USING MUSIC IN A SENIOR HIGH LEVEL 1 ESL CLASSROOM TO TEACH THE TWO MODAL AUXILIARIES ‘CAN’ AND ‘WILL’

by

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I would like to thank my parents, Bradley and Eileen, for instilling in me a passion for learning and a love for people.

A special thank you goes out to my husband Tyler, your love and support mean the world to me.

To my dear friend Rebecca, your guidance and encouragement along the way helped make this thesis possible.

This thesis would not have been possible without my students, you are the reason I do what I do every day. Thank you!
Set foot into any classroom today that teaches early literacy and one will more than likely find music being implemented to enhance students’ learning. From nursery rhymes to calendar events to memorization tactics, music is used to help students retain and recall information. Not only is music used in classrooms geared for mainstream students; it has also found its way into special education classes and English language learner (ELL) classrooms around the country.

One such example is Franklin Elementary School in Mankato, Minnesota, where music is used with a specific purpose in conjunction with English language learners—it is used to help students understand reading from left to right and decoding symbols in music to convey meaning. An article from the July 20th, 2009 West Central Tribune goes into further detail on the Franklin Elementary School ELL music initiative. Programs such as this around the nation are drawing the attention of music educators and specialists including Larry Scripp. Scripp is a music educator and researcher who is chair of the music education department of the New England Conservatory. The Tribune article touches on Scripp’s decade of work to take research on the multidisciplinary benefits of music and turn this research into something that can be attainable and measurable in the schools. Later in the article Scripp discusses one reason his work focuses on the use of music as a teaching tool is because there is so much research on music as compared to
other forms of art and his goal is to learn how to take that research and put it into practical use.

Although music is the main avenue traveled down for Scripp, he does shed light on the fact that music is not the only avenue with which to teach students new information. As Kent (2009) notes “But Scripp . . . isn’t out to prove music is the sole solution to higher achievement . . . he wants to prove that a sustainable and integrated fine arts program can benefit all students across all disciplines.” (p. 1)

Howard Gardner is a name well known to many in education today. He is the man who has written numerous pieces centering on the theory that people learn in various ways known as the multiple intelligences (MI). One MI Gardner identifies is the musical intelligence, or the opinion that using music to teach information to someone with musical intelligence will help in the person’s learning and comprehension. Kenney (2008) and Paquette (2008) are in agreement that using music is helpful in the classroom setting for students’ retention and comprehension.

Gardner’s theory of using music to teach is not a new one; instead, music has been being utilized in both formal and informal learning environments around the globe in order to teach and engage students (Gardner, 1999). What is unique about Gardner’s work is his focus on the understanding of the MI. Through this research lessons have been developed by Gardner and many others in the hopes of more effectively engaging all students in the classroom by involving all the MI in lesson presentations. Entire manuals have been created for just this purpose (Kagan & Kagan, 1998). Because of
Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, many teachers include writing, music, diagrams, and manipulatives when presenting a lesson.

I had the wonderful experience of student-teaching in a fine arts elementary charter school in a metropolitan city in 2004. I had never been in a school like it, the excitement in the atmosphere was truly contagious and I looked forward to teaching and learning at the school every day. The students’ studies were primarily focused in reading, writing, math and science. An additional supplement to the academic curriculum lay within the support utilized to teach these subjects—this is where the fine arts component factored in. The students had instruction in music via band, choir, and a dance class. In addition, the school had a theater teacher so the students spent some time learning about acting and how to handle emotions by role-playing scenarios.

Because the school was located in a poverty district, the idea was to equip the students with life skills they would need in their future. More than two-thirds of the school’s students came from single-parent, low-income homes. We had a number of students whose parents were incarcerated during my time at the school. Although our students’ parents loved their children and worked hard to provide a good life, the school acted as much more than just a place for learning; besides teaching, the staff strived to provide a safe and nurturing environment and along with academic skills, many life skills were taught as part of the curriculum.

I specifically remember hearing the buzz of excitement from the fourth graders about a song they were going to be learning at the end of the school year. The song was about the digestive system and served as a rite of passage for the fourth graders. Towards
the end of every school year, the fourth grade class would learn about the digestive system in science and then, as the fine arts supplement, the students would learn a ‘digestive system dance’ where they mimicked the process of digestion through their movements and various tempos of music. The fourth graders would then have the opportunity to show the dance to the third and second grade students. Not only did this special art event, designed to teach the digestive system, help make the fourth grade students feel mature and special, it kept the excitement going for the third and second grade students as they knew their turn would come. I can say with near certainty all three grade levels will remember that dance for years to come. The finale of the year was the all-school musical (primarily written, composed, and choreographed by the music, dance, and theater teachers). Each student was involved in the process. From the set design to the costumes to the lighting to the on-stage acting, it was quite a spectacle.

Because of seeing music used in varying ways in the classroom and based on research presented by Gardner, Schripp and others, I am an advocator of using music in the classroom. Due to the vast and varied nature of the use of music in the classroom, one could potentially spend years researching and presenting the findings. For the purpose of my thesis, I will be focusing on the use of music to teach the two auxiliary modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to a senior high level 1 ESL class (level 1 is synonymous with the classification *Newcomer* or *Beginner*).

**Background of Researcher**

As I continue my own professional growth in the ESL field, I occasionally come across situations which lead me to question my teaching methods and leave me
wondering how I can be a more effective teacher for my students. One such occurrence led me to question the teaching of the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ The use of these modals, in both the formal and informal senses, has been a challenge for a number of my former students.

This past fall a student asked me, “Will I go to the office now?” Later, I deduced he had intended to ask, “Can I go to the office now?” The first question implied the student had done something wrong or anticipated being sent to the office whereas the second question implied he needed to go to the office for an appointment or for some other predetermined task. Because of the different meaning understood by the two questions, I found myself reflecting on the idea of how I could teach modals using a different method. Any time I can think of students of mine struggling with their lack of knowledge and usage of English, I cringe. I feel it is my job to do the best I can to help prepare these students for the outside world (that is, the real world outside of my safe and nurturing ESL room).

