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„Songs in English Language Teaching:  
‘Englishman in New York’“

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## 1. Introduction

This diploma thesis will examine in what ways and why songs can contribute to English language teaching (ELT). The results of the theoretical research will be illustrated by presenting a plan for two lessons focusing on the song “Englishman in New York” by Sting.

Chapter 2 will start off with general considerations of the role of songs in ELT, and outline their potential for teaching. It will then continue with the role of motivation, learner autonomy and identity in second language acquisition. In 2.2 aspects of the human memory system(s) and how the human brain is engaged in a different way when music is involved will be examined.

As will be elaborated in chapter 2, music has a huge potential of promoting students’ motivation and of providing a suitable memory aid due to its effect on students’ emotions. Under the influence of music, things can be memorized more easily and better retention can be achieved, thus influencing learning positively. Motivation will be examined from a psychological point of view, and insights and neurological findings on memory and emotions will be considered as well. In this context Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis and learner anxiety cannot be neglected.

On this theoretical background, a sample lesson about the song “Englishman in New York” will be presented. The tasks will be conceived for 7<sup>th</sup> formers of the Austrian “Gymnasium”, at an advanced level of B1 according to the CEF. The procedure is supposed to be an example of how a song can be exploited in ELT, using various task formats, involving distinct types of interaction, and addressing different skills. The exercises will be dealt with in separate subchapters, and will each be brought into context with the aims of language learning as described in the CEF. Of course, the whole concept will be in accordance with the Austrian curriculum for EFL. Bearing in mind the Austrian standardized “Reifeprüfung”, it provides an opportunity for the students to practise their research and presentation skills.

At the close of the chapter, practical considerations of incorporating songs in the ELT-classroom will be mentioned. The conclusion will contain a brief comment on the outcome of the research, and will raise ideas and issues for further investigation.

My interest in the topic of this thesis originates from my studies of English and Music. I have now been teaching music at secondary level in Austria (“Gymnasium”) for two years, and have also taught English for some time, which allows me to draw on some teaching experience in both subjects.

In general, music is of fundamental importance for humans, no matter what cultures or societies they belong to (Spitzer, *Musik im Kopf* 16). Nowadays it is even more part of people’s – especially young people’s – everyday lives, as they can listen to music on their i-pods, i-phones, mp3-players regardless of their whereabouts. Radio and TV-channels offer music “around the clock”, to be listened to or watched anytime and anywhere. Almost every shop has their own background music, which is selected with respect to the image they want to convey and the taste of the clientele they want to address.

From advertising it can be observed that music has an enormous influence on whether a product is successful or not, especially when people recognize a TV-spot for a certain product when hearing, not even consciously listening to, the first few notes of a particular jingle or song, which is instantly associated with said product.

Besides, children grow up with nursery rhymes and songs, which are meant to appeal to their emotions. Songs, for instance, can be intended to soothe (e.g. lullabies), or they can be sung for the sake of entertainment or amusement. A major purpose of those basic rhymes and songs is instruction, leading to the assumption that they might facilitate Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as well.

Considering the popularity and “omnipresence” of popular music, and the fact that most songs are in English, they just cannot be left out of the English classroom. Therefore, it stands to reason that the potential of songs be exploited in ELT in secondary education. It goes without saying that the chosen songs should fit into the curriculum and that the learning aims have to be defined before planning the lesson. Of course, the song and the corresponding methods and tasks have to be chosen wisely to suit each class and age group.

The benefit of including songs in EFL has also been demonstrated by various authors, i.e. Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli (2010) or Barbara Spiset (2008), who wrote about the role of music in second language acquisition. Their work is

substantiated by their extensive research and experience. Papers have been written on the efficiency and usefulness of songs with regard to teaching grammar (Sandra Allmayer, 2008 and 2010) and about the role of English songs in students' lives (Theresa Summer, 2010). Ron Anton's Contemporary Music Approach (1990) or Carmen Fonseca Mora's Melodic Approach have been proposed and tried out. A brief description of these two approaches will be given in chapter 2.3, where some of their ideas will be explained.

## 2. Songs in ELT: Music, Memory and Motivation

Before considering any material for use in English language teaching (ELT), the Austrian curriculum for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) should be consulted.

The following extracts of the Austrian curriculum for the “Oberstufe”, i.e. upper secondary level, will prove that music and songs are definitely to be included in the EFL classroom:

### *Vielfältige Themenbereiche und Textsorten*

Zur Erlangung eines möglichst umfassenden lexikalischen Repertoires sind verschiedenste Themenbereiche zu bearbeiten (wie zB [...] Kunst in ihren Ausdrucksformen Literatur, Musik, bildende Künste). Spezielle thematische Schwerpunkte sind jeweils im Einklang mit individuellen Interessenslagen und Bedürfnissen der Schülerinnen und Schüler sowie mit aktuellen Ereignissen zu setzen.

Die verschiedenen Themenbereiche sind durch möglichst vielfältige Textsorten zu erschließen (wie zB [...] Lieder, Gedichte). (Austrian curriculum, AHS 4)

With respect to music and songs, in particular, this passage in the curriculum can be taken as an encouragement to incorporate them into ELT for several overall reasons. Working on different topics, i.e. regarding the arts of literature, music, and the fine arts, is supposed to contribute to the students' lexical repertoire. Of course, the topics should be chosen in accordance with the students' interests and needs, as well as topical events. The topics ought to be made accessible by using a variety of different types of texts. Again, songs and poems are mentioned in this context. In a goal-oriented, student-centred learning environment, it seems sensible to be aware of their interests and needs.

First of all, however, it is advisable for the teacher to carefully consider the aims and objectives of what is to be taught. Sağlam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli emphasize the necessity of “remember[ing] that music as a material can only work and be of value with the help and command of a human” (6). They also point out that “[music] needs to be specified, directed and planned to be of educational value in language teaching” (6). Apart from that, the register of the song, the genre and suitability for the age group need to be taken into account, too.

Considering the role of music in students' everyday lives, Summer points out that “[t]eenagers frequently identify themselves with a particular music style or

artist and thus, during their youth music becomes influential in the development of their personalities” (Summer 317). Evidence for that statement is provided in a survey Summer conducted on the role of English songs in students’ lives. The participants, 392 German teenagers, between eleven and sixteen years of age, were asked to answer seven questions in a questionnaire. The results show that they devote a lot of time to listening to English songs, namely 102 minutes on average per day (Summer 320). 69% of the participants stated that they liked English songs and gave reasons for this affinity (321).

Regarding students’ musical preferences, it turned out that their tastes cover a wide range of musical styles (322). Consequently, Summer stresses the importance for the teacher “to select a wide range of different songs, i.e. not only current pop-hits as frequently assumed, but also songs by bands no longer in the charts but still influential in many teenagers’ lives” (322). Finally, questions six and seven were about the students’ comprehension of song lyrics, question six having them “judge their ability to comprehend English song lyrics” (323). 53% thought that they understood “half” of the lyrics, whereas 30% claimed to comprehend “a lot” and 17% “little”. Of course, to determine the extent of the students misjudging themselves, further detailed analysis would be necessary.

The last question required the students to try to reconstruct a part of an English song that they knew well from memory, which 78% of the participants tackled. Summer presents five notable examples that were produced by ten- to thirteen-year-old students. Apart from the fact that the students had 20 minutes maximum for completing the questionnaire – not to mention that spelling presented an issue for learners of all ages – it is striking that they succeeded in writing down a song text spontaneously at that age (324-325). Of course, some students did not make any errors or mistakes, while others misspelled words or used an incorrect tense or verb ending. However, these errors show where the students had trouble understanding the actual meaning, and can in turn “serve as a starting point for drawing pedagogic conclusions”, as Summer puts it (325).

According to the quoted study, students devote a lot of time each day to listening to music, especially to English songs. Even though they might be able to write down the lyrics of a song, this does not imply that the young people



actually pay attention to their content (Summer 326). Consequently, using songs in ELT can help raise students' "awareness of the meaning of songs" (326), which will positively affect their listening skills. In addition to that, autonomous learning is encouraged.

There are some other reasons for including songs in the ELT classroom. Thaler compiled the so-called "A-Dekalog", which basically consists of 10 reasons for using songs in the English language classroom. To name a few, "[they] provide a change from everyday routine, [...] reflect young people's concerns, [...] work as teddy-bear-in-the-ear or as ersatz-lover-mother, are suitable for discursive negotiations of meaning due to their semantic ambiguity" (Thaler 169). In addition to that Mc Rae points out a song's "memorability, [and] the close links between sound and sense, rhythm and rhyme, melody and meaning" (35).

As repetition is important in context with language learning, it has to be pointed out that the structure of songs is usually comprised of repetitive features, thus providing more frequent exposure to certain words, phrases or grammatical patterns. On the one hand, there is the musical structure of stanzas that share the same melody and harmony, while the words change. On the other hand, the chorus is the major repetitive feature both in music and lyrics. A third part, the so-called "bridge" often adds a new musical element and a different or surprising aspect of content as well, but this part is not repeated. So just by listening to a song twice and then talking about aspects of vocabulary or grammar, lots of repetition takes place, which definitely supports language acquisition.

A phenomenon in this regard is the so-called "song-stuck-in-my-head syndrome". Fonseca defines it as "(in)voluntary musical and verbal rehearsal" (150). A more detailed explanation for this phenomenon is provided by Duff and Maley, who reported this effect in context with poetry. They state that certain phrases or fragments "tend to stick in our minds", that they "go on repeating themselves in our inward ear [...] without our consciously trying to recall them" (10). They also claim that those memories "enable[s] the learner to retrieve grammatical and lexical information he or she did not know they had" (11). If this holds true for poetry, how much more will it concern a song's memorability, given people's huge potential of recalling and recognizing remixes, different

interpretations of songs, and the existence of the “song-stuck-in-the-head syndrome”?

Another fact with regard to facilitating language learning with songs is raised by Isabelle Peretz, who puts it as follows, “songs are a unique combination of speech and music. Yet, these are separable in many ways, for lyrics and melody rely on separate codes” (257). She alludes to processes of double encoding taking place in the brain, which have a favourable effect on memorizing. This will be dealt with in chapter 2.2.

Having considered and elaborated on several reasons for the inclusion of songs into the EFL classroom, I will give a brief overview on ways of dealing with them in ELT. First of all, songs can be approached like texts or poems and analyzed from that point of view. They can function as a starting point for discussion, e.g. the song *Father and Son* (by Cat Stevens) in *Reading Between the Lines* (McRae and Boardman 10-11), a book that contains lots of “hands-on” material on literary texts in general.

However, there is more to a song than just the lyrics. The words correlate with the music, and this relation usually also transports a message – just like people have to read between or even beyond the lines in poetry, or to have background knowledge of the author’s personal history etc. to be able to understand a poem. Highlighting all these factors – what the harmonies, rhythm, (choice of) instruments, and dynamics tell the audience in addition to the words – is a world of its own; and some of it might be mentioned in the EFL class, some of it may lie within the providence of the teacher of music. This field actually presents an opportunity of combining the two subjects and of entering into the world of CLIL, which, however, would exceed the scope of this paper.

Still, it seems important to at least point out these aspects in the English lesson, as far as they help the students comprehend the song’s meaning and message, which Thaler also proposes in the code-referenced approach in his book *Teaching English Literature*, which will serve as a basis for the proposed sample lesson on the song “Englishman in New York” by Sting, presented in chapter 3.

Concerning the development of essential language skills and competences, songs can serve as material for listening comprehension exercises and as a

source for expanding the students' lexical knowledge. A song can act as a starting point for speaking exercises, such as an impulse for discussion or an exchange of opinion, which can trigger emotional involvement and increase the students' motivation. Plus, the students might continue thinking about the topic of discussion after the lesson and retain more of it instead of forgetting about it right after the bell concludes the lesson.

In addition to that, the wealth of topics that the use of songs can bring to the classroom can help increase the students' motivation for spoken interaction. By varying the task formats, i.e. doing group work and a presentation after that, students can work on their oral fluency and practise their presentation skills. Moreover, having groups choose different tasks offers a chance for individual learner types to choose exercises according to their interests and learning preferences.

