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Bringing Broadway into the English class

Título: Bringing Broadway into the English class. **Target:** Profesores de inglés. **Asignatura:** Inglés. **Autor:** Ana María López Gallardo, Licenciada en Filología Inglesa.

I. INTRODUCTION

The musicals in the United States reflect part of their culture, history and their way of life. For example, *Oklahoma*, which opened in 1949, stated the national feeling of belonging to a land and the longing of the peaceful past.

In Europe, we do not have this kind of phenomenon. Therefore, we believe that through the musicals European students of English can achieve a higher knowledge of the culture and the North American society.

Musicals are a very rich source in which students can learn, not just English, but at the same time they can be in touch with different genres: music, dance, acting, etc. It is a fun way of learning a new language. Furthermore, it can be a way or arousing their curiosity and make them be eager to learn the English language.

Using musicals in class will enable us to cover all the students' different interests, because we are going to use different musicals that will cover different styles.

We are going to focus on high school students, although all the activities can be leveled depending on the grade and proficiency of the students. For example in the beginning level we are going to focus more on the listening part given them different activities with games, filling the blanks, ordering a song, etc. In higher levels, we will discuss deeper subjects, as the purpose of the play, the social and political situation of the time and personal interpretations.

We have chosen two musicals: *Annie and Grease*. We believe that these two musicals will fit the students' interests and in a way they can feel empathy with the main characters. Actually, these two stories deal with children and high school students' lives.

II. ANNIE

We think that *Annie* is a good example to use in the high school classes because it shows us a period of the North American society. It takes place during the depression, so it gives information about this specific moment of the history of the USA.

These lessons are going to take place in different and intermittent sessions. We have planned to do it at least once a week during thirty to forty minutes in every class.

The students are intermediate level, third year of English in high school. In Europe to study a foreign language is compulsory during the whole period of high school. Lately, students have to choose two second languages during the four years of high school normally are English and Spanish or French, depending on the country.

Session 1: Introduction.

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

We will start the first session describing what a musical is. The idea is to recollect the different opinions that they have about this subject. Students will ask two or three partners about what is a musical for them. After a couple of minutes the whole class will share the information. The teacher will write this information on the board.

After this we will show a clip of *Annie* (clip 4 "It's the Hard-Knock Life"), which represents what a musical is: acting, singing and dancing. Students will need to think if there is something that they missed and will add it to the ideas on the board.

Activity 2 (20minutes)

In the next activity we will ask students if they can give us examples of some musicals that they know. Probably they will answer: *Grease, Cats, The Lion King, West Side Story*, etc., because these musicals are on television every year and are known world wide.

In the second part of this activity we are going to show them clips from the different musicals that we think they may know and they will have to match the clip with the title of the musical in a handout that they will have.

The last part will be to match the name of the director with the musical. We think that in this way they are going to be familiar with some important names to broaden their knowledge about musicals.

The homework for next week will be to bring any piece of information related to the musical *Annie*. It can be a picture, the title of a song, the name of a character, etc.

Session 2: Annie

Annie (play 1977, movie 1983) is a musical based upon the popular Harold Gray comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*. The music is by Charles Strouse, lyrics by Martin Charnin, and the book by Thomas Meehan. Famous songs from the musical include "Tomorrow" and "It's the Hard Knock Life".

Activity 1: Warm up (10 minutes)

We will give the students the poster of the opening performance. We will ask them to brain storm what they think that the musical is about. (We can use the ideas that they have looked for in their homework assignment).

Activity 2: (10 minutes)

We will show them the clip of the opening number ("Maybe"). First we will explain that in a musical you should find the main characters and the plot during the first minutes of the show.

After the video we the whole class will share their ideas to see if the show follows these characteristics.

Activity 3: (20 minutes)

In this activity students will watch and listen again the clip, but this time they will have the lyrics and they have to fill in the blanks. We will play the clip once or more times depending on the students' understanding.

The purpose of the activity is to practice the modal verb "may" and the adverb "maybe" to be able to create hypotheses in the future.

Maybe far away
Or maybe real nearby
He may be pouring her coffee
She may be straightening this tie!
Maybe in a house
All hidden by a hill

She's sitting playing piano,
He's sitting paying a bill!

Betcha they're young
Betcha they're smart
Bet they collect things
Like ashtrays, and art!
Betcha they're good --
(Why shouldn't they be?)
Their one mistake
Was giving up me!

So maybe now it's time,
And maybe when I wake
They'll be there calling me "Baby" ...
Maybe.
Betcha he reads
Betcha she sews
Maybe she's made me
A closet of clothes!
Maybe they're strict
As straight as a line...
Don't really care
As long as they're mine!
So maybe now this prayer's
The last one of it's kind...
Won't you please come get your "Baby"

Maybe

(The underline words will be the ones that will be missing)

After the correction on the board we will explain briefly how this structure works.

The follow up will be to use the structure that we have just studied to make hypotheses about the story: What is going to happen to Annie? We will collect some hypotheses and as homework they will have to write a paragraph about this.