After thinking about this situation for some time, I found myself asking, ‘How can I teach modals more effectively?’ No sooner had I internally posed this question when in walked one of my students, singing a tribal prayer song. My students who come to me from Africa come from cultures that are oral. They learn the histories of their families, their lineage, and their prayers through stories and songs. According to Howard Gardner and others, using a student’s multiple intelligences is one key method to instruct on any given topic (Gardner, 1999). My students with Latino roots are typically my natural dancers; they love to sing and listen to music. So, after some consideration on
what medium I should use to teach the modals, one potential method was fast to pop in to my head: music. I should teach the limited, formal use of modals with the aid of music.

I have previously used music with my students and they have achieved high success in their learning. From the very beginning of the school year, songs involving the days of the week, the weather outside and auxiliary verbs have been used successfully with my students. As the use of music is already in place throughout the day in my classroom, it made sense to me to think about teaching modals with music. Another reason I thought of music was that my students had already been taught modals with paper and pencil and with verbal exercises so it was obvious to me they were in need of something more to support their use of these tricky verbs. One issue I need to be careful of is sticking to the topic. Because I enjoy using music, I will need to adhere to the advice of Wilhem, Fisher, Hinchman, O’Brien, Raphael and Shanahan (2007) to stay focused on the topic of the lessons. Wilhem et al. stress music is good to use in literature but it is important to keep the lessons focused on the content and not get carried away with the musical component. Because of my personal enjoyment of music, it is necessary I focus on the lessons themselves as opposed to getting off-task and using songs without a specific purpose.

Guiding Questions

People learn in various capacities with music serving as one of the dominant learning catalysts (Gardner, 1999). Among the multiple intelligences of learning in theory, suggested music serves as a constant in numerous cultures of an ESL classroom in the rural Midwest (Kent, 2009). The use of music is a common occurrence in my
classroom because I work with the newcomer level of non-native speakers. For my classroom, the use of music and the memorization of music have served my students well in the previous years. Upon internalizing the question of how I can better teach my students, I found myself thinking about my colleagues and ELL teachers beyond my district; if I could develop something to help my students, would it not help other teachers and students as well? My response was simple and true: of course!

As a native speaker of English I understand the semantic difference between “Will you go tomorrow?” and “Can you go tomorrow?” In an instance where a non-native speaker may misuse ‘will’ for ‘can,’ however, the intended meaning may lead to confusion. Take, for example, waiting in a doctor’s office. “Can the doctor see me now?” conveys an entirely different meaning than, “Will the doctor see me now?” The first question asks if the doctor can physically visit with the patient whereas the second question asks if the doctor is willing to see the patient.

Modals serve various functions in the English language and this study only looks at two specific uses of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ namely, the idea of ‘can’ relating to a physical ability and the idea of ‘will’ serving to signal a future occurrence. The reason for this limited usage is the level of the learners. The subjects being used in this research are low-level ELLs and to give them all the uses of ‘can’ and ‘will’ would be too overwhelming. At their stage of English learning it is necessary a solid foundation be built before teaching additional functions of a word. One example of how these two modals function differently is with the use of ‘can’ and the concept of perception (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freemen, 1999). ‘Can’ may be used as a modal to express a
perceptual or cognitive ability in a sentence such as, “I can understand your nervousness.” The modal may be removed from the sentence and the meaning remains similar, “I understand your nervousness.” The modal auxiliary ‘will’ would not be used to express the same function: *I understand your nervousness* and *I will understand your nervousness* do not mean the same thing.

Another potential source of confusion of using the words ‘can’ and ‘will’ is that both are also acceptable as nouns. A can of soup, for instance, is one way to use ‘can’ as a noun. A will is a legal binding document discussing a person’s material belongings and assets following his or her death. Will is also a common nickname for the male name William. Because of the low level of the subjects for this study, only two very specific and limited uses of ‘can’ and ‘will’ as modal auxiliaries are examined.

“Modal auxiliaries are among the more difficult structures ESL/EFL teacher have to deal with. One of the reasons for this is the form of modals,” (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freemen, p. 137). A limited number of modal auxiliaries have phrasal modal counterparts. For example, with the modal ‘can’ the phrasal modal counterpart is ‘to be able to’ (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Phrasal modal counterparts and overlapping pragmatic functions of ‘can’ and ‘will’ are not in scope in this study.

For the purpose of this study ‘can’ is defined as the modal to express physical or mental ability as in ‘I can open the door’ and ‘will’ as the modal to express a future activity as in, ‘I will see my doctor tomorrow.’

At this time clarification is needed on the notion of formal versus informal English usage with the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ With my students, my primary goal
is to teach them how to use English formally as well as informally as they are going to be interacting with native speakers on a daily basis in both written and spoken form.

Formal usage needs to take precedence for the following reasons: the majority of my students want to have jobs in the community some day and this will require them to complete job applications and fill out the type of paperwork that accompanies such processes; and, most of my students claim they would like to attend college. If they do not have an understanding (at least in the simplest form) of the both the formal and informal forms of written English, any college-entrance essays or exams will more than likely not allow their acceptance (not to mention the Minnesota state standardized tests on writing all high school students currently have to pass in order to graduate).

On the other hand, I understand how a large part of the day for my students is spent communicating in the informal sense with speaking and listening. I have yet to have a student come in to my classroom and ask, “And how are you today, Mrs. DeVore?” Instead, I often hear, “What’s up, Mrs. DeVore?” and “What’s going on, Mrs. DeVore?” The majority of teachers I work with (if not all) know students do not speak formally to their peers in the hallway. My students pick up on informal discourse such as greetings before I even have them in the classroom. For the purpose of this thesis, two limited formal functions of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ are the focus of the instruction.