Reading can to some extent be included in the listening comprehension activity, i.e. in a cloze or a gap text, or reordering jumbled lines. Additionally, students have to practise skimming and scanning when doing background research on the artist or the song, or they have to do reading tasks on other topic-related texts that the teacher might provide. All this will be demonstrated in the sample lesson in chapter 3.

Songs can also be used as a basis for various writing exercises. Due to their inherent creative potential, especially creative writing like inventing new lyrics for the song or even a little story, might engage the students' imagination. But the primary focus when working with songs need not be on writing, as the potential for practising skills like listening or speaking is considerable.

An important factor which has not been brought up yet but is stated in McRae's book *Literature with a small "l"* is the use of non-standard forms in songs. Thus students are exposed to varieties of English, dialect forms and a range of registers, and can expand their concept of English as a language. Summer also draws the attention to features of spoken language i.e. shortenings or slang expressions (325).

With regard to the potential of songs in ELT, Summer names learning objectives such as practising spelling and grammatical structures. She further suggests guided comprehension tasks and a reflection upon the meaning of lyrics.

Concerning the books on the role of music and second language acquisition mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli also offer many of the suggestions for the use of songs in ELT illustrated above (see 19-26). Furthermore, the authors elaborate on music, motivation and culture (26-27). Barbara Spöset, besides providing a rationale for the use of music in the second language classroom, gives a bibliographical review on the role of music in second language acquisition. In addition to that, she presents data gathered with regard to the effects of music on SLA, and deduces implications for both second language educators and further research.

Allmayer summarizes the potential of pop songs in foreign language teaching by drawing the reader's attention to the following four categories: musical and motivational potential, intercultural potential, linguistic and grammatical potential, critical reflection regarding the use of popular music in foreign language teaching (*Sprache und Musik im Gedächtnis* 120-129).

The following subchapters will introduce concepts of motivation, learner autonomy, identity and aspects of memory and provide a theoretical overview of psychological and neurological reasons for why songs can be beneficial for the students' motivation and memory.

## **2.1      *Motivation***

In this subchapter, the question of why songs can boost the students' motivation will be explored. In order to be able to do that, it is necessary to take a closer look at motivation in general, and investigate its relevance for second language acquisition. Moreover, aspects like learner anxiety, learner autonomy and identity will be considered in context with motivation.

### **2.1.1      What is Motivation?**

Definitions of motivation vary depending on the scientific discipline the researchers belong to. According to the Canadian professor of psychology, Robert C. Gardner, "motivation is multifaceted. [...] A simple definition is therefore not possible" (8). What he considers essential is that "motivated individuals express effort in attaining the goal, they show persistence, and they attend to the tasks necessary to achieve the goals." He also adds that "they have a strong desire to attain their goal, and they enjoy the activities necessary to achieve their goal" (8).

All of this is indeed desirable in the ELT-classroom. Students need to have an attainable goal for which they are willing to work. Achieving that goal gives them pleasure and instigates new enthusiasm for more work. Zoltán Dörnyei, professor of psycholinguistics, defines a goal as "the 'engine' to fire the action and provide the direction in which to act" (120), thereby highlighting the importance of goal-oriented learning. He continues by explaining that "in goal theories the cognitive perceptions of goal properties are seen as the basis of motivational processes" (120).

There are different types of motivation. First of all, there is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the first denoting the inherent desire of a person to learn something (Edelmann 230-231). The latter concerns positive or negative reinforcement like reward or pressure (232). This definition comes from the field of psychology.

Another distinction has to be mentioned in this respect, namely that between instrumental and integrative motivation. "Instrumental motivation is motivation to learn the language for an instrumental (i.e., practical) purpose, such as getting a

better job, [...] entering a better college or graduate school, and so on.” (Oxford 3). Integrative motivation, on the other hand, refers to the desire to “integrate into the activities or culture of another group of people” (Hedge 23).

Concerning all these types of motivation, Gardner argues that “what is important is not the type of motivation but rather its strength” (Gardner x), whereas Scharle and Szabo stress that in context with developing responsibility for their own learning, intrinsic motivation has to be encouraged (7). As a teacher, I have to disagree with Gardner and agree with Scharle and Szabo, as I would not want my students to be entirely dependent on extrinsic motivation. Indeed, it cannot be denied that “immediate rewards” do have a certain power, yet in the long run, intrinsic motivation is necessary to lead to successful language learning (Brown 12).

A slightly different aspect is brought into the picture by Robert Jourdain. He declares that “to be ‘motivated’ means to have a plan and to follow through on it” (311). Jourdain emphasizes that “in that we have plans for most things that we do, we are constantly in a state of motivation. [...] So normally we reserve the word *motivation* for plans that go against the grain” (311). This is an interesting definition of motivation, as it addresses a problem that many students have to face in school. Often enough, they are distracted by their immediate needs, or are concerned with their personal lives and do not really feel like studying, while others are perfectly motivated. Consequently, the teacher has to come up with attractive tasks to capture everybody’s attention and help them acquire and maintain a good level of motivation.

Another interesting consideration contributing to this discussion comes from a neurological point of view. Manfred Spitzer, a renowned German psychiatrist, psychologist and amateur musician, has been doing research in the field of neurodidactics. Based on his experience and research, he argues that the most important motivational factor in class is the teacher. According to Spitzer, teachers have to have a profound knowledge of their subject and to simply love their subject, as their enthusiasm for the subject will in turn affect the students and increase their motivation (Spitzer, *Lernen* 194).

A second issue raised by the psychiatrist is reward. This falls into the category of extrinsic motivation, which then engenders intrinsic motivation. On one hand,

students are satisfied and derive motivation when they are praised for their efforts. Spitzer emphasizes that an appreciative regard on the part of the teacher towards his or her students is equally beneficial for their motivation (*Lernen* 194). However, not the reward in itself but the surprise of a reward makes a difference (182). Ergo, even in this respect can music function as an unexpected reward and thus act as an additional motivational factor, as it provides a break of routine (Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli 5).

A recent volume of the series “Second language acquisition”, titled *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning*, edited by Murray, Gao and Lamb, presents an endeavour to link theories of motivation with concepts of identity and learner autonomy, including a consideration of respective implications for teaching. Some of the authors’ ideas and findings will be discussed briefly in 2.1.3 and 2.1.4., as these subchapters will focus on the relationships between motivation and learner autonomy and identity. Interestingly enough, the editors also include an article on EFL-teachers’ perspectives on learner motivation, presenting insights which have often been disregarded by researchers (Cowie and Sakui 213).

On a pedagogical level, it has to be noted, however, that “little research has investigated how pedagogy interacts directly with motivation in second/foreign language classrooms,” (Lightbrown and Spada 88). The authors mention only one study that focused on “the links between teachers’ motivational practice and students’ motivation for L2 learning” (88). Of course, this does not imply that teachers should not strive to encourage their students’ motivation. On the contrary, Tricia Hedge, author of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*, recommends thinking about “what aspects of motivation can be changed and [to] focus[ing] on creating successful experiences which will enhance motivation” (Hedge 23-24). So according to her, the teacher has the chance to influence the students’ motivation by choosing appropriate didactic methods, i.e. introducing a song to change the pace of the lesson.

### 2.1.2 Motivation and Success

“Motivation is of crucial importance in the classroom”, (Hedge 23), a fact that teachers have long been aware of. Studies have also shown a high correlation between motivation and successful learning, no matter where or how the students acquired their motivation (Hedge 23). This is emphasized as well by Robert Gardner, who has been doing research on motivation for decades, stating that motivation “influences the individual’s degree of success in learning a second language” (23).

Linguistics professor George Yule, on the other hand, points out that a reverse approach to motivation and success should also be taken into account. He suggests that “those who experience some success are among the most motivated to learn. Thus, motivation may be as much a result of success as a cause” (195). Therefore, “a language-learning situation that encourages success and accomplishment must consequently be more helpful than one that dwells on errors and corrections” (Yule 195).

Lightbrown and Spada confirm this correlation:

Learners who are successful may indeed be highly motivated. But can we conclude that they became successful because of their motivation? It is also plausible that early success heightened their motivation, or that both success and motivation are due to their special aptitude for language learning or the favourable context in which they were learning. (78)

Here, the authors point out that individual learner factors like aptitude and the learning environment – no matter whether social or spatial – can play a role regarding a student’s success and motivation in second language learning as well. These aspects will be given some consideration in 2.1.3 and will be illustrated in chapter 3, where the exercises will be presented.

What the teacher can contribute in this respect, is, according to Hedge, “to focus on creating successful experiences which will enhance motivation” (23-24).



### 2.1.3 Motivation and Learner Autonomy

An important factor with regard to success in language learning is learner autonomy (see Scharle and Szabó 4). The Confucian proverb, “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; if you teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime” (qtd. in Hedge 100-101), can often be found in the ELT literature on learner autonomy, as it conveys the necessity of helping students develop responsibility and autonomy.

But what does the term “learner autonomy” actually mean in the ELT context and in what ways is it relevant for the students’ motivation?

Benson defines autonomy as “the capacity to take charge of one’s own learning,” (8). In a more general way, it can also be defined as “the freedom and ability to manage one’s own affairs” (Scharle and Szabó 4). It is “fundamentally concerned with the interests of learners, rather than the interests of those who require their skills” (Benson 21). Benson alludes here to economic and political forces that might want to interfere with education and promote their own agenda, so that the learners can then “function” according to their wishes when they have completed their education (19-21).

In his article on learner autonomy, Richard Smith brings up what he calls the ‘Bergen definition’, which was developed at the University of Bergen, Norway, during the *Third Nordic Workshop on Developing Autonomous Learning in the FL Classroom* (1990), in which the authors put emphasis on learner autonomy as “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person” (Dam et al. 102, also qtd. in Smith 396). This view highlights the aspect of the learner as a social being, and clearly states that autonomous learning is not only important for individual work but is also relevant for group work. A lack of willingness to cooperate with others would invariably annihilate every attempt at group work.

All this being said, Hedge (101) points out that some uncertainty exists with regard to the interpretation of the term ‘learner autonomy’. According to some teachers, the term ‘learner autonomy’ can be interpreted “in a procedural way” and associated “with resource-based learning in institutions”. But it can also relate “to a capacity to carry on learning independently throughout life, [...] a capacity that needs gradual building and development through practice in self-

directed learning.” Finally, it can be interpreted “more narrowly to approaching classroom-based study in more aware, independent, and effective ways” (Hedge 101). Consequently, “teachers [...] will need to find their own interpretation of autonomy, and to explore relevant meanings for learner training within their own educational setting” (102).

Furthermore, it is important to note that “learner autonomy is not a particular method, nor need it be conflated with individualism” (Little 3 and 4, also qtd. in Smith 396). Helping students become autonomous learners “can be seen as an educational goal which is cross-culturally valid” (Smith 396). Naturally, adequate pedagogical methods have to be employed (396).

Ushioda (13) emphasizes that in ELT classrooms aiming at learner autonomy, “pedagogical practices that encourage students to develop and express their own identities through the language they are learning” are crucial.

In a nutshell:

[Autonomy] is an essential element in SLA because it triggers the learning process through learners’ agency and leads the system beyond the classroom. Autonomous learners take advantage of the linguistic affordances in their environment and act by engaging themselves in second language social practices. They also reflect about their learning and use effective learning strategies. (Paiva 63)

Turning to the correlation between learner autonomy and motivation, there are different views to be considered. Students need to be motivated in order to both learn and develop responsibility (Scharle and Szabó 7). Metaphorically put, you can take the horse to the river to drink, but “unless he is willing to do his part, the horse will remain thirsty” (7).

By using a song in the ELT classroom or providing the opportunity for students to present their favourite song, an opportunity for autonomous learning can be created. If students like the song and their horizon is broadened by looking at possible meanings of the lyrics, they might feel compelled to listen to their favourite songs at home more actively, because awareness has been raised in school. Thus motivation can promote learner autonomy.

On the other hand, there are researchers who claim that autonomous learning is necessary to induce motivation (Spratt, Humphreys and Chan 246). In particular, learner-centred teaching is seen “as a precursor to learner

autonomy” (Spratt, Humphreys and Chan 263). Jenny Kemp, however, emphasizes the general indispensability of motivation, no matter whether it precedes learner autonomy or whether it is its consequence (Kemp 387). The important fact is that “motivation and autonomy go hand in hand: the greater the motivation, the greater the engagement in autonomous learning and vice versa” (Kemp 387).

