

POPULLAR

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

POPULLAR – MOTIVATING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO LEARN LANGUAGES
WITH RELEVANT MEDIA



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PREFACE

Many pages have been written on the best ways to motivate secondary students. Education is, in fact, a motivation-driven business. Teachers often lament how easily students memorize unending rap songs and anything connected with their hobbies while they need a truckload of teaching tricks to teach students basic grammar rules. The reason is quite simple.

Based on new research findings, we now know that students are motivated when their teacher is able to answer the following needs:

- to feel in control of their learning (Zimmerman, 1994),
- to feel they are learning something which is relevant to their lives (Biggs, 1995),
- to feel connected with others (Deci & Ryan, 1991),
- to feel that the activities they are doing are interesting and fun (McCombs, 1991, 1993, 1994).

As Deci & Ryan (1991) noted, knowing how to meet the individual needs of each student for control, competence and belonging in the classroom, is the key to unlocking students' motivation to learn. Therefore, it can be assumed that the success in motivating students to learn does not necessarily depend on the use of large amounts of resources and materials but perhaps can be obtained by an updated didactical approach on the part of the teacher.

The engine which generates the secondary students' motivation to learn can be stimulated by including provision for relevancy, choice, control, challenge, responsibility, personal connections and fun. Another important factor in motivating students to learn each and every day is the teacher's personal self-motivation. Most of the time, teachers themselves have to motivate students to do their best in the classroom. There are times, of course, when even the greatest of teachers need to be inspired and keep their morale high in order to do their job well and be a source of motivation for their students. In fact, much of a teacher's work is carried out in self-contained classrooms which provide limited opportunities to collaborate with other teachers or receive feedback on their work. This background aims at helping teachers increment their energy level and acquire renewed inspiration.

The PopuLLar project, an educational activity funded by the EU, has opted for popular teenage interests -songs, videos and interactive activities in particular- as a means to expand the possibilities of both self-learning and professional growth. Students work autonomously and collaboratively on the melody of a song of their choice and create new lyrics both in their mother tongue and in the language they are studying (i.e. target language). Then they record their final product as a video and/or as an audio file.

Working with popular songs fulfils all of the above mentioned requirements for engaging students: they are interested in songs and they work independently from their teacher in one or more groups. This fosters autonomy and collaboration, builds wholesome social connections and helps students learn second languages. One of the most important aspects of the project is that students are fully in control of the shape of the final outcome, while the teacher acts as a guide/facilitator who supports the students' activities and supervises the coordination of the various phases of the project, thus supporting autonomous and collaborative learning mentioned before. He/she will contact a school in another European country and thanks to this international collaboration, both students and teachers will have an opportunity to broaden their horizons.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document acts as a pedagogical background for language teachers, educators and educational institutions who are interested in utilizing songs and relevant media to motivate secondary students to learn languages and advance their professional development.

It helps them understand:

- The benefits that music can offer in second language education.
- The importance of using songs as an “unconventional” way of learning.
- The relevance of using multimedia to enrich language learning.
- The advantages in connecting video, multimedia and songs to increase the students' learning success.

Therefore, the Background to the Project is a theoretical introduction to the project, providing pedagogical framework and explaining its rationale and goals. It reflects on subjects connected with social media environments, writing lyrics and using video both for the teacher's personal enhancement and usage within a classroom.

To sum up, the material helps educators become more aware of the possibilities of exploring popular songs when teaching a foreign language and describes the advantages of using music and videos in the process of learning.

TARGET GROUP OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Background is addressed especially to language educators, teacher trainers, methodology experts and all educators interested in music as an educational tool that will greatly incentivise the study of a new language. It is meant to help teachers who wish to enrich their lessons with fresh and progressive approaches as well as following traditional course books.