As noted above, according to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), the teaching of modals is complex enough but the complexity increases when teaching modals to ELL students. One of the reasons for this is the structure of the modals. For
example, “Some of your students, who have been told time and time again that present-
tense verbs with third person singular subjects require an ‘s’ ending, overgeneralize this
rule to modals—for example, ‘He cans play tennis.’” And later, “This overgeneralization
results in errors because in English modal auxiliaries (can, may, shall, will, etc.) are
distinguished from other auxiliary verbs (be, have, do) as well as from ordinary verbs by
their lack of tense and their resultant lack of subject-verb agreement.” (Celce-Murcia and
Larsen-Freeman, p. 137). Although these overgeneralizations are not going to be
explicitly addressed within the context of this study, the students will be learning about
them in the following term in my class. In order for them to understand these
overgeneralizations in the future, this study will serve as the foundation upon which they
will build in the following terms.

Based on my students’ experiences with the misunderstandings and therefore
misuses of the modals and the research on the benefits of using music to promote
language learning, I want to discover how to combine music with educational methods in
order to teach the limited use of the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ My guiding questions for
this thesis are as follows: “Does the use of music help in the teaching of the limited use of
the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’” and “Do the students prefer the use of music
implemented in their instruction?”

In order to go about investigating this topic I am going to pre-assess and post-
assess my students to gather data. Because my students are older, I have determined an
interview would be a valuable data collection tool; their input is appreciated as I believe
they are at a mature enough stage where they can internalize information and provide useful feedback.

Because I have seen the misunderstanding and misuse of modals firsthand with my students, I hope to discover more effective methods to teach the limited usage of the two modals to ensure future success with my students’ understanding and use of the modals. Music is shown to enhance students’ learning in nearly every capacity so I intend to teach modals to my students using music.

For the reasons explicated above, the following research aims at answering two guiding questions: “Can music assist in the limited use of the modal auxiliaries ‘can’ and ‘will?’” and “Do my students view the use of music as a positive factor in their lessons?”

Overview

In Chapter One I introduced my research about using music to teach the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to a senior high level 1 ELL class. The context of this thesis was introduced with the motivation to help my students learn the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ and to show improvement from their pre-assessments in the first week in May to their post-assessments in the third week of May.

The following chapters will serve to present the new-found information to discover if, indeed, music helps in the use of teaching the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’. In Chapter Two I provide a literature review that discusses the use of multiple intelligences and the use of music to teach the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ A formal definition of the limited use of the two modals is also included so the meaning is understood throughout the research. The procedure for the research is described and a background on the theory
of multiple intelligences is summarized. A section follows dedicated to the use of music in foreign language classes. A conclusion wraps up the chapter.

Chapter Three contains information on the research paradigms, the procedure, data analysis, and the ethics included in this thesis. Chapter Four discusses the results and includes tables with data. Chapter Five serves to discuss limitations and implications of the data as well as further research that may be conducted. Chapter Five also includes the conclusion of the research for this thesis. Lastly, the results of this research will be used when presenting to colleagues and at trainings in my district.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the clarification of the limited modal usage in conjunction with the use of music for classroom instruction. The definitions of the two modals as used in this limited research are reviewed. The theory of multiple intelligences is also discussed in my literature review as it supports the use of music as a medium for instruction. Additionally, research to promote the use of music in foreign language classes is summarized. Finally, I address the lack of research on using music in a senior high level 1 ELL classroom to teach the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’

The primary purpose of this research was to answer the following questions: “Does the use of choral singing help in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’” and “Do the students prefer the use of music implemented in their instruction?”

For the purpose of this research the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ were taught in a limited context. The subjects of this research are Level 1 ELLs and they are going to be subjected to one use or function of ‘can’ and one use or function of ‘will’ as determined by me from observations I have made in the classroom. In reality, the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ are used in numerous ways (as discussed more in-depth in Chapter One) but due to the low level of the students’ English knowledge, it was imperative for me to present
these verbs in a gradual process as opposed to teaching the students all of the uses in a few days’ time. The students received one form of usage with each modal to serve them in their future learning of the modals. My hope here is to create a base from which my students can further build on as they enhance their English skills.

Definitions of Modals ‘Can’ and ‘Will’

For the purpose of clarification, I defined the limited uses of the two modals being discussed throughout this thesis. The two modals I focused my research on and the two functions of their definitions are as follows:

Can—the physical or mental ability of being able to do an action in the present tense—
Examples: he can open a window, she can talk with you, I can play outside because it is beautiful weather right now.

Will—the idea that something is presently possible and is going to happen in the future, used in the present time to anticipate a future occurrence—
Examples: she will go to the store tomorrow; they will sell their house, you will do what your mother says or you will not go to the movies.

The modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ are defined as modal auxiliaries by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) as they differ from the auxiliary verbs in that they lack not only tense but also subject-verb agreement. The fact that modals do not inflect may present problems to ELLs. Still another difficulty in teaching the modal auxiliaries is that some are phrasal modals while others, such as ‘will’ and ‘can’ are not. Phrasal modals have co-occurrence restrictions that may be erroneously extended to regular modal auxiliaries.
One such example is ‘have to.’ ‘Have to’ requires the use of an infinitive which would result in an error if extended to ‘can’ or ‘will’ as in *I will to go or I can to go.*

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) conclude ‘can’ and ‘will’ are historically used in the present tense whereas other modals such as ‘could’ and ‘would’ are typically used in the past tense. In this current capstone only the present time usage of ‘can’ and ‘will’ will be considered. There are various modals in English and selecting only two of them with one function for each to use for this thesis took some serious consideration on my part. Frequency of these modals along with the needs of my students were components of the consideration.

I am confident the selection of the limited usage of ‘can’ and ‘will’ is an appropriate selection for the level of my students; these are two modals they will use on a regular basis (as opposed to teaching them ‘shall’ or another modal rarely used in their day-to-day interactions with native speakers) and my goal is to help them establish a foundation of understanding with these two modals. As their learning continues, they will see more uses of the two modals and they will see the overlap that often occurs. One such overlap is the use of ‘can’ to demonstrate the future questioning of something, as is the example: Can she help me next week? This type of question may not make sense at first glance when considered against the most basic function of ‘can.’ But in reality, the use of ‘can’ occurs in this context on a regular basis. The goal here was to focus on one basic use for each of the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ and incorporate music into my lessons to teach these basic functions. The plan was to then expand upon future lessons to include more of the functions of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’
According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman these are useful modals for everyday speech and serve to help communicate in the most basic expressions. I feel the limited use of ‘can’ and ‘will’ are two important modal functions to teach in my students’ beginning instruction of English because they will continue to use these as they further acquire the English language.

