physical Response) songs or action songs. For older students and for teaching complicated vocabulary, where many abstract words and phrases usually occur, it is better to do listening with less motoric activity. Remembering new words is even more simple when the word is repeated several times or when it is somehow different or catchy, e.g. by some rhythmical elements intensified by musical features.¹⁸

Pronunciation is one of the language features obviously learned from spoken words and therefore conceivably also from the song. They can be motivating for students keen to repeatedly listen to and imitate their musical heroes. Later there are three main approaches that can be taken into consideration when working with songs – to focus on sounds, to focus on words or to focus on connected speech. The first approach is focused on similarities and differences of vowels and consonants. Activities can be based on categorizing occurring words into groups with similar sounds, e.g. talk, walk, New York. The second approach is focused on words and also on stress, because words are compound of stressed and weak syllables, which altogether give the words their meanings. On the website of British Council this is explained through the following points:

- Words in songs fit the music, helping learners associate the number of syllables / stress in these words, with memorable rhythms.

¹⁸Lynch, L. M., *Using pop songs*, 2009, Accessed on June 5,2018
<http://www.eslbase.com/articles/pop-songs>

- The relaxed atmosphere songs create can expose students to this difficult pronunciation area, without their realizing.
- Songs contain endless examples of weak syllables, helping to convince learners of the way English is pronounced.¹⁹

This may include some activities; for instance, pupils guess the number of syllables in multiple-syllable words and then they underline the stressed syllable during the listening. The third approach focuses on connected speech, including phrases and compositions. When pupils learn or memorize new words, they learn them as separate units. However, in speech there are several differences and deviations – not all of words carry the same weight, some sounds are even suppressed or muted. Many sets of words may blend into sounds, which may resemble entirely different words. These are phenomena that could be hardly taught through written form of language.

Also, there are plenty of grammatical phenomena which can be taught through music - tenses, prepositions, numbers, pronouns, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, conditionals and many more.

Another advantage is the possibility of individual revision outside class time because almost every song is available on the Internet. Singers and music bands are idols for the vast majority of teenagers and so this may be a way to combine work with pleasure. It is likely that they will voluntarily search for songs on their own. On YouTube there are lots of video versions of the songs for free and many include the lyrics too. If a student finds any song interesting, he or she can sing along and for the more musically-oriented ones there are karaoke-instrumental versions without leading vocal track, so they can sing alone.

Furthermore, considering the advantages of using games during the English learning process, we can say that communicative language games provide the students with significant advantages in the foreign language classroom. First of all, the language games motivate the students and offer fun and enjoyment. Language games are highly motivating. Enjoyment, excitement and passion are naturally produced by games. Games ease second language acquisition and motivate students to learn, especially the young ones, whose concentration span is lower than adult learners and they need

¹⁹ learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en , Accessed on March 28,2018

constant encouragement and motivation. In addition, games provide enjoyment and relaxation, but also they encourage students to use their language in a creative and communicative manner.

Secondly, games allow children to experience language use by performing activities in the form of games. Hence, language games provide learners with opportunities and authentic contexts which may make them aware of the need to use real language to communicate. Games are designed to provide students with a large amount of communicative language practice as conventional drill activities, but in a rather meaningful way by working language as real communication. Games also create an agreeable and supportive learning environment, which avoid frustration experiences of language learning and create relaxing and enjoyable situations. Activities and exercises requiring communicative interaction also present chances for cooperative relationships. Hence, language games also promote interpersonal relations.

However, even though some teachers underestimate games and songs and see them as time consuming or classroom techniques for fun, others are in favor of the effectiveness of using games in the classroom. After organizing the English lessons using games and songs as main instruments for learning and assimilating the information, some disadvantages should be taken into consideration too.

For instance, using pop-songs in language lessons may also bring some trouble. If teachers follow several essential rules, however, there is a high probability that this method will work properly. At first, they should be careful when they look for a suitable song. When they make light of selection, they may easily fail, so students will get bored and they will not enjoy the song at all. The teachers should also possess a sense of constant observation of mood in the class, so when the students give evident signals of dissatisfaction, the teachers should not prolong this activity and switch into another tasks. Also, the teacher should not force the students to sing loudly and clearly. Most of children are sensitive, bashful, and they refused to express themselves so loudly. The teachers should not force the students to sing. They should rather be content with the fact that pupils follow the lyrics or try to fill in the missing words.

Almost in all public schools in the Romania, there are no difficulties in working with modern multi-media and using the latest technologies. Almost every language class has been equipped with CD or MP3 player and lots of them contain also smart boards and computers, where teachers can connect to the Internet and project videos and content of websites. In such conditions, using songs in lessons is expected and quite easy to apply. However, there are many places in our country, especially in the rural zones where the schools cannot afford to equip any class with such technology. So, one of

the disadvantages of this method is that it cannot be run in every class in the country because it depends on necessary technical facilities.

Another requirement that can be considered a disadvantage relates to the teachers' abilities. The relation between the teachers' age and capabilities does not have to be strictly determining, but, as a rule, the teachers of lower age are more willing to use modern technologies and their attitude to computers and players is more positive. They are in close touch with trends and pop-music charts, so they can choose appropriate songs according to the students' taste more easily. In contrast to them, there are lots of teachers over the age of fifty, who, though more experienced, tend, in some cases, to be more conservative about using any sort of modern technology in the class. It is simply due to the fact that there were not any appliances, neither computers nor the internet at the time when they were younger and more opened to new inventions. These teachers usually do not follow the trends and do not seek for latest pop-hits, so they are incapable of choosing appropriate songs which their pupils might like. For some of them, this method can be exhausting or disturbing; some of them may suspect derision from the pupils, so they do not use songs to avoid negative expectations.

III. EXPERIMENTAL STUDY REGARDING THE INTEGRATION OF SONGS AND GAMES DURING THE ENGLISH CLASSES AT SECONDARY LEVEL

In the theoretical part, I collected and quoted ample amount of thoughts and opinions of educators and researchers focused on music, didactic games and learning English. In the practical part, the purpose of this study is to explore whether songs and games taught as part of structured lessons, prove to be effective educational tools in language learning. I also wanted to find out whether games and songs can be considered a valuable resource to teach English to young learners in the EFL classroom. My motive was to compare the theory and reality, specifically, whether the opinions mentioned in the sources are applicable and efficient.

As a student, I had experienced many lessons containing music or work with songs and games. I can remember several interesting lessons, as well as a few boring lessons which were almost pointless. For us, the students, it was quite easy to express our dissatisfaction with the song, for example, or the tasks given. However, this time I wanted to stand on the opposite side and test this activity as a teacher. Fortunately, I have already experienced eight years of working as an English teacher at a secondary level.

The idea for this research firstly came from a questionnaire interpretation that I conducted at the beginning of the previous year. Each year, when school starts I ask my students to answer a few questions regarding the English class so that I can improve my teaching process and I can make my classes more enjoyable for my students by listening their demands and their ideas. So, analyzing their answers, I noticed that there was a general tendency amongst my students: they wanted to play more during the English lessons and also they wanted to learn more songs. So, I started thinking whether I could use these methods not only as ice-breaker activities or rewards for leaning the information but also as learning tools for difficult grammar or vocabulary topics.

Therefore, from the beginning of the school year I started using during my English lessons different songs and games that helped students learn more easily and also assimilate the information for a longer period of time because they remembered that specific song or game.

The following satisfaction questionnaire was administered to a number of 70 students from the fifth to the eighth grade, which included 2 items with which the respondents had to agree or disagree. The following aspects were aimed at by the items in the questionnaire: the personal value of English language learning, students' attitudes towards the use of games and songs in grammar and vocabulary activities, their opinions about which are the most enjoyable activities during the English learning. Responses in relation to each item in the questionnaire were converted into percentages and are presented in the following pages for the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the results.

YOUR OPINION COUNTS 😊

CLASS:.....

- Please answer honestly the following questions.
- This questionnaire is anonymous.

1. Do you consider that learning English is important for your development?

Yes

No

2. How do you find the English lessons?

a) interesting

b) boring

c) fun

d) I don't like English

3. Games and songs make lessons more interesting?

Yes

No

4. Enumerate 3 types of activities/ exercises that you like to do during the English class:

.....
.....

5. Give 3 suggestions to improve the English lessons:

.....
.....

THANK YOU!

Analyzing the responses to the first question, it was underlined the fact that the students consider learning the English language essential for their development and therefore they are not reluctant when learning this subject at school. This fact encouraged and also motivated me as a teacher to try to make the teaching process more efficient and more enjoyable.

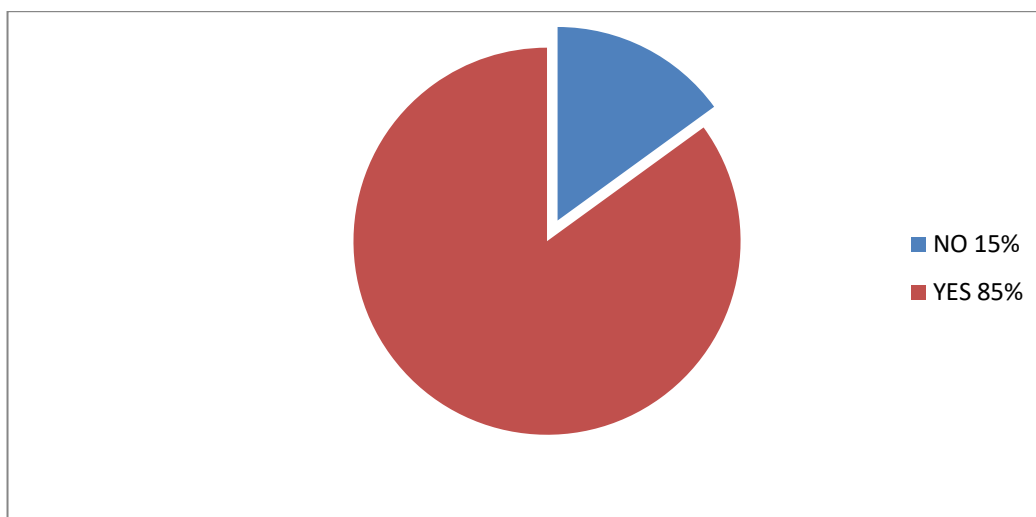


Figure 1. Question 1: “Do you consider that learning English is important for your development?”

The answers to the second question showed the students’ attitude towards English learning and how they perceive the teaching methods applied during the educational process. Analyzing the students’ answers, it became obvious that they do not think that they are having much fun during the teaching process, and that they consider the methods applied to be more interesting rather than entertaining, making the assimilation process a rather difficult one from their point of view.