Session 3

Activity 1: Warm up (10 minutes)

We are going to use the song "It's the Hard-Knock life" to illustrate that musical songs are a big source for current artists. This song has a recent adaptation of the rap singer

Jay-z that might be familiar to them. The purpose for this is to point out that musicals are not “boring stuff” as they may think. Our aim is to awake their curiosity about this unknown genre for them.

We will firstly show them the clip from *Annie* and then the group’s song.

To broaden their knowledge will show them some other examples, such as: “If I Were a Rich Man” from *The Fiddler on the Roof* and the “The Lonely Goatherd” from *The Sound of Music* which were adapted by Gwen Stefany,

Activity 2: (15 minutes)

Using the same song we are going to teach new vocabulary and everyday language.

First we are going to give just a line to every student. When they listen to their lines they have to stand up. After this, they will listen to the song again, but now they have to arrange themselves into a line in front of the class following the order of the lyrics. The last part will be that everyone sings their own sentence following the rhythm of the song.

The purpose of this song is to develop their listening skills.

It's the hard-knock life for us!
It's the hard-knock life for us!

'Stead a treated,

We get tricked!

'Stead a kisses,

We get kicked!

It's the hard-knock life!
Got no folks to speak of, so,
It's the hard-knock row we how!

Cotton blankets,

'Stead a of wool!

Empty Bellies

'Stead a of full!

It's the hard-knock life!

Don't if feel like the wind is always howl'n?

Don't it seem like there's never any light!

Once a day, don't you wanna throw the towel in?

It's easier than puttin' up a fight.

No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy!

No one cares if you grow...of if you shrink!

No one dries when your eyes get wet an' weepy!

From all the cryin' you would think this place's a sink!

Ohhhh!!!!!!!

Empty belly life!

Rotten smelly life!

Full of sorrow life!

No tomorrow life!

Santa Claus we never see

Santa Claus, what's that?

Who's he?

No one cares for you a smidge

When you're in an orphanage!

(Making a whistling sound and imitating Miss. Hannigan)

You'll stay up till this dump shines
like the top of the Chrysler Building.

Yank the whiskers from her chin

Jab her with a safety Pin

Make her drink a mickey finn

I love you, Miss Hannigan

(whistle) Get to work!

(whistle) Strip them beds!

(whistle) I said get to work!

It's the hard-knock life for us

It's the hard-knock life for us

No one cares for you a smidge

When your in an orphanage

It's the hard-knock life

It's the hard-knock life
It's the hard-knock life!

Activity 3: (15 minutes)

“It’s the Hard-Knock life” will help us to work with the new vocabulary.

The first thing will be to draw a picture of what they think that is the song about and then explain it to the rest of the class.

After that we will work with the specific vocabulary that they do not understand. We will divide the class into groups of four. They will work on a specific paragraph looking up the words that they do not understand in the dictionary. Then they will have to explain to the rest of the class the words in English.

As the follow up activity the students, in groups of four, will write the four sentences of a song starting with “It’s the Hard-Knock Life...” explain what the hard-knock life is for them. They will have to think about the rhyme of the song. At the end we will put all the parts together to have a new and extraordinary song.

The teacher will type all the paragraphs together, print the whole song and post it in the classroom.

Session 4:

We will now use the historical background included in this musical in chapter 21 (with F.D.R.). Indeed as we saw a musical cannot be separated from its historical context that is what gives a solid base to the whole story.

In this musical the background is the depression of 1930s. It is usually a period we tackle in high school, so this musical is perfect timing to introduce this aspect of the American history.

Activity 1: (15 minutes)

This time we will concentrate on both the acting part and the song “Tomorrow” (the white house version, clip 22).

The first thing will do is to hear the clip where Annie met the president. They talked about famous people of the time. Students will have to write down as many names and historical elements as they can. After this we will share the information with the whole class. This activity is designed to develop their listening skills. When we have all the information on the board the follow up will be to guess in what period the musical took place. In this way we are helping them to contextualize the history inside the musical.

The point that we would like to highlight here is that musicals can be used as mirrors of the society of the time. We need to think about them not as something trivial and funny but also as a critic and a media mean to bring current problems to the audience.

Activity 2: (15 minutes)

In this activity we will make a comparison between their hypotheses in the first class, when they had to guess what was going to happen, and the final number. We will show them just the image of the finale, the DVD in pause, where Annie and Warbucks are happy singing in the stairs. They will have to use the past tense to retell what happened. We will collect the information on the board and we will show the whole clip. They will have to compare their answers with the real story.

We will point out that almost every musical has a happy ending, which is one of the basic elements that a good musical has to have. The homework for this session will be to write a recipe for a good movie. What elements a movie has to have to be good for them?

III. GREASE

Session 5: Grease

Grease (1972) from Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey is a musical very popular in Europe. All students are very familiar to it because you can watch it on television all the time. We want to use a musical that they are already familiar with because that will allow us to concentrate more on the story. In this case the problems that young teenagers have in high school. Although, the time gap is considerable, teenager problems are basically the same nowadays, so students can identify themselves with the characters in the show.

We have chosen two songs that are very representatives of this musical, the two eleven o'clock songs: "Summer Nights" and "You Are the One that I Want".