Procedure

The senior high level 1 ELL students were split into two separate groups. The first group served as the control group and they received lessons on the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ without the use of music. The second group served as the experimental group and they received the lessons on the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ with the use of music. The lessons were taught during the month of May to the two groups. Both groups were given the same pre-assessment and the same post-assessment to gauge their use of their beginning or base knowledge of the two modals and to gauge their new knowledge following the lessons.

The data was assessed to determine if, in fact, music does help in the learning of the two modals. This data was reviewed to see if music should be used in my future lessons to promote retention of the two modals and a stronger understanding for future students’ modal reference and usage. The songs included a definition of the two modals and ways in which to descriptively use the modals. The intended purpose of the music was to serve as a mental reminder for the students when they participate in the post-assessments and personal interviews as well as in their future modal usage.
Various researchers have studied the use of music in conjunction with memory or retention. Steven Smith (1985) tested his theory of music with memory when subjects were presented a list of words with music. Forty-eight hours later the two groups were questioned about the list of words. The group that was instructed with music scored higher than the group that was instructed without music in their retention of the list of words. A second component to his study was the use of the same environment when presenting the information. Because of this study the students were in my classroom during the research for this thesis and their classroom environment stayed constant.

Bob Snyder is another researcher who has studied the use of music and linked it to memory. In his work he touches on the use of music with regards to both short-term and long-term memory. Snyder (2000) proposes music is useful when memorizing a topic or idea. His research suggests those who experience music in a cultural sense may retain information longer if this new information is presented with the use of music. In his research, music that was used in repeated patterns resulted in longer retention by the subjects in their short-term memory. Snyder (2000) later suggests if one maintains a memory in his or her short-term memory, the capability of it to develop into long-term memory is high because the information has already been established in the person’s mind. Based on these findings, I am using music along with pre-assessments, post-assessments and personal interviews to teach my lessons and gauge the retention of the lessons.

In order to discover if using music to teach modals will be a productive method, I will be using pre-assessments, post-assessments and personal interviews. I will conduct a
pre-assessment featuring 11 questions on each student prior to the lessons. The teaching of the lessons will take one week or five school days. Following the lessons, I will conduct a post-assessment of the same 11 questions to gauge their growth in their usage and learning.

Personal interviews will be conducted with my students as they are senior high school students and some are legally adults. Many of my students hope to have a full-time job in the near future so another goal in interviewing them is to help them practice their English in a more formal setting than the regular classroom environment. My students have strong personal opinions of validity and I feel these opinions are worthy of attention. The interviews will help me view the students from their own personal perspective as opposed to the close-ended questions of a formal assessment. Using both open-ended as well as close-ended data collection techniques will not only enhance the results of the research but also add validity to it. By using the two forms of data collection with both formal and informal assessments, my goal is to reach the most valid research possible from my students.

Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner is one of the prominent names linked to the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). His work proposes that every learner has a specific way of maximizing his or her brain power. Although Gardner’s theory changes as his research continues, he is predominantly known for having labeled the following identifiable multiple intelligences: spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (Armstrong, 2009).
His argument is that when presenting information if teachers (whether in formal academic settings or informal settings) include the intelligence a student needs to learn, the student may better retain the information. This may lead to the student learning the presented information better than what would have occurred if the student had not been given instruction in his or her identified intelligence.

Kagan and Kagan (1998) support Gardner’s view when they write that music seems to be the most abstract of the intelligences. They touch on the symbolism of music because it expresses and stands for human experiences. They also lend support to Gardner’s approach when they discuss how music has rhythms and harmonies. They are in agreement with Gardner’s theory that if you have a student who possesses musical intelligence, the student will be more successful when lessons are presented with musical support. As discussed in Chapter One, my students come from cultures where music plays a large role in both recreation and ceremony. For students who come from cultures so dependent on music, there is an additional incentive to incorporate music into my instruction.

Music in Foreign Language Classes

One of the most exciting times in my secondary school French education was the two weeks leading up to our Christmas break; this was the time our French teacher brought out the French Christmas music and accompanying lyric sheets. For a class of rural, Midwestern students, even seeing a cassette printed with a different language was a rarity—to hear the music was even more of a treat. We would spend the first 10 minutes or so of every class period listening to these Christmas carols. Next door in the Spanish
class, they also participated in similar methods using Spanish Christmas carols. From *Pétil Papá Nöel* to *Feliz Navidad*, our heads (and hallway) were alive with music well before the holiday break ever officially began for us.

It is interesting to reflect on what made those particular lessons in school so much more entertaining than the regular lessons. While I enjoyed all of my French education, the factor that played a major role in those specific weeks was the use of music. I always loved learning new French verbs but adding the use of music was comparable to adding the icing on the cake; one of the two alone is great but add the second and now you are really onto something special.

The use of music in teaching a foreign language has been pursued by several researchers. For example, Yukiko S. Jolly (1975) discusses the use of music in a foreign language class by noting, “The close relationship between language and music is an easily recognizable one. Both entities have significant common elements and similarities. Songs might be looked upon as occupying the middle ground between the disciplines of linguistics and musicology, possessing both the communicative aspect of language and the entertainment aspect of music.” (p. 11) According to her article, using music is a positive way to connect the seriousness of the academic curriculum with the enjoyment and relaxation of music. Jolly taught Japanese to beginning and intermediate language students and she found through her limited research the use of music aided in her students’ success with Japanese. Her article claims teachers of a foreign language should strongly consider using music in conjunction with their language lessons. She does state that the music should coincide with the lessons and not have any severe or
radical pitch jumps as this has potential to take away from the lessons. The songs should be simple and support the idea being taught in the lessons (Jolly, 1975).