STRUCTURE OF TEACHER MATERIALS

The teacher materials prepared by the PopuLLar project consist of three parts:

- **Part I, Theoretical Background** is the theoretical background of the project and its field of interest. It highlights the role of music in second language education from the perspective of brain stimuli and overall benefits of the use of music in the language classroom. It also stresses the link between today teenagers and the use of modern technology devices and the relevance of popular music, and it also covers the pedagogic benefits of using video in the classroom.
- **Part II, a Step by Step Guide** is a practical guide designed to give you clear instructions on how to work on the project with your students. Each step of the project is described in detail with clear indications of both the students' and the teacher's role. The students themselves have a separate guide. Students should not see the teacher guide.
- **Part III, Supporting materials and resources** will help you and students with translations, recording and sharing their projects. It also includes warm-up activities for students and further ideas for video recording that students choose whether to do or not (they have the choice).

1 WHAT IS POPULLAR?

PopuLLar is a European Union funded education project within the Lifelong Learning programme, in the Comenius sub-programme for schools, which includes a partnership of educational institutions from across Europe that are responsible for carrying out the project.

PopuLLar is designed to harness music, the primary social interest of secondary school students into their language learning.

There is a huge need to encourage secondary school students, in particular, to learn languages, focus on digital competencies and be creative. Teenagers are overwhelmingly engaged with music: 92% of 14-17 year olds own an MP3 player and they listen to an average of nearly 2.5 hours of music per day. Since music is a teen's most relevant interest, utilizing it will motivate and engage the students in an area that is an important part of their lives.

The project will ask students to write their own lyrics to the melody of a song of their choice. They will develop the new lyrics in two ways: firstly in their mother tongue and then in the language they are learning (i.e. target language). This will require adapting the text to the rhythm of the music and the number of notes of the melody. The students will then sing their new song in the two languages, record them (audio or video/audio) and share it with students all over Europe. Other students in other schools in Europe can then take the songs with the new lyrics, comprehend them and translate them into their native language and then sing, record and share their version of the song.

Students will be able to incorporate their love for music with creativity, literacy, digital competencies, and collaboration and, most importantly, use 'Less widely used and less taught languages' (LWULT). Thus, this project directly answers the priorities for transversal key competences, - such as learning to learn, cooperative learning, sense of initiative, social, civic and cultural competences.

PopuLLar is a project that is 'owned' by the students, i.e. they work autonomously and collaboratively and teachers are just facilitators to the project process.

1.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PopuLLar is designed to address multiple priorities and key competencies within the Lifelong Learning Programme:

- Create new, innovative teaching methodologies.
- Motivate students to learn foreign languages.
- Provide meaningful opportunities to communicate in foreign languages (focusing on LWULT).
- Foster students 'learning to learn' as a key competence.
- Raise the use of technology in education.
- Enhance teacher's and students' digital competences.

Most importantly, the project seeks to bring into learning the primary interest of secondary students as a tool for learning: music.

1.2 PARTNERS

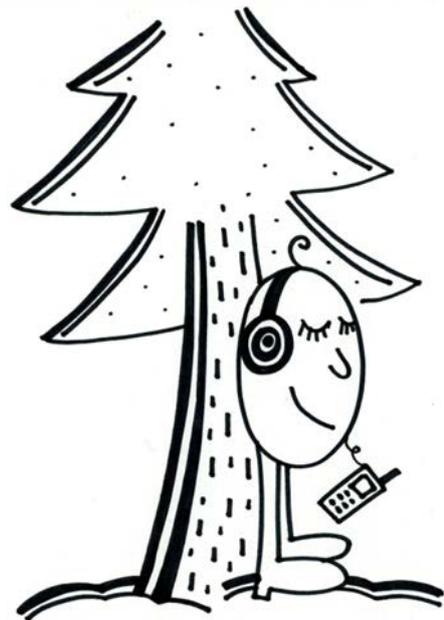
There are seven project partners who have brought together their expertise in the fields of secondary education, languages, music and video making to produce this innovative educational project.