Activity 1: (10 minutes)

As the students are familiar with this musical we would like to start with a brainstorm about all the things that they know about this story: characters, songs, settings, time, type of clothes, type of music, etc.

Then, we will ask them to whistle or sing a song the rest of the class will have to guess the title of the song or at least in which part of the story takes place.

Activity 2: (15 minutes)

In this activity students will listen to the song "Summer Night", in which the characters explain how they have met. While they are listening they have to reorder the lines of the song. After the listening we will go through the vocabulary they do not understand.

The purpose of this is to make them understand that a song is not just lines with music it also tells a story that needs to be integrated in the plot. The next step will be to write their first love story. If they feel embarrassed they can tell how they would like the love story to be or their ideal love story. The format of the composition has to be like a poem, which is similar to the way a song is written.

Summer lovin' had me a blast
Summer lovin', happened so fast
I met a girl crazy for me
I met a boy, cute as can be
Summer days driftin' away,
To uh-oh those summer nights
Tell me more, tell me more,
Did you get very far?
Tell me more, tell me more,
Like, does he have a car?
She swam by me, she got a cramp
He went by me, got my suit damp
I saved her life, she nearly drowned
He showed off, splashing around
Summer sun, something's begun,
But uh-oh those summer nights
Tell me more, tell me more,
Was it love at first sight?
Tell me more, tell me more,
Did she put up a fight?
Took her bowlin' in the Arcade
We went strollin', drank lemonade
We made out under the dock
we stayed up until ten o'clock
Summer fling don't mean a thing,
But uh-oh those summer nights
Tell me more, tell me more,
But you don't gotta brag
Tell me more, tell me more,
Cause he sounds like a drag
He got friendly, holdin' my hand
Well she got friendly, down in the sand
He was sweet, just turned eighteen
Well she was good, you know what I mean
Summer heat, boy and girl meet,
But uh-oh those summer nights
Tell me more, tell me more,
How much dough did he spend?
Tell me more, tell me more,
Could she get me a friend?
It turned colder, that's where it ends
So I told her we'd still be friends
Then we made our true love vow
Wonder what she's doin' now

Summer dreams ripped at the seams,
But oh, those summer nights

Activity 3: “You are the one that I want” (15 minutes)

To introduce this song we can explain that in every musical there is a song or more that reflects the necessities or desires of the characters. This song is a good example of “I want song”. This kind of songs helps people to know better the characters.

Students will listen to the song “You Are the One that I Want” with the lyrics, after that they will have to draw a picture of the man that she is looking for. We will compare the different pictures and write down on the board the common characteristics.

This song uses the structures “I want” and “I need”. They will have to use these structures to describe their ideal men or women.

Finally, as homework they will have to pick a scene from the movie and they have to act it in the class. They will create their own dialogue or use the same as one as in the movie. During the performance part of the skit we are going to focus on the pronunciation.

The next session about *Grease* will be the performances of the skits.

Final Project

The aim of all these activities is to enlarge the knowledge about American musicals. We will like them to do their own researches about the topic. For this reason, they will have to choose a musical, from a list that we will provide taking into account their preferences, and do an oral presentation. The class will be divided in groups of four; every group will have to discuss: the title, the plot, and the main characters, if there are any historical references. Then they will have to select a song that they like or they do not like, give the reasons, and to present it in the class with the lyrics.

IV. CONCLUSION

In our opinion, musicals have a great potential in language classes. Through them, you can teach not only the language but also the culture, the history and the daily life. Musicals are a field that is new in the second language classes. Indeed, in Europe, few students have access to musicals in their daily life. Thus it is a way to tackle what the students most like: music and movies.

We have designed lesson plans that are educative, entertaining and varied that may cover the students' interests.

All the activities we have planned can be adapted to any levels and to any musicals. What is good with musicals is their diversity of topics which allows teachers to use them for every subject they want. ●

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¿Por qué soy Docente?

Título: ¿Por qué soy Docente?. **Target:** Personal Docente. **Asignatura:** Todas. **Autor:** Helena Hernández Flores, Licenciada en Psicología y Técnica Superior en la Interpretación de la Lengua de Signos Española, Profesora de Enseñanza Secundaria: Orientación Educativa.

Si a lo largo de los años como docentes desarrollamos una habilidad es la del sentido del humor, y llámese sentido porque es uno igual que los otros cinco que conocemos, a través del sentido del humor también interpretamos el mundo que nos rodea e inferimos en él.

Soy docente, y me siento enormemente orgullosa de poder serlo cada día, de hecho, no me planteo mi vida sin esta profesión, pero también me gusta verla con este sexto sentido:

La docencia percibida a través del sentido de la vista es verde, es dinámica, es cambiante, son carreras en los pasillos, son niños en el patio, son pizarras escritas y sillas llenas de vida...

La docencia percibida a través del sentido del oído suena como un timbre puntual, como risas, como llantos, como gritos, como palabras, como el silencio al acabar el día...

La docencia percibida a través del sentido del olfato huele a madera, a hierro, es el olor a papel y a una clase después del recreo...

La docencia percibida a través del sentido del gusto sabe agua, a café, a tila...es dulce como el recreo y amarga como septiembre...