She also adds that the area between where speech communication ends and song categorization begins is a grey area. The two easily occur hand in hand so to separate them definitively on a line is a difficult task. Jolly further supports this claim by stating, “Songs and normal speech are on the same continuum of vocally-produced human sounds. Both have rhythmic and melodic content, and represent forms of communication in a linguistic sense.” (p. 11) Because of this connection, the use of music when presenting lessons is recommended to other foreign language teachers.

My study included the use of music to teach the limited usage of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to an ESL senior high level 1 class of 14 students. Linguistic intelligence has been found to be in structural parallel to musical intelligence (Paquette, 2008). Because of this, I planned on using music to aid in the linguistic instruction of the two modals. Spina (2006) agrees with this idea of parallelism in music and reading skills. Based on research summarized above, music has been selected as an additional medium to present lessons on the modals.

My students are beyond the age of children yet I realize their linguistic knowledge is in fact similar to that of native speakers at a young age. Due to their emerging low level of the English language, my hope is to use music to aid in their English instruction on the limited use of the two modals. The goal of this research is to eventually gauge if using music is more effective than not using music in teaching English.
The use of music was pursued in this research due to the fact that, as an educator, one of my responsibilities is to present knowledge to my students and to teach beginning literacy skills. Along with this presentation is my methodology of presenting; i.e., how and what I use when presenting. Educators enhance creative minds by encouraging numerous ways to view new information (Christodoulou, 2009).

While many language lessons include verbal and often pen and paper methodology, additional methods such as the inclusion of music or kinesthetic knowledge have gained popularity. Research has supported the idea of teaching important concepts in multiple ways and in this regard, teachers are able to reach students more effectively as opposed to using only one method repeatedly (Christodoulou, 2009). Using one ineffective method repeatedly will more than likely not be beneficial to a student.

Music has been credited for aiding in learning and because of this I used music to teach my students. As Darrow (2008) points out, music is a valuable tool to enhance a child’s ability to read. This viewpoint is seconded by Spina (2006) when her research suggests that an arts-based curriculum provides significant cognitive advantages to ELL students. Because learning a second language can be a daunting task, the use of music can serve as a bridge to this challenge. Spina (2006) states, “Language-dependent communication of ideas and feelings often leaves L2 learners frustrated over their inability to express themselves and have that expression understood.” (p. 103)

As with modals, the misunderstanding of communication from a non-native speaker to a native speaker has the potential to harm future verbal exchanges and to highly discourage the non-native speaker from learning more about the target language.
Because of this finding (Spina, 2006) in L2 learners, my belief in the validity of this research was strengthened. There is an area of concern that may easily lead to frustration on the part of both the learner and the native speaker and my goal is to lessen some of the frustration that accompanies learning English.

Another strong factor in my research was the age of the students; because they were ages 14-18, my approach to their education varied greatly from the approach I would use with a kindergarten-aged class. When working with adults and near-adults, a teacher needs to create an environment that not only promotes education but also demonstrates to the students she understands they are concerned with learning a large amount of English in a short amount of time (Buttaro, 2001). My students understood they were behind their native-speaking peers academically. They were anxious to catch up and it was a large part of my job to give them the best lessons I could in order to promote their learning.

In order to be as effective as possible with my lessons I needed to demonstrate to my students that even though the material was basic and low level, they were not low level learners. They should not be taught using juvenile strategies. If I present information and they feel I am patronizing or insulting them, they will shut down and not want to participate. When using music, I needed to ensure I was choosing appropriate music to their age level yet getting the point across in a simple and short manner (Jolly, 1975).

With my class, they were old enough to understand they do not have the necessary skills in English to function outside of class when immersed in an all-English
setting such as a grocery store or during a job interview. As my students have expressed to me, their goals for learning English follow the mentality of ‘teach me everything I need to know and teach me fast.’ Because of the pressure to get them up to speed with their peers, I knew I wanted to be as effective and efficient as possible with my instruction. For this reason I hoped to find more effective ways to teach a limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’

One additional point worth mentioning is the fact that research has indicated an arts-based curriculum not only enhances an L2 learner’s ability but it also adds to his/her L1 ability (Spina, 2006). If this research I am conducting will aid in my students’ knowledge of English, as they are adults or near adult age, they will be able to cognitively apply their new understanding of the English modals to their own native language. My studying of the French language, for example, served to strengthen my own understanding of the English present perfect and imperfect grammatical forms. Although this was not my intentional goal for learning French, it was an unforeseen benefit which enhanced my experience with my native language.

Conclusion

Although a great deal of information exists on using music with literacy, I found little research on the teaching of modals to senior high level 1 ELLs and even less research on using music to teach modals to senior high level 1 ELLs. Because of this lack of research, I proposed to help to fill the gap regarding the use of music to teach the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to senior high level 1 ELLs.
A plethora of information is available under the heading of music with English in elementary, kindergarten, or preschool-aged students but my particular students are not of that age group. Due to the lack of pertinent information regarding the use of music to teach modals in a senior high level 1 ELL classroom, my research looked at how music could help in teaching the limited use of the two modals.

In Chapter Three I discuss the research paradigm in this research and the physical setting of the research is explained. The participants and procedure are described as well as a section on data analysis and the ethics followed during this research. In essence, the following chapter discusses the research method, the group of students who participated in the research and the materials used in gathering the data.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to discuss the use of music to teach basic functions of the two modal auxiliaries ‘can’ and ‘will’ to a senior high level 1 ELL class. I chose to use music as one of the mediums for instruction as all of my students have, at some point in the past, displayed interest in music and I hoped to use this factor as a connection with the modal lessons. The questions guiding my research are, “Does music help to teach the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ in a senior high level 1 ELL class?” and “Do the students prefer the use of music in their lessons?” These questions stem from earlier research of Smith (1985) and Snyder (2000) on the use of music and its effect on memory. One component of this research is to eventually evaluate the data from my study and see if it coincides with the results from Smith (1985) and Snyder (2000). This chapter focuses on the research paradigms, data collection, procedure, data analysis and ethics for the thesis.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for my thesis includes both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative research consists of my interview questions asked of my students following the lessons. These interviews and results are considered qualitative data as they are non-numerical data (McKay, 2006). As my students are senior high level students, I
felt interviews were an appropriate data collection tool to use. Their feedback is valuable in my research as it will help me create future lessons on the two modals.