COORDINATOR

- The Mosaic Art and Sound, Ltd., United Kingdom

PARTNERS

- Kindersite, London, UK
- Language School with the State Language Exam Rights PELIKAN, Ltd., Brno, Czech Republic
- University of Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain
- Opera Bazar, Lucca, Italy
- Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey
- Kulturring in Berline.V., Berlin, Germany



2 ROLE OF MUSIC AND TRANSLATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Music is an essential part of human existence and it is hard to imagine a culture without it. It is a way for people to express their feelings all over the world. Within education, music is becoming, more and more, a popular subject. Research on the role of music in second language acquisition is in its initial stages, while music itself is a universally favourite way of spending one's leisure time. This section discusses how music is an important part of education, particularly with regard to second language acquisition.

The connection between languages and lyrics is notable. Most people find music deeply attractive and our brain is an apt receiver of meanings conveyed by music. If we use music, there is no need to concentrate on formal issues such as vocabulary, grammar or language in general by heart, because learning by singing lyrics is easier and more entertaining.

2.1 MUSIC AND THE BRAIN

As yet unexplained by neurological science is the main and most important feature of music as it can activate the mind when it is dormant or soothe the soul when it is in turmoil. When somebody thinks of music, the first thing in their mind is enjoyment. Its entertaining function is widespread in many human activities, individually and collectively. These are the reasons why many researchers have started thinking about the connection between music and education. Thus, Halpern (1999, p.1,) states that "of the many factors that influence learning, few are as far-reaching - or little understood - as sound and music".

Music consists of a tune, melody, rhyme, and lyrics. These elements were noted by Georgi Lozanov (1979), the psychotherapist and the author of a teaching method named "Suggestopedia", used in different fields, but mostly in the field of foreign language learning.



Tomlinson (1998, p. 312) remarks that Lozanov after discovering that people use only a fraction of its capacity, came to the conclusion that this is a consequence of negative expectations and beliefs a learner has. As a form of reducing this inner block, he recommends bringing emotions to the classes using drama, games which establish a peaceful atmosphere, playing music to stimulate the right hemisphere. Lozanov claims that by using this method, students can learn a language approximately three to five times as quickly as through conventional teaching methods.

Suggestopedia operates with some of the principles of the Theory of Multiple Intelligence established by the American psychologist Howard Gardener, who started to question why there are people who find playing a musical instrument extremely easy, whereas others need charts and tables to process information or why there are those who seem to be constantly moving from here and there when learning.

Based on such observations, Gardner initially formulated a list of seven intelligences: the first two have been typically valued in schools - linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence; the next three are usually associated with the arts – musical, bodily-kinaesthetic and spatial intelligence; the final two are what he called 'personal intelligences' – interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner 1999: 41-43).

Traditionally, school education has put special emphasis on supporting the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, underrating those remaining, including the musical one. In Gardner's view, no intelligence should be treated as inferior and all should be developed at the same time and cultivated. In modern didactic approaches, students should be encouraged to learn according to their needs and learning style preferences (Lojová, 2005).

The use of music touches as well another area of education; the question of involvement of both brain hemispheres (see the table below). For the traditional education, the left hemisphere is dominant, a fact encouraged throughout school from a young age. As Carneiro (2000) suggests, "by using more the left hemisphere, considered as rational, we do leave out the possibility of taking advantage of the benefits brought by the right hemisphere, such as creative imagination, serenity, global view, capacity of synthesis and ease of memorization, among others."

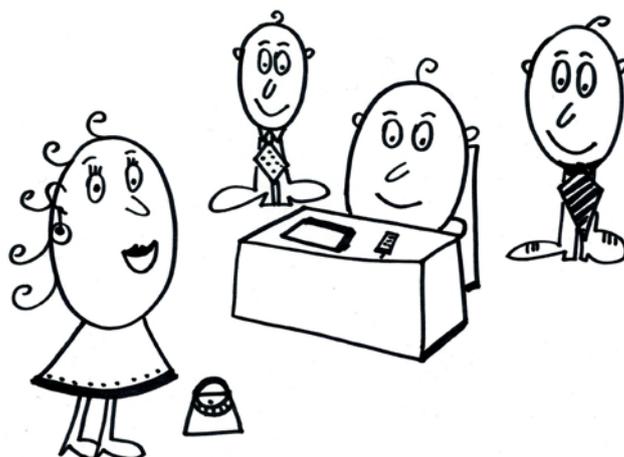
The Left Brain	The Right Brain
Thinking (logic and rationality) Languages and talking Numbers, counting/calculating Judgement Awareness of time New learning – short term memory Right side of the body	Imagining Images/visualizing Music and rhythm Intuition Timelessness, meditation Habits, long term memory Left side of the body