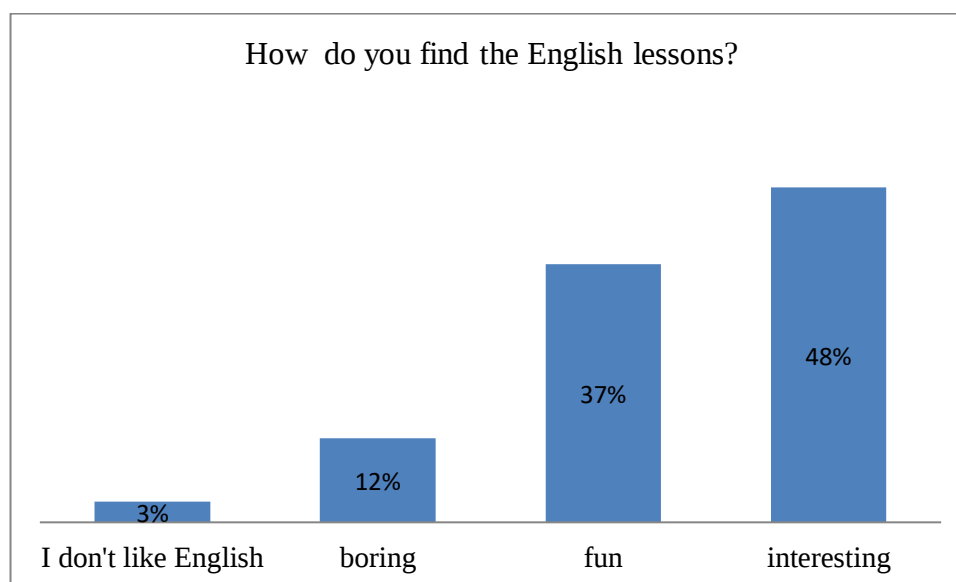


Figure 2.

Moreover, a very high percentage of students (95%) consider that an English lesson where they sing and play is an enjoyable lesson, where they can learn something in an interesting manner and not through a ‘boring’ traditional teaching method.(see fig.3)

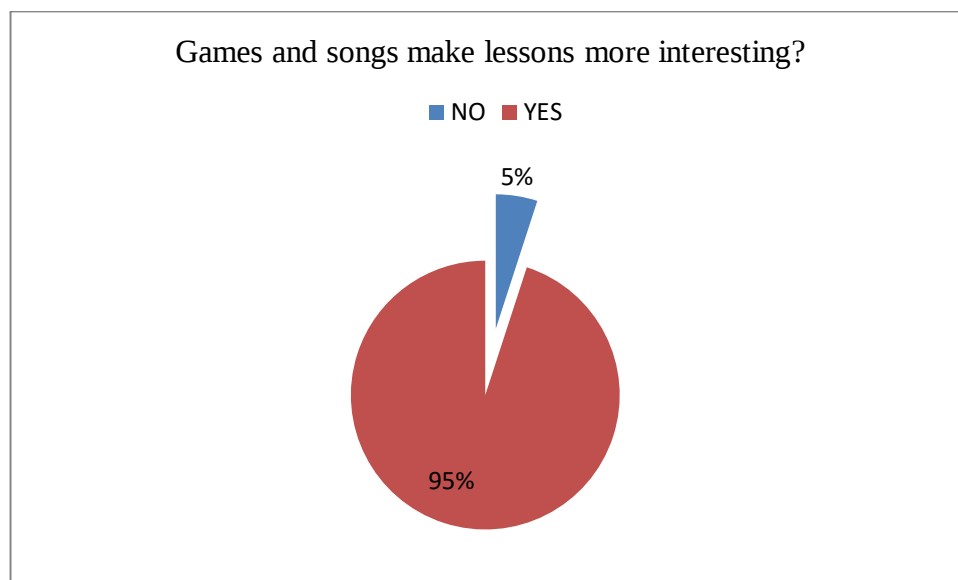


Figure 3.

When asking the students what are some of the activities they would like to perform during an English lesson again, some of the most liked activities were singing and also playing games, underlying the students' tendency to respond better to more modern teaching methods.

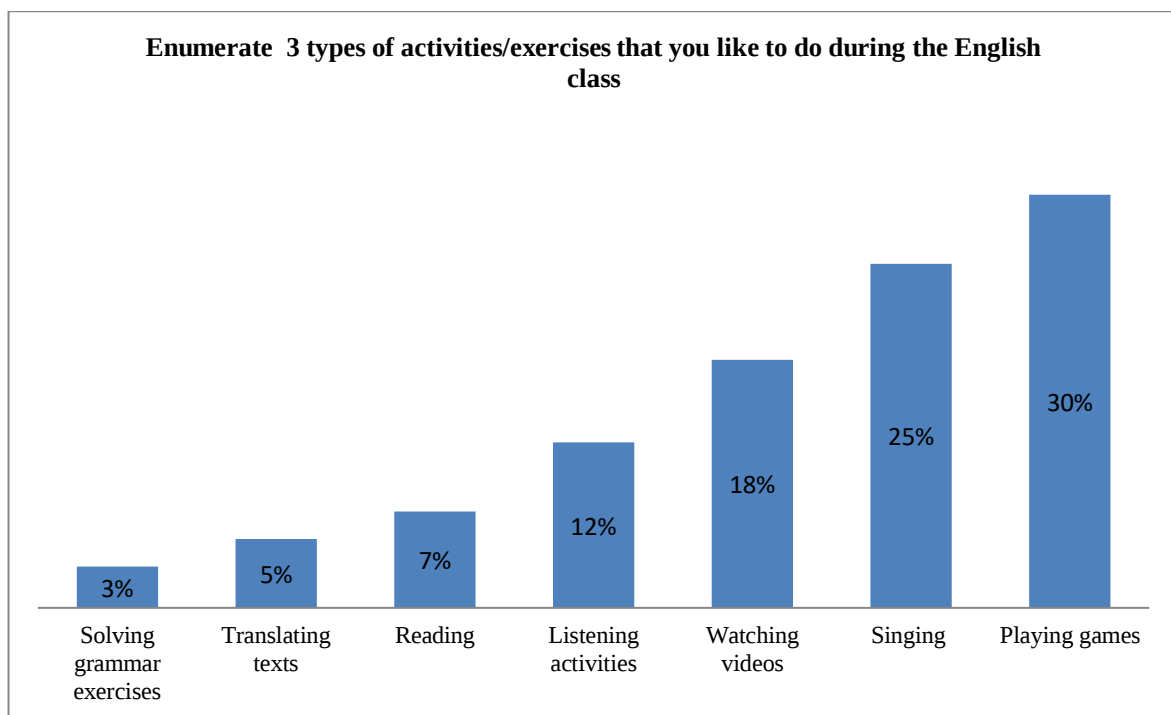


Figure 4.

The last item from the questionnaire identified the students' perception of what makes a teaching lesson but also the learning process more relaxing and more efficient.

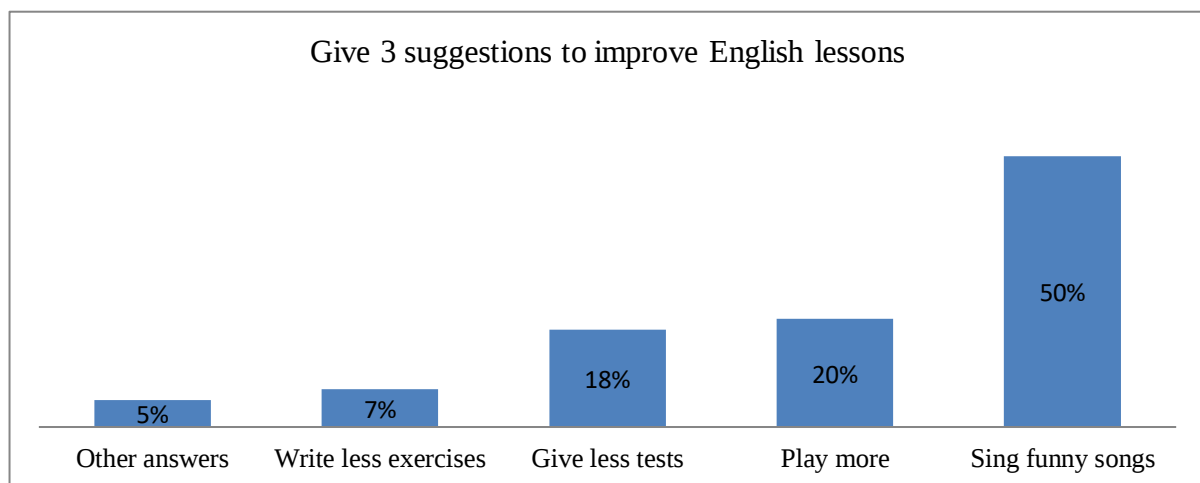


Figure 5.

3.1 Hypothesis and specific aims

Analyzing the questionnaire's data, we reached the hypothesis of this study: "Songs and games are successful learning tools that improve students' knowledge during the English classes."

More exactly, throughout the study, there were analyzed the effects of regularly integrating songs and games when teaching English as a foreign language.

The specific aims that the study followed were:

- Identifying the advantages of games-based classes
- Identifying the songs' effects on an English language learning process
- Identifying the best criteria for choosing the appropriate game or song for a lesson
- Exploring whether using language games and songs have a significant influence on the students' performance or not.

Description of the instruments

The instrument used to carry out this study was the pedagogical experiment.

The pedagogical experiment, as a method of research, is designed to clarify the comparative effectiveness of educational technology, activities, methods, techniques, new content, etc. The first step in any research study is to define the question or hypothesis of interest. Motivation could come from an interest in a particular treatment, such as wanting to explore the effects of a new technology, or in a particular outcome, such as seeking ways to improve understanding of a concept with which students commonly struggle. Whatever the motivation, each research problem should be well-grounded in current understanding of how students learn. In terms of the research objectives, one may distinguish among stating, searching, formative and monitoring experiments. A pedagogical experiment involves several stages.²⁰ Our own pedagogical experiment was conducted in four stages.

The main tasks of the diagnostic phase are an identification of the research problem and justification of its relevance, the identification of contradictions in the educational process. The main task of the prognostic phase is the development of the experiment program:

²⁰<https://www.britannica.com/science/pedagogy> , Accessed on June 28, 2018

- to design methodologies, structures, systems and measures, etc.; to formulate a working hypothesis,
- to predict expected results and the possible negative consequences, etc.

During the organizational stage the material base of the experiment would be prepared. The main tasks of the practical phase are the stating research, the implementation of new didactic learning methods, studying current results and monitoring the process.