The quantitative data includes both the pre-assessment and post-assessment scores as these are numerical data. These are numerical data because they can be assigned percentages and are statistically reviewed (McKay, 2006). The results of the two assessments are considered quantitative data as there are measurable negative and positive percentages of change (McKay, 2006) in the students’ responses to the assessments when comparing the students’ pre-assessments to their post-assessments. This serves as the concrete data for my purpose of the research.

After scoring both assessments, I displayed the scores of the two groups with the use of tables. I felt using tables to represent my data was an easier to read format in comparison to other visual charts or graphs which are sometimes used to show quantitative data.

Although research does not need to include both qualitative and quantitative data, I felt it was important for my specific thesis to include both types of data. Because my teaching directly affects my students, I wanted to make sure what I was teaching was benefitting them academically (quantitative data) and personally (qualitative data). My goal is to use the results of the data to help shape next year’s lesson planning.

Time Line

With the pre-assessment, each student independently completed an exercise regarding the modals on paper in class without my assistance. I collected the data and documented the results. The lessons on modals were taught using the music and songs I
had developed. The lessons took approximately four to five days to teach. Following the last lesson, the students took the post-assessment. From these results I determined if the students had shown any progress in their understanding of the modals. I anticipated an increase in the data but if not, I would need to reflect on which questions on the assessment and post-assessment were incorrect and which were correct. Next, I needed to look further into the consistencies or the inconsistencies within each student on his/her work and then into the results of the class as a whole.

The interviews were conducted two days after the post-assessment. This hopefully allowed the students some time for internalization of the new information. If the post-assessment and the interview were to be held on the same day, the students may feel more rushed and not be as reflective with their perspective.

The assessments and the interviews were methods useful to me. I used the data points from the two assessments to gauge empirical data in terms of students’ demonstrated usage of the two modals. The interviews were beneficial because they will allow me the opportunity to engage in unbiased communication with my students so I can assess their overall interpretation of the experience. If my students are dissatisfied or confused with their new knowledge, they will have the opportunity to communicate that with me at the time of their interview. If, on the other hand, they are satisfied with the lessons, I will be able to hear about this information. Any insight they give me will be beneficial as I summarize the data to find out if, in fact, music was a helpful tool in teaching about modals in my ELL class.
Data Analysis

Assessment criteria should take into account the multiple ways students can demonstrate knowledge (Christodoulou, 2009). Language learners have been found to use various cognitive strategies in order to store and recall new information that is presented to them (Goh, 1998). Using pre-assessments, post-assessments, and delayed assessments this research demonstrated the students’ achievement (or lack thereof) over a two-week period of time. This data served to demonstrate their ability to retain information and, in turn, reiterate it with a questionnaire featuring close-ended questions.

In order to balance out the close-ended perspective I have included personal, one-on-one interviews. By including the interviews my goal is to also shed light on the open-ended spectrum of data collection. The students’ responses to the interview questions had the potential to be varied and were certain to be personal. The option exists for some students to have had similar answers as their classmates. This may have occurred if they viewed the information in the same context as another student may have viewed it. The interviews were to be conducted individually in hopes of possibly limiting the amount of peer bias; this is a positive note as the goal was to get individual, personalized data.

Because the interviews were intended to be in a more personal setting (one-on-one) as compared to a large classroom with 14 students and one teacher, trust factors in as an integral component. Whenever a teacher is communicating and looking for honest feedback, an element of trust must have been established in order for the student to feel comfortable giving his or her feedback. Roessingh’s (2006) research focuses specifically on the issue of trust in a high school setting. She found students’ trust in their ESL
teachers served as a large factor in students’ participation and attitude while completing their secondary education.

Earning trust in any setting is important when interviews are planned if the desired result is achieving honest responses. If a student is uncomfortable or intimidated, the answers to interview questions will be less likely to be an accurate indicator of his or her true thoughts but instead serve as the responses he or she believes the teacher is looking for. Another possibility is the student will answer as quickly as possible in order to hurry the interview along; this could also result in dishonest answers which would misconstrue the data.

Assessing emergent ELLs is different from assessing more advanced ELLs for one basic reason: the emergent students I serve do not have literacy in English. In addition, over half of my class this year does not have literacy in their native language. Because of this, assessing them will require a different type of assessment than the one I would otherwise use. I will be assessing the students with a pre-assessment and a post-assessment. The assessments will not only be words but they will be words along with photos of the students in my class about to complete an action or asking a question. My goal here is to provide an additional form of communication for my students so they do not give up if they do not know the sentences on a page given to them. My hope with the research is to engage them in their learning, as opposed to scaring them away or making them feel intimidated.
Setting

Does the use of music aid in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ in a senior high level 1 ESL class? And, do the students prefer to have music used in their lessons? The setting for pursuing these guiding questions is my classroom in a senior high school in a rural Midwest town. Approximately 64% of the student body at the senior high receives free or reduced lunch; this includes a large percentage of ELLs. The classroom has twenty-two desks with a round table and chairs. The two interior walls have a total of twelve computers with chairs. The lessons are taught using an InterWrite Board, a wipe board, and poster paper in various parts of the room. The classroom walls showcase students’ work and display numerous artifacts from around the world.

Participants

The class for this particular research includes fourteen level 1 senior high ELLs. The students differ in ethnicity and are ages 14-18. The home languages spoken by this group of students are Spanish and Somali. There are six males and eight females in this research. In our district each new ELL is evaluated academically upon admittance into the district and must be determined level 1 in order to be placed into my Beginner ELL class. Chapter Four includes more data and a chart regarding the participants in this research.