To help students become autonomous learners, Spratt, Humphreys and Chan suggest developing students’ motivation. Development of intrinsic motivation in areas which are within the teacher’s influence may in one way be achieved by “helping students to believe in the effectiveness of their own efforts,” (263) as the authors claim. In order to achieve that goal, they suggest “devoting more time to engaging in activities and working with materials and syllabuses which learners wish to engage in for their own sake” (263). In this context, songs are a good example, as most teenagers are usually interested in music and emotionally involved, although their preferences with regard to musical style are very widespread (Summer 322).

Spratt, Humphreys and Chan conclude their article by underlining that “one of the main ways in which teachers can motivate their students is by being models of motivation themselves” (263). This ties in with Spitzer’s firm belief that the teacher is the greatest motivational factor in the classroom (*Lernen* 194). In the course of a study on independent learning (see Murray 78-87), a number of students admitted that “their desire to learn English was inspired by a teacher whom they respected and who made language learning ‘fun’” (Murray 86). “Fun” in this case means that the students appreciated the methods and tasks that the teacher used and enjoyed their work, which enhanced their motivation.

#### **2.1.4 Motivation and Identity**

Another important aspect that has a correlation with motivation is identity. Paiva (61) writes that “[l]earning a language is also a process of identity construction.” Considering Norton’s definition of identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton 5, also qtd. in Paiva 61), which Paiva provides in her article, a person

continually modifies and expands that relationship to the world. Regarding second language acquisition, the various linguistic and social practices that the students engage in cause that expansion (Paiva 62).

Naturally, such expansion requires an openness towards new experiences, which most students possess. In addition to that, expansion occurs in fragments, which are interconnected, as “identity is not a unified experience of belonging, but an array of multiple memberships in a fractal dimension” (62).

Ushioda investigated the effect of identity on motivation. For this, she consulted an analysis of conversations in the language classroom conducted by Richards, who, based on Zimmerman’s model of situational, discursal and transportable identities (Zimmerman 90-95), presents a distinction between three aspects of identity (Richards 60, Ushioda 16).

*Situated identities*, first of all, are determined by their communicational context, the perfect example being “doctor-patient identities” in a hospital (Ushioda 16). Another aspect would be “associated *discourse identities*”, which refer to the different roles participants adhere to in an interaction. These discourse roles can change according to the communication purpose (16).

The third and, according to Ushioda, most important aspect comprises *transportable identities*. These are “latent or implicit but can be invoked during the interaction for particular reasons” (16), i.e. the teacher incidentally reveals his or her enthusiasm for a particular band or singer. This, in turn, might have an effect on students’ motivation, especially if some students share that enthusiasm, and the possibility of incorporating it into the lesson, is provided.

Ushioda explains this correlation between identity and motivation as follows:

Engaging students’ transportable identities (e.g. as a football fan, amateur photographer, art lover, film buff) can stimulate a much higher level of personal involvement, effort and investment from them than traditional teacher–student talk, where students are invariably positioned as language learners who are merely practicing or demonstrating knowledge of the language, rather than expressing their identities and speaking as themselves through the language. (Ushioda 16-17)

Therefore, talking about a favourite band or singer, or a song, can have a favourable effect on the students’ motivation and lead them to contribute in a much more personal and involved way.

In this context, tasks and methods that promote learner autonomy provide the opportunity for students to “negotiate, struggle, participate, share ideas and experiences and evaluate these” (Ushioda 22). Of course, these methods present a stark contrast to practices that focus on exerting a high level of control on students’ use of the language and their language learning behaviours (22).

Fostering a sense of community in class is very important, as the need to have satisfactory relationships with other human beings, to belong to a social group, is one of the basic needs, as described in Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory (qtd. in Edelman 233). So the extent to which these needs are satisfied, i.e. by a certain task in the ELT classroom, has a direct influence on the learner’s motivation (233).

In their teenage years, students tend to form groups according to their tastes in music. Levitin argues that “the choice of music has important social consequences” (232) and that it can be a “vehicle for social bonding and societal cohesion” (232). In other words, if you like a certain kind of music, perhaps dress accordingly should there be a certain style associated with it, you will certainly want to be part of the group in your class that does so, too. Or it might also occur that a student wants to be a member of a certain group, so he or she starts listening to the music the group likes or dressing in a specific way in order to belong, even if he or she secretly does not like the music. Jourdain points out that most people “listen to conform” (263), thus adopting music as a device of social cohesion, even if it goes against their personal taste.

So music and pop culture can play a much larger and maybe sometimes underestimated role in the ELT classroom with regard to identity, motivation and autonomy alike.

### **2.1.5 Motivation and Songs: Implications for the Classroom**

Songs can contribute to students’ motivation in many different ways.

For one thing, dealing with a song from time to time provides a variation of methods and tasks, a break of routine (Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli 5), which is always welcome to the students. There is an abundance of songs in English appertaining to different musical genres and styles from which to choose, thus

covering a broad range of topics. So there is a good chance of capturing the students' attention, raising their interest and, as a consequence, positively influencing their motivation for the subject.

Secondly, it might be a revelation for students to be able to understand the lyrics, which might induce them to listen more attentively to the lyrics of their favourite songs in their spare time. In this case the song presented in class not only acts as a motivating factor, but triggers autonomous learning as well.

In addition to that, music enforces social bonding (Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli 11), which is beneficial for the students' sense of community in class. In order to "make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn", Lightbrown and Spada recommend for teachers to ensure that "classrooms are places that students enjoy coming to" (88). Of course, due to diverging tastes in music, it will be difficult to find a song that everybody likes. But this should not deter teachers from using songs, as the same goes for any kind of text or task. However, students can be invited to bring along their own favourite songs and talk about them. This gives them the opportunity to "speak as themselves" (Ushioda 22), engaging their transportable identities.

Finally, while boosting students' motivation, songs can also reduce language anxiety. Here, especially a song's emotional value comes into play (Spitzer, *Musik im Kopf* 379). What this means for the learning process in general and specifically in context with songs in ELT will be discussed in the following section on memory, music and the brain.

## **2.2      *Music, Emotions and Learning***

In order to understand what songs contribute to ELT, some facts about music and the brain relating to learning and emotions have to be considered. Consequently, I will briefly summarize the most important findings from research in the fields of neurology, psychology and psycholinguistics with regard to memory, learning and emotions.

Therefore, the following two subchapters will deal with:

- The relevance of multi-channel information processing
- The effects of emotions on learning, triggered by music, in context with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis
- The side effects of the body's internal reward system on learner anxiety

### **2.2.1      *Memory, Music and Multi-Channel Information Processing***

Levitin states that “[t]he strength of a memory is related to how many times the original stimulus has been experienced” (197). This means that in order to integrate a new item of information into long term memory, repetition is necessary. In other words, memorizing an item means changing, i.e. adding on to the neural structure in the brain. Buhl und Cslovjecsek claim that according to neurologists, music is one of the strongest stimuli to cause neuronal restructuring (65).

When new items of information are integrated into existing knowledge, this integration will be more effective and permanent if the information is delivered through different channels, i.e. picture and language, audiovisual encoding, music and movement (Buhl and Cslovjecsek 68). This process of multiple encoding, also called multi-channel information processing, means that associations and networks will be built and modified by incoming impressions if different “channels” are involved (Allmayer 57). This is especially relevant for the simultaneous information processing of language and music (58).

In this context Allmayer adds that when listening to verbal information the phrase as a whole as well as its different (grammatical) structures are retained

and can both be recalled (Allmayer 56). This also applies to vocabulary acquisition and touches upon the importance of teaching lexical chunks.

### **2.2.2 Music, Emotions and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis**

First of all, Spitzer states that the degree of retention depends on the attention that is paid to the material that is to be memorized (*Lernen* 155).

Levitin points out that on one hand, "increased practice leads to a greater number of neural traces, which can combine to create a stronger memory representation" (197). On the other, the strength of a memory can also be determined by "how much we care about the experience", as "we tend to code as important things that carry with them a lot of emotion, either positive or negative" (Levitin 197). Thus, better retention can be achieved if emotions are involved (Spitzer *Lernen* 158). The fact that emotional involvement can significantly improve learning has, in fact, been proven in an experiment by Cahill et al. (1994, see Spitzer *Lernen* 158-160 for details).

At this point, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis has to be mentioned. It predicts successful language acquisition when the filter is low, meaning that a student has positive attitudes towards learning the language, is motivated and self-confident (Norton 119). "The filter", according to Hedge, "can be imagined as a sliding barrier which moves into place when a student is, for example, tired, dispirited, tense, or angry, and which prevents the processing of input" (21).

Accordingly, language anxiety has a negative influence on the filter, meaning that the filter is high and so language acquisition is inhibited. Putting the notion of a high affective filter into context with Spitzer's work has revealed that people are nevertheless capable of learning quickly when they experience anxiety or fear, something which Krashen's affective filter hypothesis denies. However, this kind of learning is not beneficial for the learner, as it prevents the integration of new items into existing knowledge and its application (Spitzer *Lernen* 161).

In the course of a study on memorizing words most effectively, it was demonstrated that recall was best on those words which were stored in a positive emotional context (Spitzer *Lernen* 165-166). All this definitely



emphasizes the relevance of both positive attitudes towards learning and a positive learning atmosphere.

In this context it has to be mentioned that humans react to music in an emotional way and that they want to listen to music because it affects their disposition (Spitzer *Musik im Kopf* 208). Apart from affecting the mood of the listeners and, of course, the mood of the musicians or singers, “[i]t also invokes some of the same neural regions that language does, but far more than language, music taps into primitive brain structures involved with motivation, reward, and emotion” (Levitin 191).

With regard to music and its effect on the body’s internal reward system, Spitzer reports another interesting discovery. According to him, music stimulates our internal reward system the same way that drugs or chocolate do. In layman’s terms, this means that deep in the brain a substance called dopamine is released, evoking positive feelings. But at the same time, music which the listener likes also reduces unpleasant emotions like fear or aversion (*Lernen* 187-189). In addition to that, music induces the activation of neural regions responsible for alertness and attentiveness, which implies that there could be other favourable effects of music i.e. with regard to performance (189).

Put into the context of language teaching, the use of music in class can reduce language anxiety and boost the atmosphere in the classroom, which are both favourable for successful learning.

Some of most important facts concerning language acquisition presented in subchapters 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 in a nutshell:

- The higher the number of different channels engaged in learning, the better the retention will be, including an improved accessibility of the item that has been integrated into the associative network.
- Information is memorized in a different way i.e. much faster and more permanently when emotions are involved.
- Music triggers emotions.
- If we care about the piece of information to be remembered, it will be remembered more effectively.

- When experiencing strong positive emotions, dopamine is released. This substance at the same time reduces fear and anxiety, which is important with regard to learner anxiety and the positive effect music can have on it.

### **2.2.3 Music and Language as Cognitive Systems**

As there is ongoing research on the workings of the cognitive systems of language and music, Patel's shared syntactic integration resource hypothesis (SSIRH) and some pertinent facts from Peretz' work on the topic will be presented to show current trends of interdisciplinary research. Bharucha, Curtis and Paroo's considerations about the communicative function of music promoting group cohesion will conclude the subchapter.

**Patel's** theory is based on the assumption that music and language share neural resources with regard to syntactic processing (204). He argues that both systems have domain-specific representations in long-term memory, i.e. knowledge of words including syntactic information concerning their properties versus "representations of chords and their harmonic relations" (206). These representations are stored in different regions of the brain. However, neural overlap can be observed between both systems "when similar cognitive operations are conducted on domain-specific representations" (207). As was demonstrated in a study, brain operations which are "also involved in linguistic syntactic processing", appear to be involved as well in the processing of an aspect of what Patel calls "musical grammar", i.e. harmonic structure (205).

The concept is based upon the fact that music, with its structural elements like tones or chords, arranged according to certain principles within hierarchic structures, can be viewed as a syntactic system as well, of course making allowances for significant differences with regard to linguistic syntax (207-208). I will not go into detail here, as it would exceed the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that Patel named this idea the "shared syntactic integration resource hypothesis" (SSIRH) (210).