At the stage of generalization, the main tasks are data processing, matching the experimental results with the objectives, data analysis, the adjustment of hypotheses, description of the design and experimental results.

The final stage, which is the innovative one, is linked to the dissemination of new findings and experiences to other teachers.

The diagnostic tools of the experiment - the means of estimation of the experimental results - are questionnaires, interviews, texts of examinations, tests, experimental diagnostic materials, and expert assessment.

In order to assess the students' results and evaluate their achievements throughout the teaching process while integrating songs and games as methods of learning and teaching, two types of tests were given: a diagnostic test at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year and an achievement test applied at the end of the school year.

The aim of diagnostic tests is to assess the students' progress along the curriculum/syllabus, as well as the teacher's educational successes and failures. Diagnostic tests are large-scale tests and they look back over a long stretch of learning and they usually take up the entire duration of the class (50 minutes). With the applied diagnostic test, the following aspects were assessed:

- the effectiveness of the learning process: if the students have attained the objectives set for the given stage in the learning process;
- the learners' progress along the curriculum, their strengths and weaknesses;
- the deficiencies of the learning process, the students' typical mistakes;
- the students' real language proficiency, their ability to use language individually and actively.

The techniques used for this type of test target several of the students' language skills (both receptive and productive ones) and they contain both objective and subjective tasks namely:

- objective items to check on acquisition of language and information;
- subjective /communicative tasks to assess the development of the learners' productive and communicative skills.

Therefore, after applying the diagnostic test, reliable information concerning the students' progress and linguistic proficiency was obtained. The test's analysis showed valuable information regarding the students' knowledge about the material taught the previous year and assessed the students' ability to cope with requirements of the next stage in the learning cycle. The test determined how appropriate the methods applied during the learning process were to the students' personal and group characteristics and made me, as a teacher; consider changing the teaching strategy by integrating more games and songs in the teaching process.

At the end of the school year, an achievement test evaluated the students' general language proficiency and assessed whether they attained the final course objectives.

Achievement tests are complex, large-scale tests that look back over a longish period of language learning, so they must assess a large amount of language and a wide variety of language skills. Consequently, they must follow the curriculum and the textbook closely; at the same time, they must be summative and sample the whole curriculum. Traditional achievement tests focused on the acquisition by the learner of the linguistic and informational content of the textbook. Conversely, modern achievement tests target the learners' ability to use the language acquired independently, after and outside the classroom.²¹

The achievement test indicated whether the students have achieved the terminal course objectives; what has been taught, what has been learned and how well. The test relied on objective and subjective /communicative tasks, namely:

- objective items, to assess information, vocabulary, grammar, listening, and reading skills;
- subjective/communicative tasks, to assess writing, and general communicative skills.

If different types of tests were used to provide information regarding the students' overall mastery of the language and the general success of the language course, the questionnaire's method

²¹Adriana Vizental, *Metodica predării limbii engleze*, Editura Polirom, 2008, p. 321.

was used to find out the students' attitude towards English language learning after a school year when games and songs were their main learning tools.

Questionnaires can be classified as both, quantitative and qualitative method depending on the nature of questions. Specifically, answers obtained through closed-ended questions with multiple choice answer options are analyzed using quantitative methods and they may involve pie-charts, bar-charts and percentages. Answers obtained to open-ended questionnaire questions are analyzed using qualitative methods and they involve discussions and critical analyses without use of numbers and calculations.²²

Why use questionnaires?

- To allow for feedback from a large number of students, where it is impractical to collect feedback using other more resource intensive methods.
- To allow each student the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on their experience.
- Structured questionnaires allow for the exploration of patterns and trends which help to describe what is happening in the learning and teaching context and provide a measure of respondents' opinions, attitudes, feelings, and perceptions about issues of particular concern to the evaluator. They also help to identify patterns and trends that merit further exploration using qualitative methods.
- Unstructured questionnaires allow for richer feedback that may provide insight into explanations for what is happening and participants' opinions, attitudes, feelings, perceptions etc.

Questionnaire's advantages:

- Questionnaires can be used to collect data quite quickly.
- All participants can be given the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Feedback is generally anonymous, which encourages openness and honesty.
- Structured questionnaire data can be processed by software packages such as Excel and SPSS.

²²<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/lets/strategy/resources/evaluate/general/methods-collection/questionnaire>, Accessed on June 30.

3.2 The establishment of a representative number of students for the research

In order to see if the previously announced hypothesis can be proven, I conducted a pedagogical experiment throughout the previous school year (2017-2018). The experiment took place at “Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae” Secondary School from Vlădești and involved a number of 20 students from the sixth grade. The students’ level of English was Pre-Intermediate.

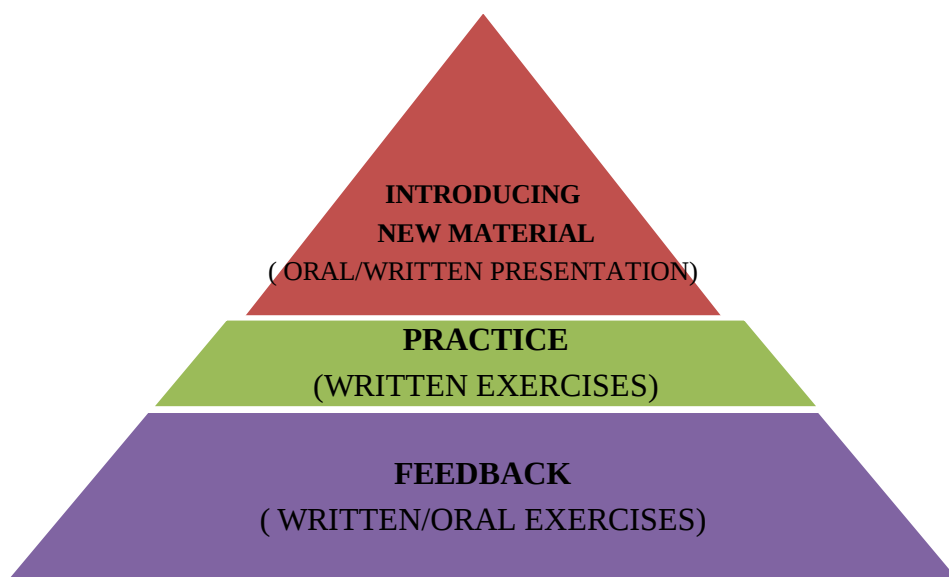
For the first stage of the experiment I divided the students into two equal groups, having students with different levels of achievement of the language skills.

- group A –the witness group
- group B - the experimental group

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, for the group B, lessons that include not only vocabulary knowledge but also grammar were introduced by the teacher by using a didactic game or a song or the new material was practiced through a game/song or a game/song was used to provide feedback. More exactly, these modern learning methods and strategies were used at least for one stage of the English lesson.

For the A group, introducing new information and also checking feedback was provided by using more traditional learning methods such as repetition, solving written exercises, translation exercises, simple text reading etc. students assimilating individually the new information.

The stages followed for a lesson for group A were:



The stages followed for a lesson for group B were:



These teaching and learning methods were adopted in order to compare the results of the groups at the end of the research and to obtain valuable findings. The previously presented stages were followed not only for vocabulary lessons but also for lessons that include grammar topics.

3.3 Methods and research instruments applied when choosing the suitable games and songs

When games and/ or songs are used as a teaching method during an English lesson, a frequent question comes to the teacher's mind, namely: "How do I choose the appropriate game/song for my students?" There are several rules, which every teacher should respect, otherwise these methods can impact students negatively and even immorally. Briefly highlighted, every song or game-based activity should be positive, comprehensible, and morally and linguistically uncontroversial.

For a better understanding of these educational methods, they will be analyzed separately: first the song selection criteria and secondly the game selection process. In order to choose the appropriate song for the students, the following criteria should be taken into consideration:

- Positiveness of Music and Lyrics

In education, positive approach is crucial. When pupils or students are motivated positively, they are able to process new information much faster. This is a proven general rule and it is even more important to take it into account in the contemporary world where plenty of negative news and events surrounds us on every step. Music, even instrumental music without lyrics, affects the listeners through its timbre, tempo, tonality, melody, harmony and also through contrast in dynamics. In classical music (symphonies, operas, sonatas and many more), there are plenty means of expression. This is the genre that the most publications about music psychology are about. In pop-songs use, harmony is an essential feature to determine whether a song is rather positive or negative.

The major key and dominance of major chords evoke positive and optimistic emotions and feelings, e.g. *Mamma Mia* by ABBA, *What Makes You Beautiful* by One Direction or *Call Me Maybe* by Carly Rae Jepsen, etc. Such songs are from emotional aspect absolutely proper to be used for students that do not like to sing simple educational songs because they consider them childish. This type of songs that is very popular among teenagers and not only, are an easy way to grab their attention during the educational process. In contrast to that, there are many songs written in minor scale. Such songs usually bring negative emotions, so they are not very suitable due to its pessimistic tonality - e.g. *Hurt* by Christina Aguilera, *Sweat* by David Guetta feat, Snoop Dogg, etc. Tempo, another music aspect, can emotionally influence the listeners. It is measured in BPM (beats per minute).

The songs below BPM=70 can be labeled as relaxing and too slow, which reduces an ability to concentrate and can make pupils tired, even though outside the class they are undoubtedly worth listening. On the other hand, the songs above BPM=140 are labeled as too fast and can have a disruptive impact. They also may arouse aggression among pupils. The ideal tempo for educational purpose is approximately from BPM=90 to BPM=130. Fortunately, most popular songs belong to this group.²³

Music usually goes hand in hand with lyrics, which can often be obvious and predictable just from the title of the song or just from the first few seconds of the song. Teachers should eliminate songs with negative messages involving death, violence, pain, war, apocalypse, infidelity, crime, religion, hatred or despair. These topics surround us everyday in media, film and TV series and it is wise not to remind students of them. However, sometimes songs deal with current events and illustrate personal opinions of their artists, which can act afterwards as useful stimulus for subsequent discussion - e.g. *Dear Mr. President* by Pink.