Procedure

The instruction for this research took place in my classroom. I taught four lessons to both groups of students. The lessons were the same with the exception of one simple
component—music. The control group received lessons without the support of music and the experimental group received lessons with the support of music. Each lesson included the same verbal and written instruction; the only difference was the control group’s lessons did not include music and the experimental group’s lessons were supplemented with music. When a lesson was taught to the control group, repetition and question/answer were used as the two main methods of instructional delivery. When the same lesson was taught to the experimental group, repetition and question/answer were also used but the implementation of a song to accompany the lesson was the medium used with repetition. Any repetition in the experimental group was through song whereas in the control group the repetition was strictly non-musical.

I assessed each student with a pre-assessment to ascertain the level of knowledge before beginning the lessons, a post-assessment to measure retention of the information and one-on-one interviews to gauge their input on the success or failure of the lessons. These methods were appropriate for my class as the formal assessments will demonstrate measurement of their skills based on a continuum of progress; the anticipated intent was to see a rise in the application and understanding of the modals with each assessment. The interviews were suitable for data as the students were adults or near adult age and they could now articulate their own thoughts; this allowed for individual feedback I could evaluate and use later to decide how to approach the instruction of the same modals with future classes.

Pre-assessment (Appendix A), post-assessment (Appendix B), and interviews (Appendix C and Appendix D) were used as the data collection agents for my research on
if using music aids in the teaching of two modals to senior high level 1 ELL students. The first lesson consisted of information regarding modals (referred to as ‘helping verbs’ with the class) to introduce the topic to be studied that week. We reviewed verbs and the control group was given a list of verbs (Appendix E) to look at and have as a reference sheet throughout the week. The experimental group received the same introduction lesson and the same list of verbs but the list was presented as a song. Both groups went through the list with me. The control group listened to me say each verb and repeated each verb after me. During the repetition for the experimental group, I sang the verbs and they repeated the verbs back to me in song. I then had both groups find and circle ‘can’ and ‘will’ and I told the class we would be learning about these two helping verbs throughout the week.

The second lesson discussed how words in English can serve different functions such as a noun in one sentence or a verb in another sentence. The word ‘can’ is a verb and it’s a noun—like a can of soup (Appendix F). I felt it was important to distinguish the fact that we were only looking at verbs with the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ but I also knew it was important to recognize how the words can serve different functions. There was a student in our class who had a brother nicknamed Will; I knew if I did not clarify the fact that ‘will’ can be both a noun and a verb the students would have greater confusion in the end.

The second lesson focused on the understanding of ‘can’ to mean the physical or cognitive ability to do something. Examples used in class were: ‘she can go home,’ ‘they can listen,’ ‘he can dance,’ ‘we can learn English’ and ‘I can do it.’ Again, the only
difference between the control and experimental groups was the experimental group received the reference sheet (Appendix F) as a song and the control group received it as a paper with no accompanying music.

For the third lesson the students in the control group received the written definition of ‘will’ as taught in the limited context and the reference sheet for ‘will.’ The third lesson focused on the modal ‘will’ and the meaning given for it was ‘to do something in the near future.’ The students gave examples of their daily routine and I prefaced the routines like this, “Tomorrow at 7 o’clock you will __________. After you wake up you will __________. When you get to school you will __________.” The examples continued on in this manner. Following the lesson I had each student say one thing they were going to do using ‘will.’ The answers were basic but appropriate such as Nasra’s, “I will go home.” We practiced with verbal prompts by me initially and then the students volunteered to give each other verbal prompts. The allowed them the opportunity to both practice starting the sentence and to fill in the blank.

The experimental group was given the same information in the form of a song sheet (Appendix G). An additional bonus for the experimental group was that they helped me in determining where to put in the pauses for the song. I had the melody prepared and sang it once for them after handing out the sheets. I then asked them to help me put in some claps. They really appeared to enjoy this and asked to sing the song numerous times. They even changed the rhythm of the last two lines and instead of it being an equal rhythm they added syncopation from the third line into the last line. It was fun to
watch them interact with each other as they made the decision how to sing the last two lines.

The fourth lesson served as a kinesthetic one in that the students were able to get more physical. Each group was again given the same sheet (Appendix H) with the only difference being the musical component. The control group’s lesson was presented without music and the experimental group’s lesson was presented with the use of music when reading through the supplemental sheet. The two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ were discussed. Each one was talked about separately and then the control group read through the sheet whereas the experimental group sang their sheet. One constant in lesson four was that each group was able to act out their sheets. For the first line of the sheet, ‘The verb can is physical’ the control group stood up and flexed their muscles or acted out picking something up. The experimental group also acted out the first line but they were singing while gesturing. Other examples included using cognitive meanings of ‘can’ such as ‘we can think’ and ‘we can learn.’ Although more difficult to gesture, the students were able to understand the meanings of these examples. These examples were given with both the control and experimental groups.

The fifth lesson concluded the unit on the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ and served strictly as a review. The students had learned quite a bit in a few short days and I felt it was important to review the new information before the weekend and then we could start a new topic the following week.

For the control group, we went through our reference sheets and the students had a chance to ask any remaining questions on the verbs. The question was asked by a
student, “How can will be verb if Will is brother for Carlos?” (The intended meaning of this question grammatically is, “How can ‘will’ be a verb if Will is the brother of Carlos?”) The final lesson gave me the opportunity to reiterate the different functions words can serve in English.

For the experimental group, we reviewed all of the song sheets and sang each song multiple times. The students also had the same opportunity to ask any more questions they had on the limited use of the two modals. The experimental group had very few questions and I honestly was not sure if that meant they had a stronger understanding of the two modals or if they had caught on to the fact the longer we discussed the two modals, the less time they had to sing the songs.

I was pleased with the timeline of the lessons as I did not know if I would need the full week. It seemed the students were engaged in their learning and excited but had the unit continued into the following week I believe they would have begun to get anxious to move on to a new topic.

Data Collection

Both the pre-assessment and post-assessment were used for the quantitative data. Each student was given a pre-assessment using a fill-in-the-blank exercise with pictures of himself/herself and his/her classmates involved in the specific activities discussed in the written statement. The students were to choose the verb ‘can’ or ‘will’ to complete the blank. Following the lessons, the students were given the same assessment (Appendix A) as the post-assessment (Appendix B).
My control group, whose lessons on the modals were taught without the use of music, was asked questions individually regarding their thoughts on the use of music in general as they did not receive the lessons on modals with the use of music. The purpose for this was to be able to compare the post-assessments from the control group (who had no music in their lessons) and the experimental group (who had music used within their lessons).