The second source investigated with respect to shared neural processes concerns phonology, focusing on "the relationship between musical abilities and phonemic abilities in language" (Patel 216). Long story short, the evidence

presented by Patel suggests that musical ability “predict[s] unique variance in L2 [phonemic] skills” (217-218), implying that musical training could improve phonemic abilities (219).

So Patel’s theory of domain-specific representations drawing on common brain resources that “provide a particular processing function needed in both domains” (219), could have significant implications for pedagogic concepts.

Naturally, these insights cannot be taken at face value and imported directly into the ELT classroom. Further work has to be done before converting these ideas and insights into feasible concepts is advisable. However, the research and findings of Patel and Peretz can be seen as a motivation for using songs in ELT thoughtfully, because they can be beneficial for students on a cognitive basis as well.

In the following, a few interesting insights from Isabel **Peretz**’ research on music and language will be offered, gained from her article “Music, language, and modularity in action”, “in action” in this context meaning “singing and speaking” (255).

With regard to singing, she writes that “[s]inging is universal and found in all cultures” (257). Peretz also stresses the relevance of singing as a group activity and its association to a “highly pleasurable experience” (257). Consequently, she argues, singing fosters group cohesion. This social function of singing is also taken up in Fonseca Mora’s melodic approach, which will be touched upon in 2.3.2.

As music processing involves “a vast network of regions located in both [...] hemispheres of the brain”, it does not come as a surprise “that functional neuroimaging of the normal brain reveals significant overlap in activation patterns between music and language tasks” (Peretz 259). This fact ties in with Patel’s theory of a resource-sharing framework between music and language. Peretz refers to these multiple processing systems which “might be shared between music and speech, especially when singing contains lyrics” (260).

Furthermore, she mentions that among others, Callan et al. (2006) reported a higher activation “in brain regions involved in reward [...] in singing than in

speaking [...], suggesting a greater emotional component to singing. This is consistent with the fact that singing, more than speaking, is experienced as a highly enjoyable activity in general” (Peretz 261). So singing stimulates the body’s own neural reward system, which is highly relevant with regard to motivation (see also 2.2.2, Manfred Spitzer on the body’s own reward system).

Peretz’ research encourages the incorporation of songs in the ELT-classroom, as the effective use of songs can provide implicit pronunciation practice, and stimulate the internal reward system, which may have a positive effect on motivation and reduce language anxiety (see 2.2.2). In addition, group cohesion will be promoted, which is beneficial for all kinds of classroom-related work.

Besides that, her work is also included here in order to show that there is ongoing research, but it will still be a while until meaningful pedagogical conclusions and implications can be gained. In addition to that, it is relevant in context with Carmen Fonseca Mora’s melodic approach, which is given some consideration in 2.3.2.

With regard to shared capacities by music and language, **Bharucha, Curtis and Paroo** (139) emphasize the “ability to communicate affect” (139), which both language and especially music possess. According to the authors, the function of different aspects of musical communication, i.e. musical structure or a sense of motion is to “align our brain states and thereby foster social cohesion” (139). This alignment can also “promote group identity” (139), which anyone who has sung in a choir or played in a band or orchestra can confirm (146). Plus, this “social cohesive function”, which is induced by merely synchronizing emotions, is in fact “independent of the emotions themselves” (139).

Of course, this is just one aspect of what music can do, yet a powerful one. If applied with care, music can bring about an improvement of the students’ learning environment as how they feel and are accepted within a group can determine their success or failure. This includes not only singing a song but many of the activities in connection with it.

## **2.3      *Two Approaches and Allmayer's Implications for the use of songs in ELT***

In this subchapter two approaches on how songs can be used in foreign language teaching will be presented. First, Ron Anton's Contemporary Music Approach (CMA) will be considered. The CMA focuses in particular on the teaching of grammatical structures, and is based on songs that were written especially for that particular purpose. The second approach to be considered is Carmen Fonseca Mora's Melodic Approach, which illustrates the benefit of songs in ELT regarding the better retention of lexical chunks and phrases.

Thirdly, Sandra Allmayer's methodological-didactical implications for the use of songs in the foreign language classroom will be outlined.

### **2.3.1      The Contemporary Music Approach by Ron Anton**

In 1990, Ron Anton published an article about his experience with the Contemporary Music Approach, which he had developed in the course of his teaching career. The Approach is based on songs that he composed himself, each of them featuring a particular aspect of grammar. In addition to that, he chose different rhythms and musical styles for the individual songs to facilitate association of rhythm and grammar (1169).

Initially, he developed this approach for speakers of English learning Spanish. Today, songs for learning French and English as a second language are also available. For teachers of ESL, Anton offers ten professionally recorded original songs, which can be acquired on his homepage *Via Music Communications* (see bibliography).

In his project at the University of Akron, Ohio, the following procedure was established. Each song is to be presented in three stages: Song Introduction Stage, Recording Stage and Grading (Anton 1167-1168). Stage one consists of eight specific steps, which focus on the students' listening, speaking, writing, and memory skills (1167). In the following two weeks the students have to practise and memorize the song. During this so-called recording stage, the teacher should reinforce the grammar in context with material and practice in class. At the end of the allotted time, they have to present the song to the

instructor in small groups and their performance is graded. Of course, the emphasis in grading lies on aspects of pronunciation, intonation and rhythm, in short, the accurateness of the words, and not on hitting the correct pitch. To support students' confidence, Anton recommends giving at worst a B- grade at the beginning. After completing the third phase, the students are assigned to write new lyrics for the song within an additional week (Anton 1167-1168, see also Sposet 37).

Effects observed after finishing the procedure for the first two songs of the CMA were a greater willingness of students to try to speak the language and a growing "facility in expressing their ideas" (Anton 1167). Moreover, "students relax and enjoy learning through music" (1168).

To demonstrate the benefits of CMA, a questionnaire was given to 200 students after participating in the project. The results indicate that this approach has a positive influence on the students' motivation, as 93% wrote that they enjoyed learning Spanish that way, and on their perception of their own language acquisition, as 98% felt that CMA helped them learn Spanish (Anton 1169, Sposet 37-38), suggesting a boost of their self-confidence, which incidentally is one of the aims of the approach (Anton 1168). Besides that, 92% of the students "played the song for family and friends" (1169) and 50% claimed that they even listened to the songs during their spare time. This can be taken as an illustration of the songs' potential concerning learner autonomy.

Anton recommends a supplementary use of his CMA to any course book used in class (1167), but not as an exclusive method for learning a language. In addition to a booklet on the songs, he offers a CD with two versions of each song, the second version being an instrumental one for sing-along practice and for trying out the new lyrics the students are supposed to write. He also emphasizes that special care needs to be employed when doing the first two songs in class, as their presentation largely determines the students' acceptance and the subsequent success of the CMA (1168).

### 2.3.2 The Melodic Approach by Carmen Fonseca Mora

The Melodic Approach is based on the idea that music and language have several features in common (Fonseca 147), as both result from sounds that are being processed. Both are employed for conveying a message. While linguistic expression is more precise, music communicates mainly on an emotional level. Language and music also share some intrinsic features like “pitch, volume, prominence, stress, tone, rhythm, and pauses” (147). In both cases, learning occurs through exposure.

In this context, Fonseca also explains the role of “motherese”, which is the exaggerated way of speaking a mother uses when communicating with her baby. So early L1 acquisition is very much based on the integration of musical features like exaggerated intonation, repetition or the “rhythm of stressed and unstressed vowels” which “conforms to the musical pattern of a word” (149). The author then argues that EFL-teachers have also been observed making use of modified intonation, thus actually “singing” the word, i.e. when introducing a new structure (150).

The Melodic Approach suggests a conscious use of this melodic intonation, thereby “giv[ing] emphasis to the melody and prosodic features of the structure, pattern, or expression s/he is presenting” (Fonseca 150). This has to be repeated several times with emphasis on the prominent stresses. Indeed, Fonseca Mora also mentions the possibility of using a well-known tune, such as the beginning of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, for that purpose (150).

According to her,

[t]he more rhythmic and intonated the utterances we teach are, the more holistic the learning will be. By focusing on rhythm and intonation we help our students to take in the new utterance as a gestalt. By engaging the concentration and motor control of children musically, their attention can be directed away from the tediousness of articulation exercises. (Fonseca 151)

Naturally, the melodic approach is primarily suitable for young L2 learners, but Fonseca argues that it can also be useful for intermediate and advanced learners regarding the improvement of their pronunciation abilities. Additionally, in context with listening comprehension exercises, a focus on the musicality of speech can be worthwhile, thus training the students’ ability to detect “the mood

and attitude of the speakers by paying attention to their intonation contours” (Fonseca 151).

Concerning the general benefits of songs in ELT, Fonseca stresses their contribution to a “relaxing classroom atmosphere” (151), which is conducive to any kind of activity or task. She equally emphasizes a song’s memorability, especially induced by its repetitive structure, and highlights its potential of “providing students with lexical patterns” (151). In the same way, “the appropriate foreign sounds will be stored in the students’ long-term memory” (152), so that both lexical and phonemic knowledge can be retrieved in adequate situations.

### **2.3.3 Five Methodological-Didactical Implications According to Sandra Allmayer**

With regard to teaching grammar, Sandra Allmayer’s work on the subject should be mentioned at this point, because she also supports the use of songs in foreign language teaching. Based on extensive research in the field of cognitive psychology, she describes memory processes for both language and music, elaborates on insights that can be gained from these considerations and on methodologic-didactic implications for the foreign language classroom. In a second part she designs, conducts and evaluates a study which exemplifies her work. It has to be added that her investigations were carried out with respect to German as a second/foreign language, but most of it also applies to ESL/EFL.

On the basis of her research, Allmayer (*Grammatikvermittlung* 298-299, *Sprache und Musik im Gedächtnis* 110-112) lists five general methodological-didactical implications, which, according to her, have to be observed when teaching grammar via the use of songs in ELT. As mentioned above, many of those are applicable in context with vocabulary teaching and other types of exercises as well.

First of all, she proposes using the inherent structure of the song, i.e. stanzas and chorus, when teaching grammar, thus emphasizing repetition and breaks, which are both needed by the brain for effective learning.



Secondly, she stresses multi-channel information processing with regard to holistic learning. This should not only be facilitated by word-tone relations, which means that both words and music are doubly encoded in memory, but also by adding other supportive material like pictures or colours, thus delivering information to the brain in different ways.

Thirdly, Allmayer mentions the relevance of the depth of processing, suggesting that this can be achieved by learner-centred teaching and a variety of teaching techniques that enforce agency on the part of the learner, thereby providing the opportunity for them to build their own associative networks.

As a fourth implication she recommends putting more weight on explicit grammar teaching as a consequence of recent insights in cognitive psychology, which indicate that treating grammatical rules on a meta-level can facilitate information processing and storing.

The final implication concerns the teaching context, especially with regard to the selection of the song. According to Allmayer, the students' identification with the song is essential and induces an increase in motivation (*Grammatikvermittlung* 298-299).

## **2.4      *Summary of the Insights Gained From Research***

In the first two chapters of this paper, I have tried to give an overview of different theoretical aspects involved in the use of songs in the ELT classroom. The Austrian Curriculum has been looked at and concepts of motivation, learner autonomy and identity have been examined. Important aspects of learning especially with regard to the influence of music and emotion have been described and put into context with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. In addition to that, ongoing research on the topic of music and language as cognitive systems has been considered. Finally, two approaches which suggest a specific use of songs in the ELT classroom have been introduced in chapter 2.3, which has been concluded with Allmayer's methodological-didactical implications for the use of songs in foreign language teaching with regard to teaching grammar.

Concerning the **research question** of why and how songs can contribute to ELT, important aspects of research done in the last decades have been presented. It has been demonstrated that there are indeed many reasons why songs should be included in the English language classroom. How this can happen will be illustrated by presenting a sample lesson in chapter 3 of this paper.