- Comprehensibility

Teachers should always consider age and language skills of their students. If grammar and vocabulary of a song is too easy, the activity may probably be boring and purposeless. On the other hand, if lyrics are too complicated, the students will easily get lost and may feel discouraged. Their self-confidence may deteriorate, so they may become reluctant to participate in similar activity next time. In ideal cases, the lyrics supplement curriculum and help to understand the phenomenon actually discussed. Even when an optimistic song of middle tempo, grammatically suitable for children is chosen, it does not necessarily lead to success. It must be comprehensible not only within a language, but also within an overall content

According to Fleming, teachers should avoid songs containing complicated lyrics, too abstract and poetic expressions, which cannot be clearly explained. Children aged between 11-15 are probably not ready to identify and comprehend complicated irony or satiric depictions; they may be able to understand such words separately and translate them; however, the lyrics are confusing and hard to understand as a whole. Religious, political and similar controversial issues are rather unsuitable

²³<http://www.musicalenglishlessons.org/>, Accessed on July 3, 2018.

without supplementary discussion. However, the songs can help with their depiction and can work as complementary evidence.²⁴

Naturally, teachers' competences of dealing these problematic issues are essential. Undemanding, more ideal lyrics concern teenagers' problems, Christmas, summer, holiday and also geographic and culture knowledge. For example, *The Empire State of Mind* by Alicia Keys is rich in vocabulary connected to New York City, it gives a detailed description of the city and its grammar is not very difficult. It is a great example of linking up the scope of English subject and language with musical lyrics.

Teachers should also avoid songs with high density of text. This is typical for hip hop and rap music. For example, *Super Bass* by Nicki Minaj or songs interpreted by Pitbull can be impressive, catchy and admirable, yet most students might not be able to follow the printed lyrics while listening to the track.

- Moral Harmlessness

In the last few decades moral boundaries across globalized society have been liberalized. What was immoral and obscene twenty years ago, has become natural and ordinary.

Due to the expansion of media and the Internet, every consumer and user, even a little child, is very close to content that should be approachable only to adults or teenagers over eighteen years old. Sexual issues and abusive vocabulary has reached pop-music industry and become absolutely common and popular. Such lyrics are not censored because its separate elements, words, are proper.²⁵

Teachers therefore have to be very selective. Teachers should thus make sure that any song planned to be used in the lessons is in harmony with the prevailing morals and ethics. Sometimes it is obvious, but sometimes the immoral subtext is well-hidden behind metaphors and symbols. Elimination of songs where impolite words occur is a matter of course.

²⁴Fleming, M., *Taboos vs. Tolerance*, 2007, Accessed on June 21, 2018
<http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/taboo-vs-tolerance>

²⁵ Ibid.

To prevent the use of inappropriate lyrics, teachers should rather use more “classical” songs from previous decades, when the writers had seemingly respected moral boundaries. Lyrics by The Beatles, Sting, ABBA or Michael Jackson are much more applicable.²⁶

- Language Accuracy and Origin

In the present globalized world, most singers and bands desire to make an international breakthrough, so they want to sound “supra-nationally” and English is essential necessity to impress the masses. There are thousands of artists with e.g. of German, French, Czech, Indian, Japanese origin singing in English. If the teachers are native English speakers, they can recognize immediately the grammatical mistakes and affective, unnatural accent that such songs are rich in. But if the teacher is native Romanian, they will probably overlook these slight mistakes. That is why he or she should find some basic information about the artists and use rather songs sung by English native speakers.

Where Can Teachers Search for Inspiration?

For beginning teachers, there are of plenty sources where they can find tips and song activities already prepared. Even experienced teachers can save their time and energy due to present-day multimedia technology. Undoubtedly, the richest and the most available source is the Internet. When we put key words into Google browser, such as “teaching English through songs” or “songs in English class”, there appear thousands of results. Many of them are websites containing theoretical tips and knowledge. Some of them are also well developed and structured into user-friendly categories of songs. Besides just the mere list of song titles and lyrics, there are also exercises and detailed instructions how to work with them, so the teachers do not have to be especially creative or talented. Thanks to these sources, they can arrange great and funny English lessons in hand with music. However, some websites offer only paid content, so every individual has to decide whether it is worth paying.

²⁶Media Smarts ,*Inappropriate Content in Music*,2012, Accessed on June 23, 2018., <http://mediasmarts.ca/music/inappropriate-content-music>

The lyrics and exercises are not everything we need. Another demand is to have audio tracks. Nowadays, we are pretty advantaged in comparison to times twenty years back. We do not have wait an eternity until the songs reach our country and we do not have to strenuously search for them. Almost all music is available on video server *YouTube*, and it is absolutely free. If the classroom is equipped with computer connectable to the Internet and loudspeakers with sufficient performance, there are no other obstacles. Another way is to buy audio online. The most extended is iTunes - an application, where users can buy music online. The songs are not for free, but it is a legal way to download music. The prices are mostly around € 0.99 per track. On some of websites mentioned above, there are audio tracks already available directly on pages. There are thousands of songs, which are usable for teaching English. So there is no simple and uniform rule, how to work with the song. If a teacher is creative, there are no limits in discovering new activities and exercises. Other teachers might find several proven methods in books and on the Web.

One of the most used methods when working with songs is making gaps. The task is to fill them while listening. It is an applicable method to teach or revise vocabulary. It is good to put the words in the box above the lyrics, so the students can choose the proper word. For advanced students, the box can be missing.

Another technique is to cut the lyrics into pieces - per rows or rhymes. The task is to put them in the correct order. This activity is suitable even for working in pair or in groups of three or four students.

Handouts can also contain additional questions. The purpose is the same as while doing the regular listening - to find out, whether the lyrics are comprehensive and whether students understand them. The questions can be primarily formed on principles of *yes* or *no*, *true* or *false*, or naming items. There can also occur tasks such as underlining. It can be focused on any specific grammar, for example, underline all plural forms, underline all adjectives, underline words forming present perfect, etc.

While correcting the answers, the song can be collectively translated to mother tongue. If the students are told to speak and translate on their own instead of the teacher -this can be even more beneficial.

Also, David Cross mentions a method called “disappearing texts”, which is suitable for songs of shorter range. Teacher writes the whole lyrics on blackboard and then he lets pupils sing. Before

they start singing again, the teacher erases some of the words. This can be repeated until the lyrics have been completely wiped off.²⁷

After discussing the general process that led to the songs selected to be used during the English class, we will turn our attention to the games' selection process. Many teachers are excited about trying games in the classroom but they don't know where to begin. That is why some steps must be taken into consideration when we search for a game to use in the classroom and we want it to be efficient and fulfill our objectives. When finding a potential learning game, teachers must always begin with the end in mind – what do you want the players to learn?

Teachers must conduct extensive searches for games that align with their student's learning goals. It is important to consider how the game will be used during the learning process. If students need to learn new information, then the teacher must locate a teaching game. A testing game would be ideal for assessment or a review of previously-learned concepts. Differentiating the two game types is fairly straightforward. If the content is introduced to the player, then the game is most likely teaching. If the game starts to ask questions and expects the player to know the answers from the very beginning, then that particular game fits neatly into the testing category.

For teachers, one of the easiest ways to prepare for a game-based learning activity is to find a game first, then plan the learning events around its game play. Planning backwards (such as this) may seem nonsensical to educators, but the simple fact is that educational games were constructed with the purpose of being used in a classroom during a lesson. Educators using game-based learning must consider what they are teaching to students and find a game that aligns with the desired learning outcomes.

After months of searching and testing with my students the appropriate educational games to integrate in the learning process, I came to the conclusion that a game-based activity, in order to be efficient and have benefic effects for the language learning process, should have the following characteristics:

- The game should be based on a learning objective. This gives the teacher a focus point for the format, skills involved and material covered. Through play, the students use previously

²⁷David Cross, *A Practical Handbook of Language Teaching*, UK, Prentice Hall International, 1992, p. 166.

learned knowledge and skills to acquire new knowledge and enhance their abilities. For example, games that require recall improve the students' memory as they test strategies for memorization. Their knowledge is reinforced with success and mistakes are corrected due to negative consequences. They also are able to manipulate strategies for memorization and recall. Hopefully, if the players make mistakes, they realize that extra studying or help may be necessary to acquire the skill or pass the "test."

- A good educational game gives the student control over his own destiny. Not only does this increase motivation and responsibility, but it also improves decision making skills by showing that there are direct consequences for actions made or those not taken. The player is adapting to the situation in order to succeed or he is coping as a result of making poor decisions.
- An educational game should include doable challenges. The player should succeed and struggle at various points throughout the game. This increases the student's determination and drive towards success and completion. The teacher can challenge students by adding new information or a new situation to which previous knowledge can be applied.
- The games should be fun and interesting, thus motivating. This encourages the students to not only play today but to return later to the game. Because of the emotion and excitement involved, the student often forgets that he is learning something. Furthermore, it is likely that the player will begin to research information, study hard and practice more so that the next outcome of the game meets his ideals. By calling class activities a game when they really aren't, the students get excited and have fun without realizing that they are learning something.
- The games should be based on reality in order to intrinsically motivate the students to continue to play the game. The player is able to practice a useful skill without the stress that the real situation may incur. There are chances for multiple practice. There is support from peers as well as time to think and react. Situational games allow the players to assume a new identity in a simulated world where they feel comfortable making mistakes and testing hypotheses. In this instance, the games I play are not really games at all, but are perceived as games by the students because of the introduction or build up I give it. They involve speaking and listening skills. For example, describing someone's outfit in the room while others guess who it is; giving directions from one place to another while someone else makes it into a map; or, describing your room while others draw it.

- The games require interaction. The students should interact with material on a variety of levels and of course with other students, more and less experienced or knowledgeable. Once again, this promotes learning from sympathetic peers who have been in or will be in a similar situation.
- Games must include everyone. Each student should be able to participate as a player in order to effectively develop and promote social interaction, good communication and a sense of community. Games are meant to level the playing field¹⁴ giving everyone an equal chance to win because everyone starts with the same amount of resources and time while seeking to accomplish the same goal. While the students are playing the game, the teacher should be observing the students and their interaction with each other and the material.

After choosing a game for the lesson that has at least few characteristics from the ones previously mentioned, the teacher must assure the success of the activity and its effectiveness by following some guidelines:

- The game must have a clear learning objective and purpose. It should be clear what the students are learning and practicing in the activities and procedures of the game. For example, for vocabulary identification the students can draw or act out the word. These games have a clear purpose and their format can be repeated in different sections or units.
- The teacher should assign students to teams. The grouping may depend on many things but it should ultimately depend on the task the students will be completing. Having fair teams depends on knowing the students' abilities and personalities fairly well. It is advisable to separate the smartest or best and also those that struggle the most so each team has a fair chance. This will also allow those that are struggling to learn from the ones who are more secure and confident about what they have learned. Random grouping is not recommended because often one group may have an unfair advantage intellectually, or students will choose to work with their friends. Obviously, the latter option does not usually promote much discourse about the language or learning in general. Other students will try to pair up with the know-it-all and be carried through the game.
- The teacher must explain all necessary procedures and rules clearly and slowly and make sure everyone is listening and understands. If necessary, the teacher asks the students to restate

them. With games that have been played before, the students are asked to state the rules and procedures prior to beginning game play.