Table 1: Left and right brain qualities

<http://www.janetgoodrichmethod.com/2011/09/15/the-importance-of-fun/>

As pointed out by Dhority (1999), “nearly all brain functions overlap and that both hemispheres are so inter-connected and concurrently involved in most complex human functioning that it is incorrect to speak of a neat separation into the left-brain, right-brain educational methods.”

Therefore, PopuLLar has opted for using songs to teach languages, a learning method ratified by UNESCO in 1978, to stimulate both the left and right hemispheres and stimulate student’s musical intelligence in harmony with linguistic, interpersonal and kinaesthetic intelligence, in order to provide a gripping and enjoyable way to increase their success in L2.



2.2 MUSIC AS AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Music is a leisure time activity of almost every young person in the world and this is its most awesome advantage. The role of music in learning can be described in terms of enhancement of motivation force, as a tool for learning and social harmony.

- **Motivation force:** Music is used to soothe the mind, to relax the mind and body. Music enables the learners to be free from pressure and stress.
- **Intercultural role:** Music is deliberately used to teach language, social and cultural elements, as songs encode cultural meanings, inspiration, and worldviews. In other words, songs tell thousands of human stories.
- **Enhancement of social harmony:** One of the most important factors for achieving teaching and learning effectiveness is social harmony among the learners. In a classroom, children often sing together to celebrate birthdays, play games together, thus promoting the feeling of togetherness.

According to research carried out at the University of Tasmania, music is a powerful international tool which can be shared and enjoyed by people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It helps create a soothing and enjoyable environment for learning and reduces pressure and tension in the class. This knowledge shows that students do not feel threatened and nervous. Teachers are historically perceived as superior, wise and honourable characters and the above-mentioned research proves that music can be used to bridge the gap between teachers and students. The relationship between teachers and students is hierarchical. However, music helps bring teachers and students closer. They share the same interest, which is music, and teachers who can sing and like singing with students are usually very popular.

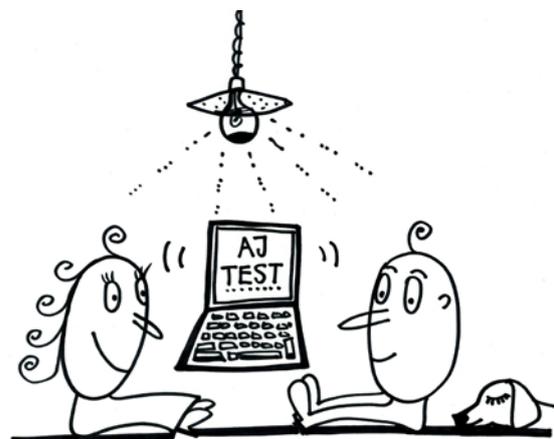
There is no formal approach of introducing music to the EFL curriculum in private and public English language teaching institutions. It is up to individual teachers to include music in their teaching programs. Teachers and students in the interviews agreed that music was helpful in learning English but due to a great emphasis on formal teaching and learning, the role of music in the EFL curriculum did not receive great attention.

2.3 BENEFITS OF MUSIC IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Educators have often reported that songs can be used effectively in foreign language education to support different language skills (Spicher & Sweeney, 2007). Studies using participants' native languages have shown that under certain conditions, verbal learning and verbatim memory for text can be supported by using a musical learning method (Thaut et al., 2008). A growing research also shows the positive effect of using music for language learning.