### 3. “Englishman in New York”: Plan for a Sample Lesson

In this chapter I am going to provide an example of how a song can be used in class. For this the song “Englishman in New York” was chosen, which was written by the British singer-songwriter Sting (Gordon Sumner). After giving some background information on the song and its composer, its didactic potential for ELT will be highlighted (see 3.1). Before dealing with the proposed tasks and activities (see 3.3), a description of the lesson plan (overview including timeline and objectives) in general will be provided (see 3.2). In 3.2.10, some ideas will be presented on the follow-up lesson. Chapter three will be concluded by a consideration of several practical aspects which a teacher should be aware of when using songs in English language teaching.

At this point it has to be noted that in 2007, Helbling Languages published a booklet compiled by Gerngross, Puchta and Holzmann containing 10 songs with specific tasks for the students, as a supplement to the course books used in ELT. One of these songs is Sting’s “Englishman in New York”. However, the tasks and activities presented in this diploma thesis have been developed independently from Helbling’s booklet. This fact illustrates that a song can be presented meaningfully in different ways in ELT, according to the aims the teacher has in mind.

#### 3.1 *The Song and Its Potential for ELT*

As mentioned above, the song “Englishman in New York” was written by the musician Sting. It was first released in 1987 as the third track on Sting’s album *...Nothing Like The Sun*.

Although it became a hit more than 25 years ago, it is still played on the radio every now and then, which indicates the song’s popularity. The musical elements like its off-beat rhythm, an element of Reggae, the saxophone, an instrument associated with jazz, and the hip-hop drum section, which at the time set the song a bit apart from more popular styles, contributes to the perception of its being “timeless”. The context of the album, which as a whole is rather reflective and “quiet” – there is only one up-beat song in it – highlights the ponderous mood expressed by “Englishman in New York” (see Sting.com).

The title of the album ...*Nothing Like The Sun* is, in fact, a quote from Shakespeare's sonnet 130, the first verse line being, "my mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun", which Sting incorporated into the song "Sister Moon" (track 10 on this album, see [Sting.com](http://Sting.com) for lyrics and more information on the song). It is fascinating to note that he also put extra musical emphasis on that phrase by elegantly changing into a higher key and falling back to the previous one after only a few verse lines, thereby setting those lines apart from the rest. It also demonstrates Sting's gift for writing poetry in combination with his musical composition skills. Indeed, depending on the class that song might be used in ELT in combination with teaching literature, but should be handled with care, as it is very reflective and expressive.

Why do I think that the "Englishman in New York" is suitable for the ESL/EFL classroom?

First of all, it can serve for **listening comprehension** due to the song's intelligibility. Sting's relatively clear pronunciation is not obscured by music. This is especially relevant, as he uses rather poetic language in some passages of the song.

Secondly, it can be used to expand the students' **lexical** and **grammatical knowledge**. Apart from offering several collocations, terms such as "modesty" or "gentleness" could be examined with regard to their Latin roots. On that basis word categories and word formation patterns could be talked about, i.e. suffixes, which convert adjectives into nouns. These word categories belong to the field of grammar, which will not be discussed in the sample lesson.

The third reason concerns the **topic** of the song. It provides an opportunity to reflect on identity and cultural stereotypes, and its message, which is "be yourself, no matter what they say". The cultural concept of "gentleman" can be explored, and the stereotypes of being "British" versus being "American" can be analysed with respect to their presentation in the song. This ties in with what is required in the Austrian curriculum on the subject of *intercultural competence*:

Durch interkulturelle Themenstellungen ist die Sensibilisierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler für die Sprachenvielfalt Europas und der Welt zu verstärken, [...] und insgesamt das Verständnis für andere Kulturen und Lebensweisen zu vertiefen. Die vorurteilsfreie Beleuchtung

kultureller Stereotypen und Klischees, die bewusste Wahrnehmung von Gemeinsamkeiten und Verschiedenheiten sowie die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit eigenen Erfahrungen bzw. mit österreichischen Gegebenheiten sind dabei anzustreben. (Austrian curriculum, AHS 1)

Undoubtedly, Sting's "Englishman in New York" can be used for that specific purpose. Besides, the topical issues of tolerance, diversity and integration can be addressed. In my experience, however, these cultural notions have to be treated with caution, as they are sensitive issues. On the other hand, if done well, reflections on this subject can be beneficial for the students on a personal level and encourage them to be true to themselves ("be yourself, no matter what they say"). Of course, such an open exchange of opinion can only take place in a classroom if certain requirements are met regarding the teacher's relationship to the class as well as the social climate between the students.

The tasks proposed in the following do not explicitly focus on the personal aspects of the message, but rather on the general issues raised by the song, thereby avoiding this potential "minefield". Personal reflection can, however, be encouraged during the group phase or might find entry to a possible discussion in context with the group presentations.

The song "Englishman in New York" could also be taken as a starting point to focus on **pronunciation**, as proposed in Fonseca's Melodic Approach, especially concerning the distinctions between British and American accents. Sting comes from Great Britain, which can be perceived from his singing. It could, for instance, be interesting to try to speak (or sing) the lyrics in an American accent, provided the students already know about the particular distinctive features. Ideally, an American language assistant could be of help here. Singing the song in class presents an opportunity for implicit pronunciation practice.

Another reason for choosing this song concerns its **musical aspects**. There is potential for CLIL, which will not be elaborated on in this thesis, as it would exceed its scope. However, there are two reasons for which a group activity on music will be included in the sample lesson, the first of them being that it is proposed in Engelbert Thaler's code-referenced approach, which is an integration of different concepts relating to the song, i.e. its background, music,

text comprehension etc. The group phase of the sample lesson is based on this approach, as it is most comprehensive with respect to the training of the skills.

The second reason for adding an activity on the musical features of the song is that in my opinion as a teacher of English and music, the students should be capable of recognizing a few musical aspects like the off-beat rhythm as an element of Reggae, and the saxophone in context with the instrumental jazz part of the song without requiring any pre-teaching or additional instruction. Some might probably even recognize the drum rhythm at the end of the instrumental jazz section as coming from hip hop. Since the groups have to do different tasks, the musically gifted students might choose that activity anyway. Lots of background information on the musical elements is provided on Sting's homepage, among other sources, which the students can combine with their musical knowledge. In addition to that, they can expand their vocabulary in that field.

Apart from that, the song "Englishman in New York" can also be taken as part of **teaching literature** in ELT. Concerning the poetic nature of the lyrics, aspects like rhyme scheme or metre could be dealt with. Metre, in particular, might be interesting to be looked at in combination with certain musical elements of the song. As the syncopated nature of the melody is set against the off-beat rhythm of the accompaniment, their incongruity enforces the message of "be yourself, no matter what they say". Furthermore, the lyrics offer irony, antithesis and other rhetoric elements for discussion. Plus, the proverb "manners maketh man" could be examined with regard to its origins and cultural significance, or in context with other literary texts. An informed discussion of these aspects, however, depends on the level of the students' literary competence, as a lot of pre-teaching would otherwise be necessary. Such literary analysis will not be part of the proposed tasks in this thesis, but could, of course, be included for a fifth group in the group phase.

Finally, the song can be **sung** with the class, even though the melodic contour of the stanza might at first seem difficult for some. But due to the repetitious nature of the tune and its accompanying harmonies, it can easily get "stuck in the head". Besides that, the chorus is easy to sing. The register and range of the melody should also appeal to the students, as it does not reach high notes

and should remain in a comfortable register for both male and female students. There are, however, some factors that should be taken into consideration before attempting to sing the song with the class. These will be elaborated on at the end of subchapter 3.7.

## **3.2      *Theoretical Considerations about the Sample Lesson***

This subchapter deals with relevant theoretical aspects of the sample lesson. The concept will be brought into context with Thaler's code-referenced approach. Aspects of theory with regard to teaching speaking, i.e. practising fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension will be considered. Objectives and aims will be discussed on the basis of these theoretical considerations as well as in relation to the Austrian curriculum. An overview of the lesson including a short description of the individual tasks will be presented and factors like time or materials taken into account.

### **3.2.1      Thaler's Code-Referenced Approach**

In his book *Teaching English Literature*, Engelbert Thaler proposes three general approaches to working with songs and music videos in more detail. The *global-to-detailed approach* starts off with the introduction of singer and title, then moves from listening for the first time to global comprehension, from listening for the second time to detailed comprehension, and finally concludes in an analysis of the text (Thaler 171). The so-called *pwp approach* proposes structuring the lesson "into a pre-listening, while-listening and a post-listening stage" (171). Thirdly, the *code-referenced approach* involves the following stages:

- Working with the written text
- Comprehending the listening text
- Discussing the music
- Analysing the visuals
- Researching the context
- Integrating the five previous codes (172).

As has already been mentioned in 3.1, the tasks for the sample lesson will be based on Thaler's code-referenced approach. Thaler does not impose a particular sequence for dealing with the different codes, which led to the idea of working on them simultaneously in different groups. This should also ensure a higher degree of attention on the part of the students when they present their findings. However, I consider it important to prepare the students for the group phase by having them look at and speculate about a few important phrases taken out of the lyrics. Then they can listen to the song and gain a global impression of its content. So an important aim of the lesson is to consider the different codes from various perspectives, in Thaler's words "to find out how the written, listening, musical, visual, and contextual features complement or contradict each other" (173).

Besides being based on the code-referenced approach, this sample lesson can also be divided into a pre-listening, while-listening and a post-listening stage, as listening comprehension constitutes the central element here, thus corresponding with Thaler's pwp approach. "This procedure, with its pre-, while-, and post-listening stages" has "become standard practice" in communicative language teaching (Hedge 247).

In this context, it is worth pointing out that Thaler's approaches are based on the concept of songs being a part of literature in a broad sense. In this respect, his focus is on songs which sport allusions to literature. He even provides a list of such songs (see 169-170). In Sting's "Englishman in New York", the bridge to literature could be "gapped" by the quote "manners maketh man".

### 3.2.2 Brief Description of the Procedure

As has already been hinted at, the sample lesson plan is comprised of three stages. A **pre-listening task** is meant to prepare the students for the listening comprehension by providing them with six phrases or lexical chunks taken from the text. The task is to be done in pairs. The students are required to negotiate the meaning of the phrases, by aid of a dictionary if necessary, and to speculate on what the text the phrases were taken from could be about. At this point, they do not know that these phrases are part of a song, which should reduce the probability of someone recognizing the song. Then, they are asked to put the



phrases into the order in which they think they will be presented in the text. The pre-listening stage should take no longer than 5-7 minutes.

The first **while-listening task** is to make sure that the phrases are arranged in the correct order, and then, while listening for the second time, to view them in their context, presupposing that the students are given the lyrics after having listened for the first time. Granted, the teacher could also set some comprehension questions for the second listening. However, as doing a song in class should also add variety to usual classroom routine (according to Saglam, Kayaoglu and Aydinli 5), I would refrain from doing that in this case and give the students a chance to work on the meaning implicitly or explicitly during the group phase, provided the students' level of language competence allows it.

Instead of just one **post-listening task**, several different tasks to be worked on in groups of 3-4 students are suggested to follow the while-listening stage. For this sample lesson, four different group tasks have been designed on the basis of Thaler's **code-referenced approach**. The groups will be working on

- a detailed comprehension of the lyrics,
- will discuss the musical elements of the song,
- will view and analyse the corresponding music video,
- will do research on the context of the song.

The aspect of "working with the written text" will be left out, the reason being explained in 3.1. Depending on the number of students in the ESL/EFL classroom, two groups can be assigned to work on the same group task independently from each other. As electronic media are necessary for the research, students might be obliged to work in a room with according equipment, which should not be a problem for 7<sup>th</sup> formers.

When the students come back from the group phase, the song should be listened to and **sung along** to the record as a conclusion of the lesson.

### 3.2.3 General Objectives of the Concept

The tasks especially address the following **objectives** listed in the Austrian **curriculum**: to strive for a wide range of student-centred, process- as well as product-oriented methods, a variety of task formats and strategies, which foster

language acquisition as well as support the development of dynamic abilities, the so-called “key competences” (Austrian curriculum, AHS 2). In this context, various techniques are to be employed, like presentations supported by media or project work. The curriculum also requires addressing different channels of perception and processing etc. (2).

All these objectives should be achieved to some extent in the sample lesson, as it is first and foremost based on **student-centred teaching**, which is reflected in the task formats, strategies and types of interaction required to complete the tasks successfully. Although presentations are not included in the sample lesson, it is implied that they should be done in the follow-up lesson. It is up to the teacher to decide whether and what kind of visualization is to be used.