- The teacher must be consistent. If necessary, a timer is used to make sure that everyone has the same amount of time to answer. It is not advisable to start another round if all the teams will not have a chance to go before class ends. It should be decided if only the first answer will be accepted because sometimes students say things incorrectly, realize it after they say it and then fix it.
- The teacher must always be prepared. He/she makes sure that there are enough materials, time, questions, etc. As an educator the unexpected always happens: an assembly, absent students, extra or not enough time. It is the facilitator's job to make educated and well-thought out decisions on the spot. Knowing how the game works helps making those decisions.
- Maintain a non-threatening environment. All standard classroom rules and procedures should be observed when playing games. For example, unacceptable behavior should include name calling and belittling. However, when playing a game, some students become emotionally charged and may react negatively, especially if the outcome is not what they expected. Before we play our very first game we discuss how to treat and talk to others. Nevertheless, if in the heat of the moment a negative comment may surface and at this point, the teacher reminds the students that games are meant for fun and by saying those things the fun is being minimized. Additionally, by saying those things certain students may become less likely to participate and thus their learning is curtailed, and they are entitled to more. Furthermore, it is just generally hurtful and mean.
- It may be useful to have students create games. It is only recommended after the students have had exposure to educational games in the classroom setting so that they are familiar with game operation and how the teacher chooses to manage them. It is important to set boundaries or requirements for the games so that the students can narrow the focus of their creativity. For example, the students must: include fifteen current vocabulary words, use the past tense, etc. If the students do create games, I usually make them the facilitators of the game groups. They will lead the class since they are the "expert" and will be responsible for facilitating the game.

Games allow the students to show a little of their true personalities, build relationships with others, and practice various skills. They also allow the facilitator to see who knows the information and who is or is not afraid to share it. In addition, it becomes more apparent what students need more

instruction or what concepts can or cannot be performed adequately. The more you use games, the easier facilitating becomes. Furthermore, as you progress, making groups, sharing and implementing rules and procedures, being consistent, dealing with competition and collaboration as well as evaluating the benefits of educational games becomes second nature.

What are some challenges concerning using games in a classroom?

Games must include everyone. In my opinion, after observing the class dynamics, this may be the hardest for the facilitator to achieve. When playing games for an extrinsic reward, the slower shier student may withdraw not wanting to be resented by his teammates for “slowing the game.” Smarter students with more outgoing personalities or confidence may be regarded as the hero or the ringer. For example, use “numbered heads together” where everyone in the group is given a number and they have to answer the question, or no one can answer a second time until everyone has answered once. Secondly, if the game involves physical activity it is imperative to examine safety precautions and student (dis)abilities. I have used games which involve the students leaving their desk and going somewhere else, such as the board, a certain spot in the room, etc. A multitude of things could have happened like tripping or running into something. In those games, the students have to walk. Running disqualifies them. Thirdly, each student brings their own personality to class. Balancing the passive and outgoing students as well as the geniuses and the average children is challenging. The passive child in each group typically will not participate except for when it is their turn, because someone else is always more willing. Outgoing students tend to be impatient, loud and constantly in motion. Those actions will typically increase the passive nature of some students. For those reasons and many more, the facilitator may want to form teams or establish rules for participation, as previously recommended.

When I started having my students play games during the first years of my activity as an English teacher, it was mostly for taking a break from the monotony of teaching from a course book, filling extra class time or reviewing for a test. Now, having researched and learned about the deep, critical learning that takes place while game playing, I realize that games and also activities that involve songs have more purpose than creating fun in the classroom.

3.4 The analysis and interpretation of the results

The pedagogical experiment referred to so far aimed to prove whether songs and games are successful learning tools that improve students' knowledge during the English classes. In order to achieve the results that can sustain my hypothesis or prove that my hypothesis is incorrect, I started the experiment by establishing the language level of my students, their strengths and weaknesses along the curriculum from the fifth grade. An initial test was given to the two groups of students.

The main assessment objectives of the test were to:

- fill in the blanks with the appropriate word
- use correctly Present simple and Present continuous tenses
- fill in blanks with the appropriate Past Simple form
- use correctly the wh-words
- create short texts on familiar topics.

TEST DE EVALUARE INITIALĂ

Clasa a VI- a L1

Clasa:

Numele si prenumele elevului:

Data susținerii testului:

- Pentru rezolvarea corectă a tuturor cerintelor din Partea I si din Partea a II-a se acordă 90 de puncte. Din oficiu se acordă 10 puncte.
- Timpul efectiv de lucru este de 50 de minute.

PARTEA I (70 points)

1. Fill in the gaps using the following words:

lives, walking, beautiful, near, small, wife, need, this, him, isn't.

Jake 1)_____ in a big city in England. Every year he comes to America to the 2)_____ town where his 3)_____ was born. Jake likes 4)_____ along the streets. One day, he stops 5)_____ a garden to admire the 6)_____ green grass. He sees the gardener and says , “ Good morning. Is 7)_____ your garden?”. Mr. Jones , the gardener, looks at 8)_____ and answers, “ No, it 9)_____ mine, but I work here.”

“ Our grass is never so fresh and green”

“ It is easy to grow grass like this. All you 10)_____ is hard work , good seeds and a caring nature”

(10x2p=20p)

2.Uderline the correct verb form:

1. **Are you liking** pizza / **Do you like** pizza ?
2. I can't talk right now. I **cook** / **am cooking** .
3. Peter **has** / **have** a big breakfast every morning .
4. We **don't** / **doesn't** like travelling by plane.
5. He **were** / **was** her best friend.
- 6.**Do you usually have** / **Are you usually having** dinner at 7 o'clock?
7. Mary's father **came** / **comes** late last night.

8. They **have** / **are having** a party this Saturday.
9. Mike **had** / **has** a test at English yesterday.
10. Where **are** / **is** Mary and Jane?

(10x1p=10p)

3 Put the verbs in brackets into the Simple Past Tense:

My grandfather had a nice life. When he was young, he _____ (**live**) on a farm in the country. He _____ (**look**) after the cows. When he was eighteen, he went to the University where he _____ (**study**) Geography. He _____ (**play**) the piano in a band. When the war _____ (**start**) he _____ (**try**) to join the Army, but he _____ (**end**) up in the Navy. When his ship _____ (**sink**), only five men _____ (**escape**). They _____ (**sail**) in a lifeboat back to England. There, my grandfather met my grandmother and they _____ (**marry**) after three weeks.

(10x2 p=20p)

4.

Fill in who, whose, what, when, where, why, how much, how many:

- a. _____ are you wearing a coat? Because it's cold.
- b. _____ is your party? On Saturday.
- c. _____ are these football boots? They are John's.
- d. _____ money have you got? £ 20.
- e. _____ is your school? It's near the station.
- f. _____ brothers have you got? Two brothers.
- g. _____ is the cheese? It's in the fridge.
- h. _____ is your sister's name? Monica.
- i. _____ is that boy over there? He's my cousin.
- j. _____ is her birthday? In January.

(10x2 p=20p)

PARTEA a II-a (20 points)

Write a letter to a pen friend telling him/her about you, mentioning your age, name, your hobbies, etc. Do not use more than 80 words.

TEST DE EVALUARE INITIALĂ

Clasa a VI- a L1

BAREM DE CORECTARE SI DE NOTARE

- Se punctează oricare alte formulări/ modalități de rezolvare corectă a cerințelor.
- Nu se acordă punctaje intermediare, altele decât cele precizate explicit prin barem.
- Se acordă 10 puncte din oficiu. Nota finală se calculează prin împărțirea punctajului total acordat pentru test la 10.

PARTEA I

(70 points)

1. 10 x 2p=20 points

1) lives; 2) small; 3) wife; 4) walking; 5) near; 6) beautiful; 7) this; 8) him; 9) isn't; 10) need.

2. 10 x 1p= 10 points

1) do you like; 2) am cooking; 3) has; 4) don't; 5) was; 6) do you usually have; 7) came;
8) are having; 9) had; 10) are .

3. 10 x 2 p= 20 points

lived looked studied played started tried ended sank married

4. 10 x 2p=20 points

a. Why; b. When; c. Whose; d. How much; e. Where; f. How many; g. Where; h. What; i. Who; j. When

PARTEA a II-a(20 points)

4 points for appropriately beginning and ending the description

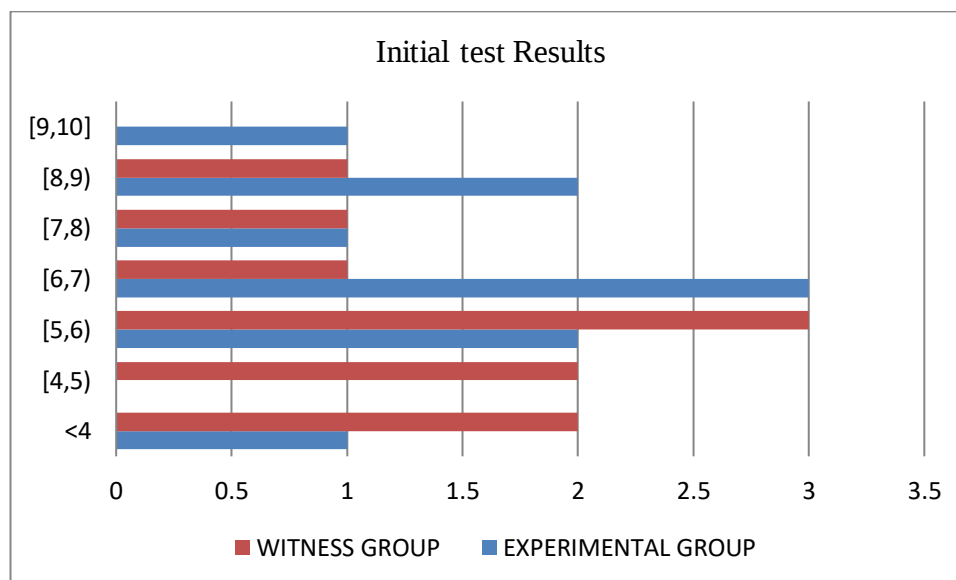
- 4 points for correct grammar structures and connectors
- 4 points for the use of appropriate vocabulary
- 4 points for covering the aspects demanded by the task
- 3 points for a balanced structure (greeting/introduction, content)
- 1 point for the general impression