One of the biggest advantages is that music is all around us. It means that there is nobody who can have no opinion about it. The students' point of view is maturing with their age and that's why they want to discuss their favourite genre or artist. Everybody wants to know what their popular artist sings about. There are so many kinds of music so everyone can choose what they prefer. In general it could be said that music is a pleasure close to everybody. Another advantage is its accessibility and simplicity of using. The teachers can start the activity in the lesson by introducing a task and then lead the entire work through stream, social networks and other tools. It is easy, funny and it attracts students' attention not only at school but also at home in their leisure time. Actually, music enriches every language lesson and there is a presumption that music can bring closer and friendlier relationship between the students and the teacher. It means that the lessons are enjoyable, gripping, engaging and witty.

It is important to note that there are many researches that confirm the increasing tendency of remembering a language thanks to music. Brewer (2000) summarizes these effects of music stating that "music stabilizes mental, physical and emotional rhythms to attain a state of deep concentration and focus in which large amounts of content information can be processed and learned."



The combination of fun, rhythm, vocabulary, melody, and the presence of the foreign language aspect causes great progress in learning. It is amazing that the amount of song activities is limitless. A teacher can repeat these activities with different intentions, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, translation, etc. Given this factor, we can consider music as an enjoyable means by which to study a second language and most importantly, the student's skills improve gradually in a casual manner.

In the PopuLLar project, students need to complete a language task by working with the melody of a chosen popular song. This method is based on Task-Based Learning (TBL) approaches which basically refer to language acquisition through solving a problem or doing a task without concentrating on language features. The role of the teacher consists of providing a suitable environment for facilitating language acquisition and setting a task or a problem to solve. Students then work autonomously on performing the task; a deeper analysis of the language will follow once the learners have completed their job. The project places the emphasis on obtaining a balance between language accuracy, traditionally sought by formal school instruction, and conversational fluency, which finally has gained more attention.

The tasks students will be assigned in PopuLLar are simple and complex at the same time. Rewriting lyrics in the target language is enjoyable and fun but students must take into consideration several factors including rhythm, the number of syllables, and rhyme. The next stage consists of rehearsing the song and singing it. The follow-up activity uses video to record their version of the song which they will then share by uploading it to the internet with other PopuLLar groups in Europe. In this manner, students will practice using a second language in a context which they like and feel familiar with - music and lyrics.

2.4 THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Until recently, there was a significant scepticism regarding the theoretical efficacy of using translation as a tool in second and foreign language (L2) learning. Especially, with the rise of communicative teaching approaches, translation was discouraged in language learning classrooms as it caused 'interference' from the first language (L1). However, over the last three decades, many studies revealed that translation should be regarded as an effective strategy in the process of second language development (e.g. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Malakoff and Hakuta, 1991; Gómez, 2003, among others). These studies highlight the importance of using L1 to facilitate the L2 learning process in different ways. As Corder (1990) puts it, relying on L1 knowledge is making an effective use of prior knowledge in the way to learn a new language. In his previous study, Corder (1981) reframed the concept of 'interference' as 'intercession', which refers to the use of L1 as a cognitive strategy used by learners. The usage of L1 information and skills in translation tasks provides learners



cognitive advantages since it requires more extensive analysis of the language being learned and thus, enhances learning a new language.

As an effective cognitive strategy, translation is believed to constitute a helpful learning tool in L2 vocabulary learning (cf. Ballard, 1991; Grellet, 1991, among others). Learners can use their L1 as a body of reference when they try to comprehend the meanings of words. When learners try to find the equivalents of words, they use many learning strategies and cognitive skills. And as Ramachandran and Rahim (2004) point out, the more processes involved in vocabulary learning, the higher level of retention and recall will be achieved.

On the whole, translation serves as an important mental processing strategy in the comprehension of a foreign language. It assists foreign language learners in various ways such as facilitating problem analysis, understanding bilingual syntax, and improvement of reading comprehension, developing cultural knowledge of the target language, enhancing vocabulary learning in terms of quantity, retention and recall.