In addition to that, **dictionary work** in every imaginable way (use of monolingual, bilingual dictionaries, use of print-, cd- or online-versions) can be practised as well, another objective that is emphasized in the curriculum (2).

### 3.2.4 Aims and Theoretical Considerations Concerning Speaking

One of the main objectives of the proposed concept for a lesson is to give students ample opportunity to **practise fluency** in a non-threatening environment. Working together in groups should help in this case, and also ensure that they are prepared for the informal presentation that can be done in of the following lesson. Hedge defines fluency as “the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation” (54).

There are “several criteria necessary for achieving fluency” (57) summarized by Hedge, which were considered and incorporated when designing the sample lesson. First of all, “[t]he language should be a means to an end, i.e. the focus should be on the meaning and not on the form” (57). This is guaranteed by having students negotiate the meaning of lexical chunks and phrases in the first task, and by having them speculate on what these phrases could be about in the larger context of a text. This relates to another argument, namely that “[t]here must be a negotiation of meaning between the speakers, i.e. students must be involved in interpreting a meaning from what they hear and

constructing what to say as a response” (Hedge 57). The pre-listening task, in which the students have to clarify the meaning of lexical chunks and phrases taken from the lyrics, speculate on what those phrases could be about and put them into an order they think plausible, is meant to involve students in a negotiation of meaning. Additionally, they have to reach a consensus with regard to ordering the phrases.

“In order for the previous criterion to function, what a learner hears should not be predictable, i.e. there should be an information or opinion gap” (Hedge 57). This is not 100 percent the case, but it could be argued that the “selection of relevant information” (58), which Hedge concedes can be required in an information gap activity as well, and the general criteria required in the group phase (see 3.3.3 for details) fall into that category. Apart from that, the pre-listening task includes a reasoning-gap concerning the “ordering” task of the phrases, as the students are engaged in “deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns” (Hedge 59). This required selection of information is also connected to the aspect that “[t]he content should be determined by the learner who is speaking” (57). Of course, instructions are needed to provide a framework for the topic to be talked about or the information to be found out. But in order for this to work, the students have to “formulate and produce ideas, information, opinions, etc.” (57).

Fluency practice is also characterized by the practice and development of strategic competence, i.e. “improvising and paraphrasing in speech (58).

Finally, Hedge addresses the field of error and mistake correction, emphasizing that “[t]eacher intervention to correct should be minimal as this distracts from the message” (58). It could also discourage students especially during presentations, and might have a negative side effect on their confidence. In this case it would be better for the teacher to write down some of the problems and work on them another time.

It has to be pointed out that despite of there being no explicit speaking task, opportunities for practising speaking have nevertheless been integrated into the pre-listening task on the one hand and the group phase on the other, as is evident from previous subchapters. The types of interaction required are

therefore pair work and group work, respectively, the group consisting of 3-4 students per group. The purpose of the pre-listening task is for the students to get to know some of the more challenging or significant phrases of the song, without knowing that the text the phrases were taken from is a song, as some of the students might recognize the song, thus cutting short a potential negotiation of meaning and speculation.

Language anxiety should be kept to a minimum by allowing students to talk to their partners before sharing any ideas with the whole class. The same goes for the group phase. The fact that presentations might take place in a follow-up lesson would provide some extra time especially for students suffering from acute language anxiety to practise their part of the presentation at home in advance.

### **3.2.5 Aims and Theoretical Considerations Concerning Vocabulary Acquisition**

In fact, the proposed sample lesson does not contain any task which focuses explicitly on vocabulary. The pre-listening task, however, requires students to work with lexical chunks and phrases, which is why a few theoretical aspects with regard to vocabulary acquisition will be considered in this section.

First of all, by confronting the students with phrases which they will encounter at least six times during the lesson (i.e. when clarifying meaning, speculating about the context, putting them into a plausible order, checking the order while listening for the first time, paying attention to the context in which they are presented while listening for the second time, and singing the song at the end of the lesson), enough opportunity for repetition is provided to enforce the acquisition of new lexical chunks and phrases.

Students are required to find a suitable context for the phrases before they are given the context in which they actually occur in the song. Thereby, different semantic networks can be activated, depending on the extent of speculation the students achieve when negotiating the meaning and speculating on the context. In this respect, Hedge mentions Schouten-van Parreren's argument that "if learners have to perform certain activities on unfamiliar words in texts, there is a

good chance of retaining the words” (120). It should also be said “that learners are more likely to remember a word if they have worked on its meaning actively” (Hedge 121).

An important aspect has to be mentioned at this point, which is that hearing the phrases in the context of the song adds another channel to the incoming information (see also 2.2.1), thus bringing with it the advantage of multiple encoding. As Summer puts it, “songs [...] are considered to help the learner memorise chunks of language due to the dual combination of language with rhythm and melody” (318). This is confirmed by Fonseca, who concludes that songs present “an effective way of providing students with lexical patterns that are stored in their minds and that can be effortlessly retrieved during any oral interactions” (151) due to their memorability. Both authors refer to the “song-stuck-in-my-head” phenomenon, which is explained in 2.2.1.

In consideration of the pre-listening task proposed for the sample lesson, Hedge’s argument that teaching lexical phrases offers the advantage that their speedy retrieval from memory “will help learners to produce the language more fluently” (55) applies. This effect originates in the fact that focusing on specific lexical chunks at the beginning is intended to achieve the activation of existing knowledge and effect its integration into said knowledge. Indeed, Little points out that “each increment must be accommodated to what the learner already knows by various processes of adjustment and revision. New knowledge, in other words, necessitates the reorganization of existing knowledge” (15).

Furthermore, Spitzer explains that each experience and impression leaves a trace in the brain. When experiencing the same stimulus anew, recognition will be faster and more effective (118-119). Based on the assumption that among other neural systems, words are also interconnected within a semantic network (Hedge 122), and that the nearest connections are primed when a word is processed, the proposed pre-listening task could have a positive effect in this regard.

Besides that, the pre-listening task provides an opportunity for students to train certain cognitive strategies like “using clues in the text to guess meaning, using knowledge of affixation, and checking in a dictionary to establish a word’s meaning for themselves” (Hedge 90). It can be argued that the pre-listening

task requires some of these cognitive skills and that it further trains them. Of course, said skills are a necessary precondition in order for the students to be able to solve the vocabulary task in the first place.

### **3.2.6 Aims and Theoretical Considerations Concerning Listening Comprehension**

First of all it has yet to be mentioned that the concept of the sample lesson is based on a task-based approach. As part of communicative language teaching, there are certain criteria for a communicative task. In fact, Hedge lists the same criteria that were presented in context with practising fluency in this thesis in subchapter 3.2.7 (see Hedge 359 and 57-58).

With regard to introducing a listening activity in ELT, McRae points out the interesting fact that “it is usually demotivating to read the lyrics before or during the first hearing of the song” (36), as the first hearing is meant to arouse the students’ curiosity. This is achieved in the sample lesson. The pre-listening task in this case, involves a combination of a vocabulary and speaking task. One of the main aims of the pre-listening task is the activation of prior knowledge, thus preparing the “neural soil” for effective vocabulary acquisition to occur.

Before presenting the students with a while-listening task, it is important to consider whether the task has to be adapted to the students’ level of English, as a less difficult while-listening exercise can be beneficial to the students’ motivation especially if the language level of the song is a bit too difficult for their current level of knowledge. Thus the “degree of response required” can be influenced (Hedge 253). In the case of the song “Englishman in New York”, such grading will not be necessary, as the students should have a sufficient command of English.

Every song carries a message, which is expressed by both music and lyrics. This is a fact that the students should be made aware of. While a music teacher can elaborate on the aspects of the message expressed by the music, the language teacher will concentrate on the lyrics. In this context Summer’s findings, which were introduced at the beginning of chapter 2, are worth mentioning for a second time. One of the questions in her survey required the

students to reconstruct the lyrics of a song they knew well. She found that students are indeed “capable of writing down lyrics, but do not always seem to comprehend actual meaning” (326). To change that Summer suggests “creating tasks in which students are guided and lead [sic] to understand the content of a song text” (326), which “could encourage students to comprehend a text and teach them how to listen not only to the melody, rhythm, and text, but also to reflect upon the meaning” (326). On a long term basis an increased attention to the lyrics of a song and their meaning can be achieved, and the students “will become more proficient listeners” (326). Of course, such active listening will have a positive effect on the expansion of the students’ vocabulary and encourage autonomous learning.

As the proposed sample lesson should also to some extent present a break from classroom routine, the post-listening task has been converted to a post-listening stage in which the students are required to do research in groups of 3-4 and to prepare a short presentation on one of four topics indicated in 3.2.2, which can take place in a possible follow-up lesson.

### 3.2.7 Overview of Lesson Plan

The proposed lesson plan is comprised of different methods, task formats and types of interaction, namely pair work, individual work, group work, computer-based research, and a presentation. The latter will not be described in this sample lesson plan, but is meant to be done in the follow-up lesson. The time between the lessons offers an opportunity for the students to do some more research on their topic if they want to improve the quality of their presentation. At the same time autonomous learning takes place.

The sample lesson plan is meant to address all the skills to some extent, but the primary objectives are practising fluency in spoken interaction, vocabulary acquisition and listening. Therefore, the immediate focus with regard to the theoretical considerations has been on these three domains.

The tasks presented in this thesis are designed for 7<sup>th</sup> formers of the Austrian “Gymnasium”, on an **advanced level B1**. However, the proposed exercises might also be conducted towards the end of a 6<sup>th</sup> form if the students’ language proficiency is adequate. During the 7<sup>th</sup> form, the students’ command of the receptive skills may already be close to B2, whereas it takes longer to become proficient in the productive skills on the level B2. This explains why some of the CEF descriptors have been taken from level B2.

In addition to that, the tasks are meant to provide some practice in preparation of the paper (“Vorwissenschaftliche Arbeit”) they have to write, present and discuss as part of their school leaving exam.

**Timeline:** The sample lesson is planned to take 45 minutes, offering an the additional 5 minutes as extra time, in case the students have to go to the computer room for the research. A potential revision and comparison of homework at the beginning of the lesson should be postponed or skipped due to time constraints.



**Lesson plan** of the sample lesson on the song “Englishman in New York”:

<b>Name and type of Activity</b>	<b>Task Description</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Time <i>Material</i></b>
Pre-listening stage Paired activity	Vocabulary task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumbled phrases: clarify meaning (by means of dictionary)</li> <li>• Speculate on what the text the phrases were taken from could be about</li> <li>• Put phrases into order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate and expand students' voc. knowledge</li> <li>• Practise dictionary work</li> <li>• Train their associative competence in order to activate their semantic network</li> </ul>	5-7 min. <i>Slips of paper with phrases for each pair</i>
While-listening stage Individual work	Listening Comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening for the first time: Check the proposed order of phrases</li> <li>• After: Compare in class and distribute lyrics</li> <li>• Listen for a second time, paying special attention to the phrases studied before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practising the students' listening skills, both listening for detail and global comprehension</li> </ul>	10 min. (Duration of song: 4'25") <i>Record of Song</i> <i>Handout with lyrics</i>
Introduction to group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction of the tasks and organization of groups</li> <li>• Each group receives handout with detailed explanation of their task</li> </ul>		5 min. <i>Handout for each group with detailed instructions</i>
Group phase Doing research in groups of 3-4 sts.	Groups work on their tasks. Some might have to go to the computer room.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on research competence</li> <li>• Increase discourse competence</li> <li>• Practise fluency in oral interaction</li> </ul>	20 min. Allotted time for the groups: 15 min.
Sing the song	Singing along to the record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pronunciation skills</li> <li>• Reactivate semantic networks</li> </ul>	5 min.

The remaining 3-5 minutes are intended as extra time in case it is needed for individual tasks.

### 3.2.8 Advantages of the Sample Lesson

The advantages of the proposed sample lesson are that the work is **student-centred**, which in context with the song and the diverse tasks especially during the group phase should be conducive to the students' motivation, and therefore make their work more effective. Working in pairs and in groups is to present an opportunity for practising fluency in a less-threatening environment than in a teacher-student interaction or in a class discussion. Naturally, the use of the English language is a first priority and has to be supervised.