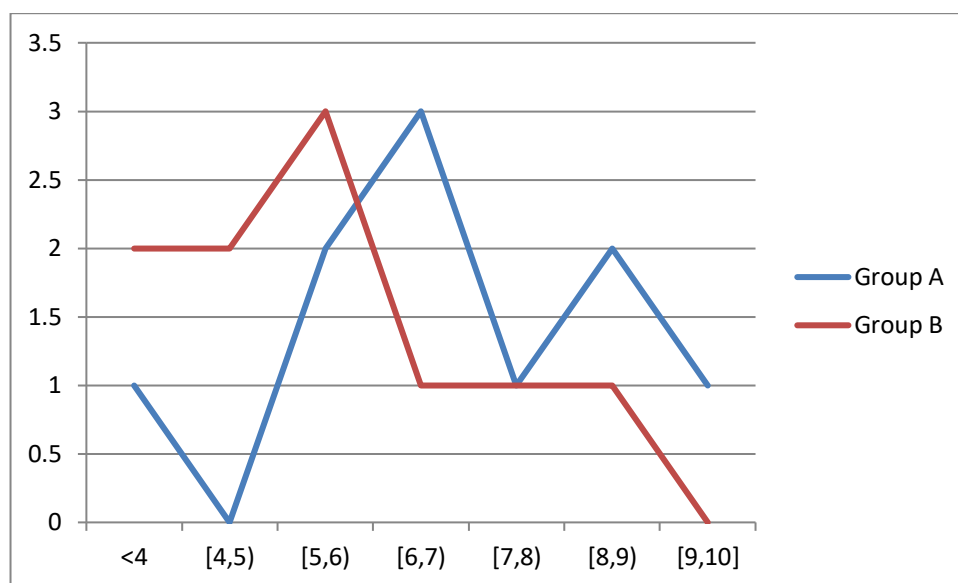
MATRICE DE SPECIFICAȚII

Competențe corespunzătoare nivelurilor taxonomice Teme Continuturi/concepte- cheie Unități tematice	Să completeze fraze lacunare	Să prezinte pe cineva-să identifice elemente din universul familiar	Să identifice varianta corectă
General vocabulary	Partea I 20p		
Present Simple vs. Present continuous			Partea I 10p
Write a letter		Partea a II a 20p	
Past tense simple	Partea I 20p		
WH-words	Partea I 20p		
TOTAL	60	20	10

Collecting the data after the initial test, the following results were obtained:

Grade Nr. students	<4	[4,5)	[5,6)	[6,7)	[7,8)	[8,9)	[9,10]	Mode
Group A (the witness group)	1	0	2	3	1	2	1	6,62
Group B (the experimental group)	2	2	3	1	1	1	0	6,57





Analyzing the students' test, valuable information regarding their weaknesses and their strengths was brought to surface:

- more than 50% of students from both groups can use correctly the Present simple, Present continuous , Past simple tenses
- the students are familiar with the filling the blank exercises
- more than 40% of the students from both groups use a rather poor vocabulary when they need to provide information about themselves
- about 57% -65% of students have difficulties in using the English language individually

Taking into consideration the initial test analysis, the following objectives were set to be reached until the end of the school year:

- give the students the change to use the English language more actively and individually through activities than help them improve their language skills
- create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere where students can practice pronunciation without feeling nervous
- enhance the learning process by developing new materials and new activities

Furthermore, two lessons examples are given in order to better understand how the grammar games for instance, were applied during an English class for group B. Two grammar points in the course book were chosen and taught in 50 minutes:

- Comparative adjectives
- Conditional sentence type 1

Lesson 1 (Game 1, about 10 minutes): comparative adjectives

The teacher prepares several pictures and puts them in a box. Then, the class is divided into 4 groups (five members in each group). Each group takes turn to choose a picture inside the box. In 1 minute that group has to make two sentences using the comparative form of adjectives (for example: the red car is bigger than the green car and the red car is more expensive than the green car). However, the students are required to speak out and write down their answers). The group who finishes first will get 1 point. The teacher provides comment and the winners will receive a small presents.

Lesson 2 (Game 2, about 8 minutes) Introducing conditional sentence type 1

The teacher shows one sentence on the board (for example: If I am free, I will go to the theatre). After that the teacher asks the students to work in groups of five. The students are asked to elicit the tense and verb form in two clauses. Then, they try to clarify the meaning as well as the usage of this type of conditional sentence. Each group has 3 minutes to prepare and then present the issue in front of class. Whichever group has the correct answers will win and get a gift. The teacher gives feedback, explanation and asks students to draw out the form.

When observing these types of activities, I could see that students cooperate well and communicate with others frequently in order to contribute ideas, discuss the answers, and make possible sentences. Also, during the grammar game, the students attempted to complete the task as fast as they can. These groups often competed to win the game. They sometimes gave their answers before the teacher's signals. From what I could observe as a teacher, the interaction among students and competition is about 75% – 85 %. Hence, students' speaking time is increased (about 70% - 79%). Obviously, most of the students are very active from the beginning until the end. They raise hands to answer and other students clap hands to encourage. They can create meaningful sentences using new grammar point. In addition, classroom environment is lively and funny. It seems that 8 to

10 minutes is not enough for playing the games. When time is up, some students even do not want to stop.

On the other hand, one grammar lesson is presented below in order to exemplify the way in which the activities were conducted for group A:

Lesson without grammar games

To begin the lesson, the teacher invites 2 students to go to the board to check old lesson. Then, two lessons are taught similarly by applying the communicative approach. The procedure follows present- practice- produce technique (PPP). Firstly, the teacher presents the meaning and structures of new grammar points by setting the situation. Secondly, the students practice the new grammar structures by doing exercises individually, in pairs or small groups without any games. Finally, it is time for students to practice freely, and finish some more tasks: gap-fill, word/ sentence transformation.

When comparing these lessons with those using games, students have less chance to communicate and exchange ideas with others: about 45% – 55% for students spent too much time to do exercises. Moreover, here the atmosphere is quiet and sometimes nervous but not funny and exciting. From my observation, students are tired at the end of the lesson. In fact, competition rate is about 40 – 50% because the students do not compete to answer the teacher’s questions.

Table 1: Comparison of students’ motivation through lessons

Motivation	Lessons with games	Lessons without games
Students’ English speaking time	70 – 79 %	45 – 55 %
Competitive atmosphere	75 – 85 %	40 – 50 %

To sum up, the findings show that games seem to be relevant for students due to the fact that they increase the students’ English speaking time as well as stimulate their collaborative learning. As a result, students can be successful in applying what they studied to real contexts.

Songs or song related activities were also used for a better understanding during the activities devised for group B. Here are three choice songs for intermediate level students.

“Somebody That I Used to Know” and “Call Me Maybe”

Teaching Point: Past Constructions

I used “Somebody that I Used to Know” or “Call Me Maybe” to review different past constructions with the students. Lyrics like the following allow them to think about which past tense is appropriate to use and why:

*No you didn't have to stoop so low
Have your friends collect your records and then change your number
I guess that I don't need that though
Now you're just somebody that I used to know*

*(From “Somebody that I Used to Know”)
I wasn't looking for this
But now you're in my way
Your stare was holding
Ripped jeans
Skin was showing
(From “Call Me Maybe”)*

In order to use these songs in class, the most efficient way is to make worksheets in advance with the lyrics typed out and the appropriate past construction removed. These removed past constructions were replaced with a blank, accompanied by the infinitive verb in parentheses.

Students filled in the correct answer. Once they've finished, the answers were verified using the recording as a dictation. This activity will get students singing along, creating a relaxing atmosphere among the students, giving the chance to shy students practice their pronunciation without any pressure or fear of being heard by the other colleagues.

“All my loving”

Teaching Point: Future Simple

This classic Beatles tune will help the students recognize and practice the future tense forms in an interesting manner.

*Close your eyes and I'll kiss you
Tomorrow I'll miss you
Remember I'll always be true
And then while I'm away
I'll write home every day
And I'll send all my loving to you*

*I'll pretend that I'm kissing
The lips I am missing
And hope that my dreams will come true
And then while I'm away
I'll write home every day
And I'll send all my loving to you*

*All my loving I will send to you
All my loving, darling I'll be true*

*Close your eyes and I'll kiss you
Tomorrow I'll miss you
Remember I'll always be true
And then while I'm away
I'll write home every day
And I'll send all my loving to you*

*All my loving I will send to you
All my loving, darling I'll be true
All my loving, all my loving ooh
All my loving I will send to you*

“All My Loving” uses the auxiliary will construction in the future fairly consistently, making it ideal for practicing this future form. A worksheet is made as I did for the last exercise, replacing future tense conjugated verbs with blanks and the infinitive verb in parentheses.

This exercise is ideal to use with false beginners (beginners who have studied English before and forgotten) to remind them of the future tense, as well as for intermediate learners who just need a to practice. Also, the song can be sung by the students. No song lesson is complete without a sing-along! The students should strive to sound as much like the singer as possible, which, depending on the singer, can be a pretty amusing exercise. This means paying attention to the pitch and rhythm of the song, as well as the pronunciation of each word.

The many parallels between language and music really come into play here. Since the chorus repeats itself several times, this is a great way to learn new vocabulary through repetition and commit words to memory. I divided the students into groups and have different groups of students sing different parts of the song for an added challenge.

Moreover, using The Killers' song, "Human", several examples of exercises will be presented in order to see some types of exercises used for a song-based activity:

Human

By The Killers

Teaching Point: General Vocabulary

*I did my best to notice
When the call came down the line
Up to the platform of surrender
I was brought but I was kind
And sometimes I get nervous
When I see an open door
Close your eyes
Clear your heart...
Cut the cord*

*Are we human?
Or are we dancer?
My sign is vital
My hands are cold
And I'm on my knees*

*Looking for the answer
Are we human?
Or are we dancer?*

*Pay my respects to grace and virtue
Send my condolences to good
Give my regards to soul and romance,
They always did the best they could
And so long to devotion
You taught me everything I know
Wave goodbye
Wish me well..
You've gotta let me go*

CHORUS

*Will your system be alright
When you dream of home tonight?
There is no message we're receiving
Let me know is your heart still beating*

*Are we human?
Or are we dancer?
My sign is vital
My hands are cold
And I'm on my knees
Looking for the answer*

You've gotta let me know

CHORUS

*Are we human?
Or are we dancer?*

Are we human

Or are we dancer?

1. Fill in the blanks with the words in the box.

Cut, Eyes, Heart, Kind, Line, Open, Platform, Sometimes

I did my best to notice

When the call came down the _____(1)

Up to the _____(2)of surrender

I was brought but I was _____(3)

And _____(4) I get nervous

When I see an _____(5) door

Close your _____(6)

Clear your _____(7)

_____ (8) the cord

CHORUS

2. Match the parts.

1. Are	a. is vital
2.Or are	b. are cold
3. My sign	c. the answer
4. My hands	d. we human?
5. And I'm	e. we dancer?
6. Looking for	f. we human?
7. Are	g. on my knees
8. Or are	h. we dancer?