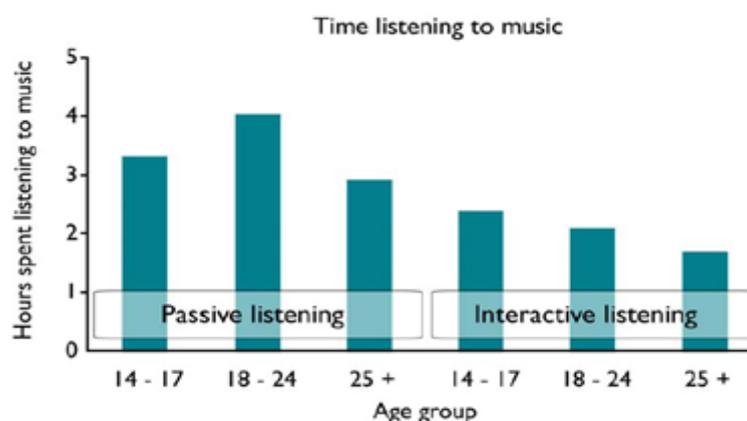
3 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING “POPULLAR”

In this section we will outline the relationship between teenagers, music and technology. We will point out the importance of new technologies as one of the most important factors for teenagers, together with the role of modern devices usually used to listen to popular music.

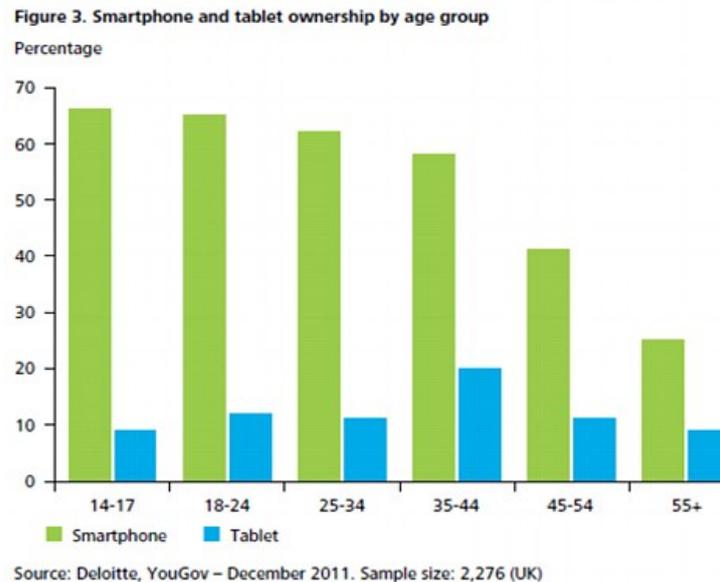
3.1 TEENS AND TECHNOLOGY

Modern day technological advancements are constantly seen throughout every aspect of life. Teenagers today are what Mark Prensky (2001) call “digital natives” as they are surrounded by cell phones, portable Internet availability, laptop computers, smart phones, iPods and mp3 players of every type. Although some voices claim all these technological advancements create a less interactive generation, too much dependent on technology for satisfaction, technology has also positive impacts on today’s youth. Especially in terms of social activity, the Internet not only offers an easier way to share information, but also contributes to sociability by providing a way to communicate with friends and family, as well as giving socially challenged teenagers an opportunity for interaction in any language they choose.

It’s easy to notice that teenagers are fans of smartphones and music devices: figures from a recent survey conducted by British Music Rights (2008) reveal interesting findings on the state of digital music in the UK. Quite unsurprisingly, the age groups who head the list of those who spend most time listening to music are young adults aged 18 – 24, with more than 4 hours a day, and teenagers, aged 14 – 17, who spend on average of more than 3 hours daily.



Similar facts demonstrated by Deloitte found that two-thirds of UK teenagers own smartphones. A simple and obvious conclusion can be drawn: teenagers simply love music and are very familiar with using musical devices.



For this reason, PopuLLar has decided to combine these two favourite teenager's hobbies – music and technology.