Another advantage is that learning can take place on various levels, i.e. on a linguistic, a meta-linguistic level, in context with the skills and competences involved in doing research, in selecting appropriate information, and according to personal interests in context with the song. As a bonus, students can profit from each other's knowledge and competences when doing cooperative work, which they will have to in order to successfully fulfil all the tasks set in the sample lesson.

Cooperative learning is explained by Hedge in the following passage:

One reason for promoting groupwork in some school classrooms is that an educational goal within the general curriculum is to encourage cooperative learning. This is seen to have valuable outcomes both within education and in the world beyond the classroom. Co-operative learning has been variously defined, but one general characteristic is that individuals are responsible within the group and accountable to it, and that all members are therefore expected to make their contribution. A second characteristic is interaction in which students are dependent on one another to achieve an outcome. (278)

Being responsible for their own progress and at the same time for the outcome of the group work can enhance motivation as well as promote autonomous learning.

As far as speaking is concerned, in a teacher-student interaction only one person can talk at a time, whereas in group work, many students get the chance to practise oral fluency. This constitutes another benefit of student-centred teaching and learning.

The concept of such a lesson could be adapted to other songs as well. Of course, some songs are better suited than others and tasks might have to be altered. Still, the benefits of this kind of work are considerable.

### 3.2.9 Considerations of the Required Materials

An issue that has not been treated yet are the materials needed for the proposed lesson. First of all, a **record** of the song has to be procured. Naturally, the song can be found on youtube, but unfortunately the quality is not the best. It would be better to buy the CD or to acquire the song on iTunes, which of course predetermines the electronic device that is necessary for playing the song in class. In addition to that, a teacher should be familiar with the technical equipment and opportunities provided by the school and can therefore make an adequate selection of the best method.

If the class in question participates in computer-based instruction and the students use their own laptops for the lessons anyway, it will not be necessary to reserve a computer room for the research tasks. Otherwise, a timely reservation is paramount. Students also have to be told in advance to bring **headphones** to class, so that the two groups doing work on the video and on the music of the song do not disturb each other during the group phase.

Apart from that, the necessary **handouts** have to be provided (lyrics, instructions for the groups) and slips of paper with the jumbled lexical chunks and phrases have to be prepared (one series per pair of students working on them).

### 3.2.10 Suggestions for a Follow-up Lesson

As the sample lesson ends with singing along to the record, the presentations of the group phase need to take place in the following English lesson. The procedure could be:

- presentation of group work (approx. 40 minutes, 3-5 minutes presentation time per group, plus giving room for further discussion if necessary)
- 5 minutes round-up: "What have you gained from studying this song"
- Sing the song again (5 minutes)

Alternatively, the pre-listening vocabulary task and the while-listening activity could also be done in the previous lesson, thus being able to start directly with the group phase. As a consequence, the presentations could be started right after that, and a short discussion on relevant aspects or singing the song could conclude the lesson, provided there is some time left. However, this would take away the opportunity for the students to do some additional research at home in case they are not done with their research within the 15 minutes allotted to them.

### 3.3 ***“Englishman in New York”: The Tasks in Detail***

The following chapter presents all the tasks proposed in the sample lesson on the “Englishman in New York” in detail, ready for practical implementation. A short comment on relevant aims, skills addressed, methods and types of interaction employed, and a note on materials is provided for each task, followed by a description of the tasks. In addition to that, instructions for the students and practical implications to be considered are suggested.

#### 3.3.1 **Pre-Listening Stage: Negotiation of Meaning**

**Aims:** Activate and expand students’ vocabulary knowledge; practise dictionary work; train their associative competence in order to activate their semantic networks

**Skills addressed:** Lexical competence, spoken interaction

**Type of interaction:** Pair work

**Method:** Student-centred learning

**Material:** Slips of paper containing a phrase from the song “Englishman in New York” for each student, dictionaries

**Task description:** Students are presented with 6 slips of paper each, each slip containing a lexical chunk or phrase taken out of the lyrics of the song “Englishman in New York”.

The chunks and phrases are the following:

- the hero of the day
- manners maketh man
- takes more than combat gear to make a man
- suffer ignorance and smile
- you could end up as the only one
- modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety

These chunks and phrases are jumbled and have to be put into the correct order after clarifying their meaning and talking about what the text they come from could be about. This part of the exercise is pair work. The teacher should

be available as a resource and monitor. Dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual) should be available for the students' use, or they could also be allowed to use online dictionaries on their smartphones. Indeed, this could present a practice opportunity for the use of online dictionaries, which they have to be capable of when they write their paper for the school leaving exam.

The **instructions** the teacher should give are the following:

*Step 1:* I am going to distribute slips of paper with phrases taken from a song we are going to listen to today. Think about what each of these phrases could mean. Then talk to your neighbour and exchange your ideas. Use a dictionary if you need to look up a word.

*Step 2:* Speculate on what the song from which the phrases were taken could be about and share your ideas with your partner. Then try to put them into the order in which you think they will occur.

After completing steps one and two, ideas on the topic of the song and the proposed order of the lyrics should be shared with the whole class. This, of course, has to be instigated by the teacher.

### 3.3.2 While-Listening Stage: Listening Comprehension

**Aims:** Practising the students' listening skills, both listening for detail and global comprehension

**Skills addressed:** Listening comprehension, reading for detail

**Type of interaction:** Individual work

**Method:** Student-centred learning

**Material:** CD and CD-Player for best quality, or other electronic devices, handout with the song lyrics

**Duration of song:** 4'25"

**Task description:** In this phase the students listen to the song twice and check the accuracy of their guesses from the pre-listening task. After having listened for the first time, the order of the phrases should be correct. For the second round of listening the students receive the handout with the lyrics so that they can see the phrases in their original context.

**Instructions:**

You are going to listen to the song “Englishman in New York”, by Sting twice. While listening for the first time, check if you have guessed the actual sequence of the phrases correctly. Make sure that the slips are in the correct order and number them.

Before listening for the second time, you are going to get a handout with the complete lyrics of the song. Locate the phrases you have been working on and highlight them.

With regard to information processing, two channels are employed, namely auditory and visual, fostering retention of new vocabulary and phrases. Apart from that, the two codes of language and music are involved as well (see chapters 2.2.3 on music and language as cognitive systems). Highlighting the phrases adds another visual stimulus for memorizing.

### **3.3.3 Post-listening stage: Group work**

As a post-listening task – or rather post-listening stage, as Thaler terms it in his pwp approach (171, see also subchapter 3.2) – group work is suggested. This has to be prepared in detail beforehand, as otherwise confusion could result if the instructions are not explained in the proper sequence or material is distributed at the wrong moment.

**Aims:** Work on research competence; negotiation of meaning; practising fluency in oral interaction; enhancing presentation skills;

Skills addressed:

**Skills addressed:** In fact, the different group activities address all skills that are necessary for successful communication in a foreign language. Of course, the focus of group work is on spoken interaction, but there are other skills engaged, too, i.e. listening, as the students have to listen to each other in order for effective communication to occur. The notes on the presentation cards require writing skills. Jotting down key words means that students have to concentrate on the main points of an argument and choose the most important pieces of information. Reading skills are needed for reading the handout and of course for the research, where skimming and scanning are essential. In other words, students have to be competent both in global understanding and in reading for detail.

**Types of interaction:** Group work

**Method:** Student-centred learning

**Material:**

- Laptops or smartphones, or – if possible – access to the computer room for the group phase
- Ask students in advance to bring their headphones. It might also be useful to organize headphone jack splitters so that more students can plug in their headphones and listen at the same time, in case there is a limited supply of electronic devices for listening and watching
- Handouts for the groups
- Presentation cards
- Mobile phone with timer for signaling the end of the group phase

Depending on the number of students in the class (usually around 24 students in an English group), two groups can work on the same task independently, or the number of participants in the groups can be varied.

By doing the tasks demanded in the group the students have a certain degree of autonomy which should boost motivation.



**Instructions:**

The following 15 minutes will be spent working together in groups of 3-4. Each group will get a different task which will be explained in detail on the handout your group is going to get. There are four different tasks to choose from.

Group 1 is going to have a closer look at the lyrics and examine their meaning and implications.

Group 2 is going to do research on the context of the song and its singer.

Group 3 is going to find out about instruments, musical styles and other musical elements in the song.

Group 4 is going to analyse the original video.

You will be expected to do a short presentation on your research in the next English lesson. After the presentations there will be a discussion of some of the issues raised.

With regard to the CEF, the following descriptor of spoken interaction – especially informal discussion (with friends), level B1 advanced – is being trained:

*Can follow much of what is said around him/her on general topics provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly. Can express his/her thoughts about abstract or cultural topics such as music, films. Can explain why something is a problem. Can give brief comments on the views of others. (CEF 77)*

**Instructions for group 1:****Group 1: Being British versus Being American**

- What is the message of the song?
- What issues are addressed in the song?
- What is said in the song “Englishman in New York” about the

stereotypes of being British and being American? Describe the characteristics of the typical Englishman and the typical American as presented in the song.

Keep in mind that you will have to present your findings to the class. You need to work together on the tasks and make sure that each of you will present part of your findings to the class. Be careful to structure your presentation and present the most important points with regard to the tasks your group has been given. Your presentation should take between 3 and 5 minutes. You will be given presentation cards for the key words.

Beware talking about being different in a majority group can unleash conflicts (not only) in a multi-cultural classroom.

Furthermore, the individual may not *want* to reveal his private life in a public role. Thus, encouraging learners to explore and share their own personality can actually be seen as an unwarranted intrusion on privacy, and as the imposition of alien attitudes, in some cultures and for some individuals. In which case, it may lead to a *disengagement* from learning. (Widdowson 13)

Therefore this aspect ought to be treated with care. I have tried to “defuse” the task for group 1 as much as possible by basing it entirely on the lyrics and their implications. It lies within the providence of the teacher, whether it is sensible to put the song into context with the actual situation in Austria or whether to concentrate on the song’s message (“be yourself, no matter what they say”). Basically, this discussion of cultural stereotypes meets the requirements of the Austrian curriculum (see beginning of chapters 2 and 3), but it takes some tact in order not to hurt anybody’s feelings.

### **Group 2: The Song and its Context**

- Find out about Sting, the singer-songwriter who wrote and performed the song “Englishman in New York”. Concentrate on the most important

facts.

- When was the song first released? Give some brief background information on the album it was presented in.
- A word of advice: Check out Sting's homepage.

Keep in mind that you will have to present your findings to the class. You need to work together on the tasks and make sure that each of you will present part of your findings to the class. Be careful to structure your presentation and present the most important points with regard to the tasks your group has been given. Your presentation should take between 3 and 5 minutes. You will be given presentation cards for the key words.

This task involves online research and selecting relevant information out of a wealth of details. Both competences are needed for the Austrian "Reifeprüfung". In addition to that, the first part of the CEF descriptor for overall reading comprehension, level B2, applies here: *"Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes and using appropriate reference sources selectively"* (CEF 69).

**Material for group 3:** headphones, electronic device for listening, access to the internet via computer or smartphone

### **Group 3: Discussing the Music**

- Which musical style(s) does the song belong to?
- Which musical elements are presented?
- Which instruments can you identify?

For information look up the song "Englishman in New York" on Sting's homepage. There he describes his motives for writing it, as well as talking about the music in detail. Note that the song is part of the album ...*Nothing*

*Like The Sun*, but you might find out more if you look up the Single version which was released in 1988.

Keep in mind that you will have to present your findings to the class. You need to work together on the tasks and make sure that each of you will present part of your findings to the class. Be careful to structure your presentation and present the most important points with regard to the tasks your group has been given. Your presentation should take between 3 and 5 minutes. You will be given presentation cards for the key words.

**Material for group 4:** Headphones, electronic device for watching the video, access to the internet via computer or smartphone

#### **Group 4: Analysing the Video**

Watch the original video of Sting's "Englishman in New York" on youtube (link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d27gTrPPAyk>>).

- Describe the people featured in the video. Where are they? Who are they? What are they doing?
- Why do you think the video is in black and white?
- How does the video relate to the lyrics of the song?