1. ____ or ____ 2. ____ or ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____ 6. ____ 7. ____ or ____ 8. ____ or ____

3. Now number the lines as they appear.

- a. They always did the best they could
- b. Wish me well..
- c. Give my regards to soul and romance,
- d. Wave goodbye
- e. You've gotta let me go
- f. And so long to devotion
- g. Pay my respects to grace and virtue
- h. You taught me everything I know
- i. Wave goodbye
- j. Send my condolences to good
- k. Give my regards to soul and romance,

1.____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4.____ 5.____ 6. ____ 7.____ 8. ____ 9.____ 10. _ 11.____

CHORUS

4. Correct the mistakes.

Will your computer be alright
When you dream of house tonight?
There is no village we're speaking
Let me know is your soul still dancing

CHORUS

You've gotta let me know

CHORUS

Are we human?
Or are we dancer?
Are we human?
Or are we dancer?

5. Read the following texts and answer the questions below.

The Killers are an American post-punk revival band from Las Vegas, Nevada, formed in 2002. The band consists of Brandon Flowers (vocals, keyboards), Dave Keuning (guitar, vocals), Mark Stoermer (bass guitar, vocals) and Ronnie Vannucci Jr. (percussion, drums). Part of the post-punk revival movement, The Killers draw their influences from music styles of the 1980s. The group's debut album, *Hot Fuss* (2004) brought the band mainstream success. The Killers' second album, *Sam's Town*, was released in 2006, and the compilation album *Sawdust* containing B-sides, rarities, and new material, was released in 2007. Their third studio album, *Day & Age*, produced by Stuart Price, was released in November 2008.

Reading Comprehension

1. Where does the band "The Killers" come from?
2. What is the name of the lead singer?
3. Who plays the drums?
4. How many musicians play in the band?
5. Which decade were they influenced by?
6. How many albums does the band have?
7. What is the name of their first album?
8. What is the name of their last album?
9. Who produced it?

These types of exercises and activities involving songs and games were used during the English lessons for group B, while for group A were used more traditional methods that involve working individually with the course book, solving grammar and vocabulary exercises, etc. The evaluation for both groups was made simultaneously through written tests, oral evaluation, systematic observation and also portfolios.

At the end of the pedagogical experiment, a final test was applied in order to see how efficient were the teaching methods adopted throughout both semesters and how valuable were the learning tools for the students. Comparing the test's results from group A with the test results from group B, I managed to see if the hypothesis previously presented can be proven or not.

Through the final test, the students' ability to produce the language was mainly assessed. I wanted to see if all the activities used during the lesson gave the students the change to gain

confidence in producing their own ideas, opinions while assimilating the topics required by the syllabus.

The main assessment objectives of the final test were:

- fill in the blanks with the appropriate verb and tense
- use correctly Present Perfect simple tense
- identify the correct opposite
- create short texts on familiar topics
- use correctly the tenses in conditional phrases

TEST DE EVALUARE FINALĂ

Clasa a VI- a L1

Clasa:

Numele si prenumele elevului:

Data susținerii testului:

- Pentru rezolvarea corectă a tuturor cerintelor din Partea I si din Partea a II-a se acordă 90 de puncte. Din oficiu se acordă 10 puncte.
- Timpul efectiv de lucru este de 50 de minute.

PARTEA I

(70 points)

1. Use the verbs given in the Past tense to fill in the blanks:

chase, feel ,be, shout, drive, stop, begin, try, take, come

Gordon and Celine decided to go to Red Rock Safari Park. First, they1) _____into the park and Gordon2)_____the car. He3)_____some pictures of the lions. After that,he4)_____to start the car again. Suddenly, smoke5) _____to come out of the engine. A few minutes later, the front of the car6) ____on fire, so Celine beeped the horn and7)_____for help. Just then, a park ranger8)____ _____along in his jeep to help them. Finally, another jeep arrived and9)_____the lions away. Gordon and Celine10) _____very lucky to be alive.

(10x2p=20p)

2.Put the verbs into the correct form of present perfect simple :

1. I(not / work) today.
2. We..... (buy) a new lamp.
3. We..... (not / plan) our holiday yet.
4. They.....(finish/just) the homework for tomorrow.

(4x2p=8p)

3. Find the opposite:

unhappy	to die
to live	to lose
to find	sadness
happiness	to put on
powerful	to take
to give back	happy
to take off	

(6x1p=6p)

4. Complete with the correct nationality or country and language.

1. She comes from Greece. She is.....
2. Pierre lives in He speaks French.
3. We come from China. We speak

(3x2p=6p)

5. Complete the Conditional Sentences Type I.

- 1.If you (send)..... this letter now, she(receive) it tomorrow.
2. If I (do)this test,(improve) my English.
3. If I (find)your ring, I..... (give) it back to you.
4. Peggy (go)shopping if she.....(have) time in the afternoon.
5. Simon (go)to London next week if he.....(.get) a cheap flight

(5x2p=10p)

6. Enumerate at least two household items from your house and describe them.

.....
.....

(10 p)

PARTEA a II a

(30 points)

7. Write a short presentation about yourself. You should include information about your family, your hobbies, and your look. Do not use more than 100 words

TEST DE EVALUARE FINALĂ

Clasa a VI- a L1

BAREM DE CORECTARE SI DE NOTARE

- Se punctează oricare alte formulări/ modalități de rezolvare corectă a cerințelor.
- Nu se acordă punctaje intermediare, altele decât cele precizate explicit prin barem.
- Se acordă 10 puncte din oficiu.
- Nota finală se calculează prin împărțirea punctajului total acordat pentru test la 10.

PARTEA I

(70 points)

1. 10 x 2p= 20 points (1 point for each verb placed in the correct gap + 1 point for each correct form of the verb)

1. drove; 2. stopped; 3. took; 4. tried; 5. began; 6. was; 7. shouted; 8. came; 9. chased; 10. felt.

4. (4x2p=8points)

1. haven't worked; 2. have bought; 3. haven't planned; 4. have just finished

3. (6x1p=6points)

happy-unhappy/ to live-to die/to find-to lose/ happiness-sadness/to give back- to take/ to take off-to put on

4. (3x2p=6points)

1. Greek; 2. France; 3. Chinese

5. (5x2p=10points)

1. send/will receive; 2. do/will improve; 3. find/will give; 4. will go/has; 5. will go/gets

6. 10 points

4 points for correct grammar structures and connectors

3 points for the use of appropriate vocabulary

3 points for covering the aspects demanded by the task

PARTEA a II a

(30 points)

7. 4 points for appropriately beginning and ending

6 points for correct grammar structures and connectors

5 points for the use of appropriate vocabulary

10 points for covering the aspects demanded by the task

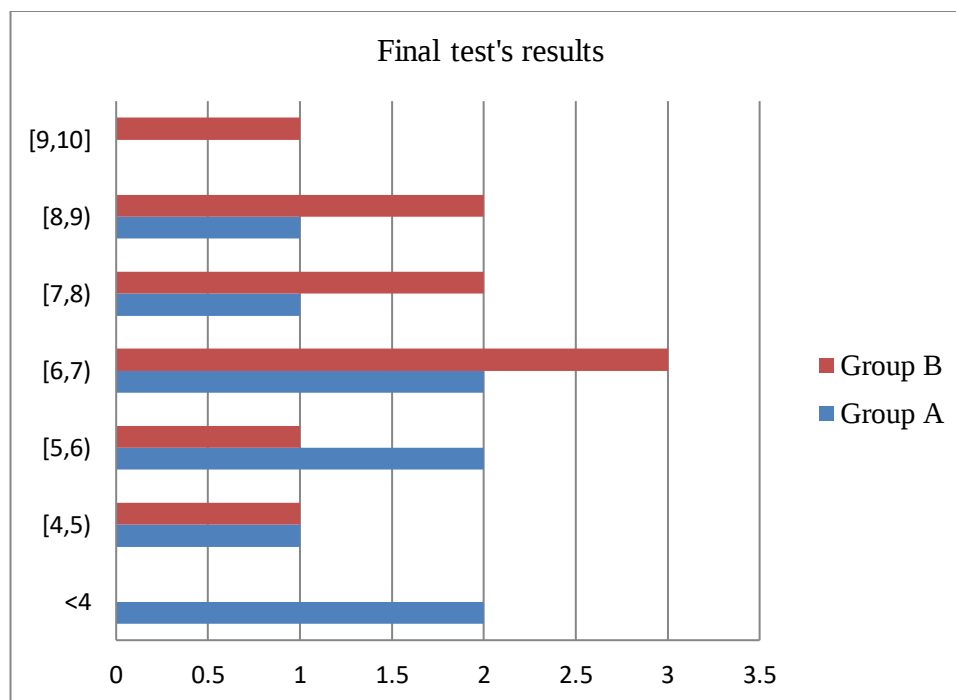
3 points for a balanced structure (greeting/introduction, content, conclusion)

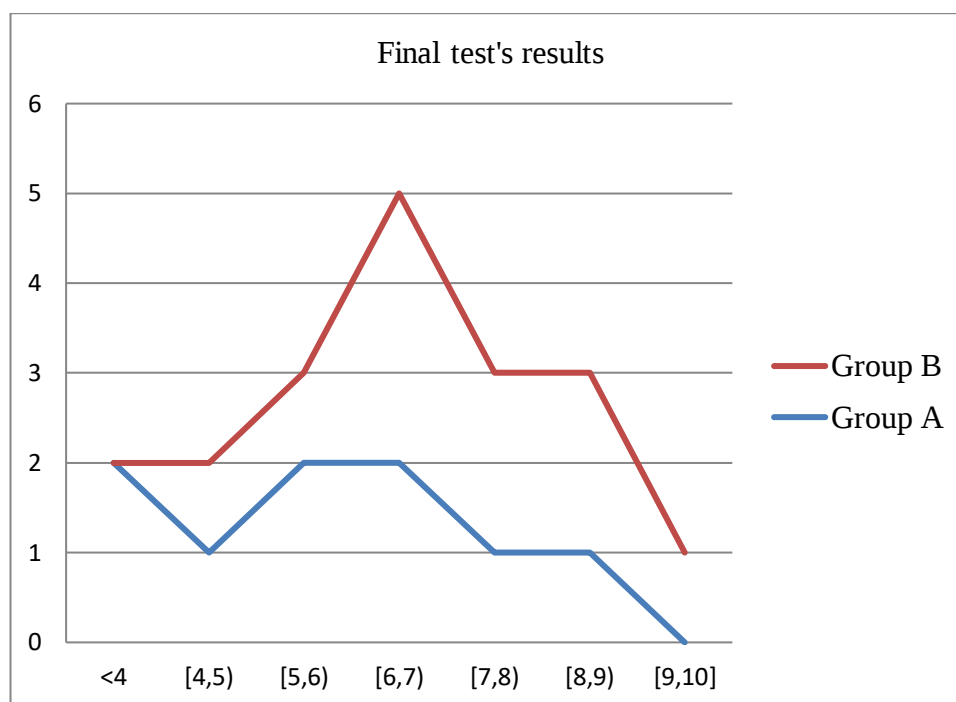
MATRICE DE SPECIFICAȚII

Competențe corespunzătoare nivelurilor taxonomice Teme Continuturi/concepte- cheie Unități tematice	Să completeze fraze lacunare	Să prezinte pe cineva-să identifice elemente din universul familiar	Să identifice greselile și să le corecteze
Past tense simple	Partea I 20p		
Describe yourself		Partea a II a 30p	
Present perfect simple	Partea I 8p		
Opposites			Partea I 6p
Countries and nationalities	Partea I 6p		
Conditional Sentences Type I	Partea I 10p		
Describe household items		Partea I 10p	
TOTAL	44	40	6