Students working autonomously on the lyrics of a song they like will create new lyrics in their mother tongue and in the language they are studying. The language dimension (putting lyrics into the studied language) is combined with using technology to recording and share. Students will learn about different ways of recording their final outcome – their song – and share it on social networks with peers around the world. By performing enjoyable tasks, students will become more motivated towards their studies and will develop their curiosity regarding the contents of the project.

4 USING MULTIMEDIA TO SUPPORT YOUR MUSIC PROJECT

The Background to the Project has given you so far a clear rationale for using music as a support in the language classroom. The use of multimedia can take this even further. Multimedia in this document refers to the use of audio and video equipment to record a song. This chapter shows why teachers should not overlook the role of audio and video devices in the classroom. It includes several reasons why video should be considered a relevant medium to enhance classroom dynamics.

4.1 USING AUDIO RECORDINGS

Audio recording technology has become very accessible and easy to use. For example, most modern cell phones have the option to record sound and notebooks contain built-in microphones. Purpose built sound recorders can also be used to record the music of the students. The recordings can be easily uploaded and shared.

Audio recordings are a good option if privacy is an issue and the students don't want to be seen in a video. This additional element, making an audio recording of your music, can further motivate the students. They will be able to keep a record of what they have developed and can share their results. They will, at the same time, become more competent in the active use of media which will increase their visual and media literacy.

4.2 USING VIDEO RECORDINGS

Video recordings have also become a lot easier and many new smartphones come with a built-in HD camera. Some contain editing software that allows you to make basic changes to what you have recorded. Video recordings are obviously more interesting and engaging than audio recordings but more time and care is needed if you wish to develop more sophisticated video clips.

There is a possibility that editing videos can become too much work and would take the attention away from the prime goal, something worth considering beforehand.

4.3 TEN GREAT REASONS WHY EDUCATORS SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK VIDEO

Video is nowadays recognized by most educators as a powerful communications medium which, in combination with other learning resources and instructional strategies, can perform a crucial role in modern L2 education.

Here are many reasons why we should not overlook it:

1. **Amusement:** Using video in language lessons is an extraordinary and entertaining activity which fosters enthusiasm among students.
2. **Attractiveness:** Making or playing a video is a modern approach in syntony with undeniable trends throughout advanced societies. Recording information on a video has become very popular nowadays and teenagers enjoy taking videos with their smartphones and watching /browsing YouTube.
3. **Diversity:** A great advantage in using video is that it can be used in every lesson, for any topic, at any point. The possibilities are endless, video is suitable for educators in all areas and levels of L2 learning and teaching.
4. **Availability:** With all the tools and technology available, making a video has become easier than ever for you and your students. You can use YouTube as a free repository, take advantage of hand-held cameras, or choose a Webtool like Animoto <http://animoto.com/> to create your own customized classroom videos. There is also no problem in including audio in the video, as all video recording devices capture audio as well.
5. **Ability to Illustrate:** Thanks to the video format, it is very easy to illustrate even complex, abstract concepts or demonstrate the practical use of language in the classroom. It can also provide a meaningful incentive to spark conversation.
6. **Ability to Share:** One of the biggest advantages is the possibility to share the results of tasks once they are completed, or even document the stages during construction. The videos can be easily transferred or viewed through social networks or video/audio sharing websites.
7. **Multimodality:** From an educational point of view, the use of a video can make a significant impact on the students' retention; some find it easier to remember subject matter using hearing and sight simultaneously. Video also reaches children with a variety of learning styles, especially those who are visual learners, and those with a variety of information acquisition modes.

8. **Portability:** Students don't need to be present in person at an educator's lesson, it is easy for a teacher to upload a small video for streaming. Many possibilities are open to students for individual or group work and the classroom content can be disseminated via social networks.
9. **Community Builder:** Teenagers love communicating online and spend hours on social to contact other students around the globe, to meet new people and hear their ideas.
10. **Reflection:** It is widely recognized that videos form a frame of mind open to self-reflection. Students need to be encouraged to participate in short videos as they will benefit from the results and will profit from the ensuing moments of introspection.



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