Keep in mind that you will have to present your findings to the class. You need to work together on the tasks and make sure that each of you will present part of your findings to the class. Be careful to structure your presentation and present the most important points with regard to the tasks your group has been given. Your presentation should take between 3 and 5 minutes. You will be given presentation cards for the key words.

**End of group work phase:** Give an acoustic signal (e.g. alarm clock on mobile phone) 2 minutes before time is expired and when the group phase is over.

The last 5 minutes of the lesson are dedicated to singing the song. This is meant as a sing-along activity with the CD providing the music.

This activity appeals to the emotions, which facilitates memorizing relevant lexical items and at the same time helps students improve their pronunciation.

Fonseca supports this idea in her Melodic Approach. She says, “[s]inging is an easy way of memorizing something. [...] Melody seems to act as a path or a cue to evoke the precise information we are trying to retrieve” (150).

### **3.4      *Practical Considerations***

In this final subchapter, several general considerations for an adequate use of songs in the ESL/EFL classroom will be presented from the practical viewpoint of a teacher of English and music.

First of all it has to be mentioned that the teacher can include this fascinating aspect of language whenever deemed necessary. In times of well-equipped classrooms with computers and beamers and internet platforms like YouTube, iTunes and Spotify, finding a song online should be relatively easy. The lyrics can usually to be found on the internet, but it is highly advisable to check their accuracy, as mistakes often occur, according to my own experience.

The teaching aim is essential and should be communicated to the students so that they do not lose their motivation in case of a more advanced language level than they are used to. In this context the level of difficulty of the lyrics has to be considered, which indeed applies to all texts taken directly from the “English speaking world”, and the intelligibility of the words has to be assessed as well. If the lyrics are difficult and the level exceeds the students’ current command of linguistic and cultural knowledge, the level of the task has to be adequate. Otherwise, this could have negative consequences for the students’ motivation.

A song might be suitable for teaching a particular grammatical structure, introducing a topic etc., but a teacher needs to choose a song which the majority of the class will enjoy. In general, it can be recommended to use songs of different genres, styles and periods in order to broaden the students’ knowledge of musical culture of the different cultural communities of the target language. This attitude of tolerance, of being open-minded, however, needs to be cultivated from lesson one onwards, which actually is quite a task. In fact, the teacher is supposed to convey certain values and attitudes, i.e. an appreciation for the diversity of cultures, as written down at the beginning of the Austrian curriculum (AHS 1).

Consequently, when working with a song in context with intercultural learning, a careful preparation of the exercises and tasks connected to the song is indispensable. Intercultural learning – specifically when paired with spoken interaction – can bear some “conflict potential”, especially in classes with a high percentage of students with immigrant background. In this respect a teacher

has to employ some sensitivity concerning the choice of song because of the sometimes enormous emotional potential that can be aroused with it.

As the teacher is an essential “factor” with regard to motivation (see chapter 2.1), they have to be aware of the influence they can exert. So even if the music teacher confirms that the students like – or even love – a certain song, that does not mean that the same song automatically will be a total success with said students. Consequently, the odds for a positive response are much higher if the song is presented with confidence.

Equally, it has to be taken into account that factors of group dynamics and conflicts within the class can play a role regarding the acceptance or rejection of a song. Some students might secretly like the song, but they might not be able to show it because the “popular” students decree that it is “uncool” to like the song. In this context, Jourdain points out that most people “listen to conform” (263), thus adopting music as a device of social cohesion, even if it goes against their personal taste.

Last but not least there are some further considerations that a teacher should also pay attention to, especially when wanting to sing the song with the class. It is important to know whether the students are used to singing in class or not. If they are, then it will be easier to motivate them to sing something together. Awareness of their age and the corresponding phase of development they are in does not hurt, either. Of course, there are the physical changes that have to be taken into account. Students are often unwilling to sing when their voice breaks, i.e. during the growth period of their vocal folds, which is to be expected from the age of 13 onwards, maybe also earlier. A teacher should not force them to sing; they should never embarrass anybody who does not hit the exact pitch.

If a teacher can play the piano or the guitar and feels confident to use their musical talent in class, they can sing the song together with the students, accompanying them on their instrument. Apart from that, singing the song together with the class also presents the opportunity to ask students who play the guitar or the piano to play the accompaniment. Naturally, the students have to be asked in advance so that they have time to prepare the song at home. YouTube as a source for musical accompaniment can be used as well. There

are lots of versions of songs with lyrics instead of videos as a visual accompaniment, or even full karaoke versions. Entering the title of the song and adding “lyrics” or “karaoke” to the search term should produce the desired results. When in doubt, it is advisable to ask a music teacher for assistance.



#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to point out how and why songs can and should be used in ELT. The research has shown that they can have a favourable effect on motivation, learner autonomy and the development of the students' identity. Besides, it has been demonstrated that emotions can have a huge impact on learning, showing that music can have a powerful influence in this respect as it communicates predominantly in an emotional way. Concerning music and language as cognitive systems, there is still a lot of research to be done and it will be interesting to observe the developments in this field in the future.

A sample lesson plan has been presented to illustrate how the song "Englishman in New York" can be incorporated into ELT in a didactically meaningful way. Apart from training vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, songs are good starting points for fluency practice, either with group work, pair work or in-class discussions. In fact, there are a few possible discussion topics that are worth mentioning for further consideration. For one thing, the relevance of manners could be discussed on the basis of the song "Englishman in New York" by Sting. As current concepts of manners seem to be different from the concept of a gentleman as described in the song, it might prove intriguing to get to know the students' opinions on the topic. In addition to that, research on the concept of a gentleman could also be included in the group phase.

With regard to the message of "Englishman in New York", i.e. "be yourself, no matter what they say", another possibility would be to discuss the marginalization of people who do not conform to the mainstream of society. Or from a slightly different angle, to examine the questions of how and why stereotypes "dominate the picture" in today's world. Both issues are topical and culturally significant. Talking about them in a guided discussion could raise the students' awareness for them and maybe also lead them to rethink their attitudes.

In general, music, as demonstrated in this thesis, can be a very strong motivational factor. Especially during the years of puberty, music is very important for the students' personal well-being and the development of their identity. Music has the power of addressing people's emotions and of manipulating them. It has the power of uniting people in their quest for a

common goal, of bringing people together. If this happens in a classroom, the favourable social atmosphere in combination with the beneficial effects on memory and learning are ideal ingredients for second language acquisition.

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## APPENDIX

### Englishman In New York – Lyrics by Sting

I don't drink coffee I take tea my dear  
I like my toast done on the side  
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk  
I'm an Englishman in New York  
See me walking down Fifth Avenue  
A walking cane here at my side  
I take it everywhere I walk  
I'm an Englishman in New York

I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York  
I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York

If "manners maketh man" as someone said  
Then he's the hero of the day  
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile  
Be yourself no matter what they say

I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York  
I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York

Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety  
You could end up as the only one  
Gentleness, sobriety are rare in this society  
At night a candle's brighter than the sun

Takes more than combat gear to make a man  
Takes more than license for a gun  
Confront your enemies, avoid them when you can  
A gentleman will walk but never run

If "manners maketh man" as someone said  
Then he's the hero of the day  
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile  
Be yourself no matter what they say

I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York  
I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate in what ways and why songs can and should be used in English language teaching (ELT). After considering general reasons for the use of songs in ELT, the concept of motivation, also in context with learner autonomy and identity, is examined. A subchapter on memory is included to illustrate the cognitive advantages a song can contribute, especially with regard to multi-channel information processing and to effective learning when emotions are involved. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is considered in light of findings from neurodidactics. Apart from that, a short section is devoted to viewing aspects of ongoing research on music and language as cognitive systems.

Turning to ways in which songs can be incorporated in ELT, two approaches are presented, one focusing on the teaching of grammar through music, the other concentrating on the teaching of features of spoken language such as pronunciation, intonation, or stress, but also addressing other qualities of songs in context with ELT.

Chapter three features a sample lesson on the song "Englishman in New York". The concept for part of the lesson is based on Thaler's code-referenced approach. At the same time, his pwp approach, consisting of a pre-, while- and post-listening stage, is demonstrated in the sample lesson as well.

The overall findings of the research illustrate the beneficial effects music can have in ELT. Songs can enhance the students' motivation, encourage autonomous learning, and facilitate the acquisition of new lexical and grammatical structures.

## Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Diese Diplomarbeit untersucht die Frage, warum und auf welche Weise Lieder im Englischunterricht einen wertvollen Beitrag zum Spracherwerb leisten können. Nach umfassender Konsultation relevanter Literatur, konnten einige maßgebliche Vermutungen bestätigt werden, warum der Einsatz von Liedern im Englischunterricht von Vorteil sein kann.

Zunächst wurde die Rolle der Musik, im Besonderen von Englischen Songs, im Alltagsleben der SchülerInnen beleuchtet. Eine Studie zeigte, dass deutsche Teenager rund 102 Minuten pro Tag Musik hören, ein Großteil davon Lieder in Englischer Sprache. Aufgrund dieser Tatsache wurde Literatur zum Motivationspotential Englischer Lieder im Sprachunterricht bearbeitet. Es zeigte sich, dass Englische Lieder die Motivation der SchülerInnen positiv beeinflussen können. Idealerweise führt diese Motivation zu autonomem Lernen und begünstigt die Entwicklung der persönlichen Identität der SchülerInnen.

Hinsichtlich des Einflusses von Songs auf das Merkvermögen kann festgehalten werden, dass durch Lieder eine mehrkanalige Informationsverarbeitung im Gehirn stattfindet. Die beim Hören von Liedern kombiniert hereinströmenden Informationen über Musik und Text werden somit jeweils doppelt gespeichert und können deshalb leichter wieder abgerufen werden.

Eine weitere positive Auswirkung von gut gewählten Liedern betrifft den Einfluss der durch Musik ausgelösten Emotionen auf das Lernen. Günstige Emotionen beeinflussen das Lernen positiv, das bedeutet wiederum besseres Merkvermögen, was zum Beispiel beim Lernen neuer Vokabel oder grammatikalischer Strukturen sehr von Vorteil ist. Auch die Klassengemeinschaft kann durch Lieder positiv beeinflusst werden, was ebenso zu einem förderlichen Lernklima beiträgt.

Exemplarisch wurde eine Unterrichtseinheit zu dem Song „Englishman in New York“ von Sting zusammengestellt. Dieser Song wurde für eine 7. Klasse Gymnasium ausgewählt, weil er ein großes Potenzial in vielerlei Hinsicht darstellt. Sowohl das Thema als auch der Wortschatz und grammatikalische Aspekte sind für diese Altersstufe adäquat und entsprechen den Anforderungen



des Lehrplans und des GERS. Besonders bedeutsam ist, dass der Song für eine schülerzentrierte Didaktik so bearbeitet werden kann, dass neben Wortschatzerwerb und Hörübungen vor allem das zusammenhängende Sprechen in der Fremdsprache ausreichend trainiert wird.

Abschließend kann also festgestellt werden, dass Lieder das Potenzial haben, den Englischunterricht in jeder Weise zu bereichern.

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- 2014 Abschluss des **Lehrgangs** zum Unterrichtspraktikum an der PH-NÖ
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- Februar 2013 bis August 2014 Vertragslehrerin für Musikerziehung am **Stiftsgymnasium Melk**, im Schuljahr 2013/14 Mitverwendung am **Mary Ward Privatgymnasium** St. Pölten (vertiefendes Wahlpflichtfach Musik)
- April – Juni 2014 Fächerübergreifendes Projekt WPF Musik mit WPF Bildnerische Erziehung
- Sommer 2011 Übersetzungsauftrag des ÖSZ für die englische Übersetzung des Europäischen Sprachenportfolios für die Mittelstufe (ESP-M)
- Feb. 2009 Übersetzungsauftrag für das Projekt meNet (Music Education Network, <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/>) vom Englischen ins Deutsche

## Sprachkenntnisse

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Deutsch     | Muttersprache                                   |
| Englisch    | Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency (Level C2) |
| Italienisch | B1  |
| Französisch | B1  |
| Spanisch    | A2  |

## Auslandsaufhalte

insgesamt knapp 7 Monate Sprachaufenthalt in den USA und Kanada (mehrwöchige Aufenthalte bei Gastfamilien)