After applying the final test to both groups, the following results were obtained:

Grade Nr. students	<4	[4,5)	[5,6)	[6,7)	[7,8)	[8,9)	[9,10]	Mode
Group A (the witness group)	2	1	2	2	1	1		6,42
Group B (the experimental group)		1	1	3	2	2	1	7,50





As we can see, according to the results registered at the final test, the following data can be highlighted:

- the students from group B have considerably improved their language skills
- through the strategies adopted for group B, the students' vocabulary was enriched
- the students from group A have difficulties in using the language individually for written tasks

According to the final test's results and its accompanying visual representation, it can be underlined that the students' grades from group B are considerably higher comparing with the results from the initial test, fact that proves the effectiveness of classroom strategies applied namely songs and game-based activities in developing students' language skills. Analyzing students' results in group A, we can notice lower grades which brings us to the conclusion that the traditional teaching methods such as repetition, memorization and imitation have demotivated the students' incentive to learn. With much emphasis on verbal explanations and various types of written exercises focusing on specific grammatical patterns, traditional teaching methods draw students' attention on mechanistic aspects of language learning and language use. Therefore, even though some students were able to perform well on items involving different grammar topics such as

tenses and wh-words, they often react incompetently when expected to integrate their linguistic knowledge in communication tasks as required in exercises six and seven from the final test.

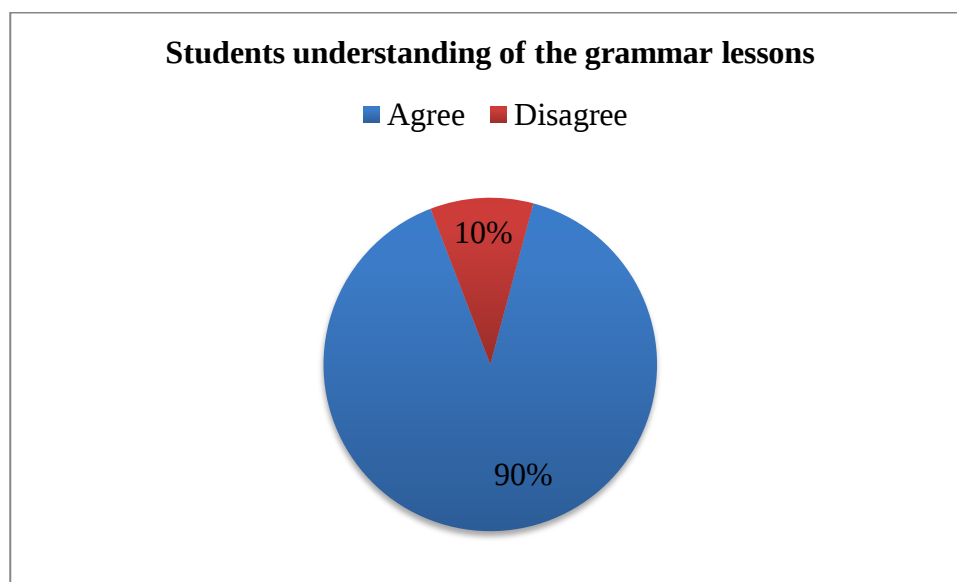
Therefore, comparing the results obtained at the initial test and those from the final tests, it can be seen that the learning tools used in the learning process for group B, were more efficient than those used for group A.

If the students' knowledge was assessed using the written evaluation, in order to assess their state of mind and how they have perceived the classroom environment during the English lesson, a questionnaire was created. The aim of the questionnaire was to see if the methods used during the learning process affected the students' performance or if they felt different from a psychical point of view participating at a more active English lesson involving singing or playing. The questionnaire was applied for both groups.

	YES	NO
I like playing games during lessons	19	1
Singing exercises are annoying	2	18
Memorizing exercises helps me more than playing games	-	20
I feel more relaxed after the English lesson	20	-
I like written exercises more than games	1	19
When I play a game I don't learn anything	2	18
Games and songs encourage me to learn	20	-
I understand grammar lessons through games	18	2
Rank the following types of games according to your preference: movement games/board games/guessing games/grouping games /card games/desk games/role-play/task based		

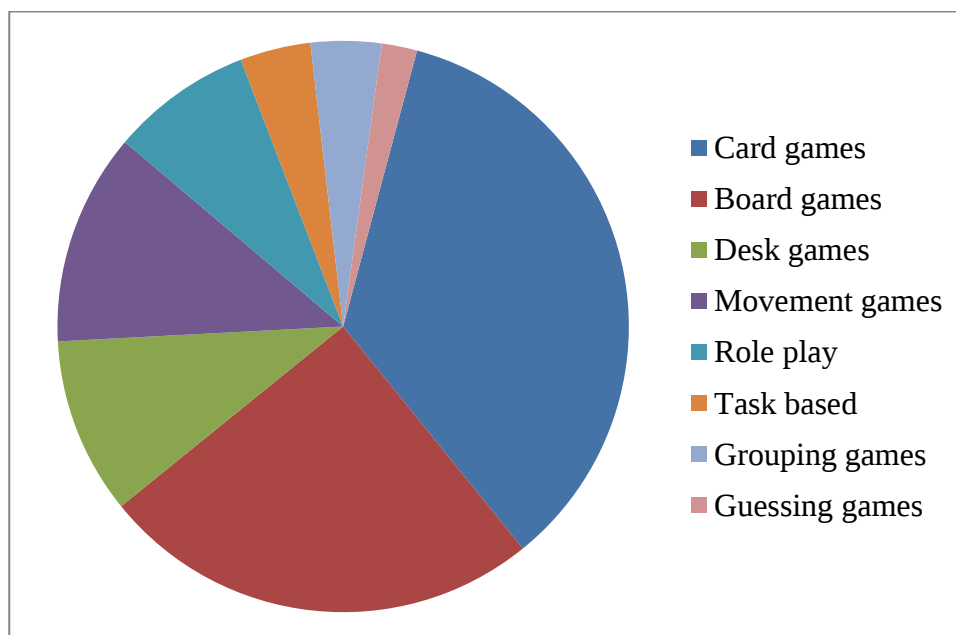
The results of the statements about the advantages and positive aspects of games and songs show that almost all the students appreciate and recognize the opportunities and advantages that games and singing activities can offer since, a great majority of the participants (99%) strongly agree that these activities are both fun and useful to learn English. None of the students disagreed with the statement that highlights the beneficial effects of methods applied.

In what concerns the grammar lessons, 90% students agree they can understand and practice lessons in class better through games, while 10% of the students answer negatively. These figures confirm that the understanding of students is high and they involve more in learning new grammar structures.



In a similar way, the results indicate all the students believe that games and songs are motivating and encourage them to learn. Moreover, the students were asked to rank their favorite games played during the lessons. As revealed by the following figure, students most appreciate board games, movement games, card games and desk games. I think the reason is that they require less effort than other games (card and board), they are more challenging and also competitive (desk games). Movement games are more about understanding orders than about practicing English; therefore, they seem easier and funnier for the students. On the other hand, role play for instance requires concentration, skills and discourages shy students. Task based games are viewed too strict and boring if the task is not challenging. The last category, guessing games, are considered boring, useless and sometimes too noisy.

Students' preference in terms of didactic games



Optionally students could add some comments or ideas. I received notes from fifteen of them and they were mostly positive. They mentioned that the activities they have participated during the English lessons on sixth grade were relaxing and informative, they liked the way how it had been prepared and especially for the lessons that involved singing, the students mentioned that they would like to see this type of activity in English lessons more often. Some students, evidently a fan of pop music, would rather prefer more modern songs

3.5 Conclusions

This topic is closely related to the activities that I have been engaged in for many years. Starting from the data presented above, we can state that teaching and learning through games and song-based activities is not only an enjoyable way of making the transition from knowledge towards competence, but also is an effective strategy to involve students in the learning process, proving the above-stated hypothesis that “songs and games are successful learning tools that improve students’ knowledge during the English classes.”

The analysis provided suggests that in-class games and song-based activities do have a positive impact on students. Students who participated in the games or singing activities did perform better on average in the final test. In addition, students who participated in the games and activities involving music appear to be more engaged in the learning process. This was supported by the higher grades given at the end of the school year and also by the abundant positive comments provided in the questionnaires where they expressed their opinions about the English lessons. In addition, the games and songs themselves each were enthusiastically received by the students, adding further credibility to the findings. As already noted, playing games and singing songs has been shown to lighten the mood and facilitate greater creativity and boost student morale.

There are many creative and dynamic ways to adapt music and games for the classroom and the presented ideas barely scratch the surface. Teachers can strengthen that connection by using creative activities that make listening to and playing educational games both entertaining and educational for English language learners.

Nevertheless, a note of caution is to be mentioned with regard to the fact that this research is indicative only of the phenomenon that it was studying, i.e. responses of the 6th-grade students taking English as L1 during the 2017-2018 school year. Thus, continued ongoing research is necessary in order to explore how this approach could be designed to develop deeper learning, and to see how this approach could be applied to different groups of students, studying at various levels across other disciplines. Such future work can contribute to the advancement and promotion of fun and interactive learning and teaching methods, never forgetting that teaching and learning is a dynamic evolutionary discipline that will always benefit from further study and research.

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