My experimental group, whose lessons were taught with the use of music, was asked questions individually directly related to the use of music in their modal lessons as this was how their lessons were presented to them. Each student’s response was individual and was not compared numerically or in terms of percentages with the other students’ responses. Qualitative data was important for my thesis as one of my guiding questions asks if using music helps to teach the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ Because of this, it was important for me to understand how my students felt about the use of music in their lessons and if they felt the music enhanced or hindered their lessons on the modals.

Ethics

This research was conducted in my classroom in an ethical manner. The rights and the privacy of the students were respected and maintained throughout the entire process. Each student received a permission slip to be signed by a parent giving me the right to include him/her in the research. Each permission slip had one side in English and the other side translated into the student’s home language. This helped to ensure the parents would truly understand what they were signing. As this group is senior high level I had a few students who were labeled ‘independent’ by the district who were legally able
to sign their own papers. All permission slips were collected with the necessary signatures prior to the beginning of the research. Each of the students’ parents signed and agreed to the research.

When explaining the permission slip and its purpose to my class I reiterated participation was not mandatory, it was completely voluntary and their grade would not show any changes regardless of their involvement or their declining to be involved in the research. In addition, the students had the right to cease participation in the research at any time with no questions asked and no adverse consequences. Each of the participating students’ signed permission slip was collected before administering the pre-assessment at the beginning of the research.

All materials used in the research were kept in my classroom cabinet in a locked drawer. Results were not discussed with other teachers nor were names given out regarding those who chose to participate. As stated with the tables in Chapter Four, no real names were used but pseudonyms were used to refer to specific students. The photographs used in the pre-assessment and the post-assessment were shown in class but the faces have been blocked out in this thesis to protect the students’ privacy.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Three served to discuss the research paradigm, the setting of the research and the participants used in the research. The procedure, along with a description on the lessons, was given. Data analysis and the ethics adhered to in this research were also elaborated on.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research beginning with a detailed description of the participants. The results are presented in the order of the questions listed. A discussion of the data collection procedure follows. Finally, the results of this research are compared to other research.

With the collection and interpretation of this data, my goal is to discover the answer to my guiding questions which are, “Does the use of music help in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’?” and “Do the students prefer the use of music implemented in their instruction?” Other questions presented in this chapter are: Did the pre-assessment scores differ from the post-assessment scores? What are the differences between the scores of the control group and the experimental group? Did the students in the experimental group prefer the use of music in the presentation of their lessons? Would the students in the control group like to have music used in their lessons in the future?

This chapter presents the results of the study beginning with a description of the participants. A discussion of the data collection procedures follows. The results are presented in chronological order. Tables are included to demonstrate the results in a linear fashion. Finally, the results of this study are compared to other research.
Table 4.1 Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Previous schooling experience</th>
<th>Date of US entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binti</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>summer 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>fall 2007</td>
</tr>
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<td>Habso</td>
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<td>summer 2008</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>winter 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Formal education in El Salvador</td>
<td>spring 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Two years of formal education</td>
<td>summer 2008</td>
</tr>
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<td>El Salvador</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>**Zamzam</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>summer 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Names of students have been changed for confidentiality purposes. **Student receiving special education services.

Participants

The research for this study occurred in my senior high level 1 ELL classroom. The fourteen students are all at a pre-emergent or emergent reading level and they are all non-native speakers of English. The students who participated in this study are from countries in North America, South America, and Africa. The largest population of students is from Somalia. Six of the students are from Somalia. The second largest country represented is from El Salvador; three students participating in the study are from
this South American country. Two participants come from Kenya and one student comes from each of the following countries: Ethiopia, Mexico, and Honduras. The ages of the students range from 14 years old to 18 years old. The gender ratio is eight females to six males. This information is in table 4.1.

Test Measure Results

The results of the study are presented in the order of my guiding question, the pre-assessment (Appendix A), post-assessment (Appendix B), personal interview questions for the control group (Appendix C) and personal interview questions for the experimental group (Appendix D). The results for the pre-assessment and post-assessment are given for both the control group (Table 4.2) and the experimental group (Table 4.3).

Guiding Question 1: “Does the use of music help in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’” The median score of the control group in the pre-assessment is 6. The median score of the experimental group is 7. These scores are very similar and I thought it was a positive that each group scored so closely before teaching the lessons; this suggests the idea that the groups are balanced closely relating to previous knowledge (or lack thereof) of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ The median score for the control group in the post-assessment is 6. This indicates the scores did not vary greatly from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment. The median score for the experimental group in the post-assessment is 9. This indicates the scores did increase from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment.

Table 4.2 also displays data on the percentage change of the control group’s results. The results are as follows: Habso demonstrated a -33.33% change, Binti had a -
28.57% change, Jorge had a -14.29% change, Najma and Ikran both maintained a 0% change, Ricardo had a +20% change and Abdi showed a +40% change. This means that according to the pre-assessment and post-assessment scores, Habso, Binti and Jorge in the control group went back in their measurable scores whereas Ricardo and Abdi showed measurable improvements. Najma and Ikran both remained neutral as their scores did not increase or decrease.

In essence, without the use of music to teach the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to the control group, three students appeared to go backwards in their measured usage of the limited use of the modals, two students maintained the previous level of usage, and two increased their usage of the two modals. As the teacher reviewing this data, it appears to me the lessons were overall unsuccessful with the students.

For the experimental group, the results were as follows: Bianca maintained the same level of usage with the two modals at 0% change, Ahmed showed a +16.67% change, Zamzam had a +20% change, Carlos and Fernando both had a +25% change and Ifrah and Nasra showed +28.57% changes.

From this data, I can conclude the use of music seemed to help in teaching the limited usage of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ as every student (with the exception of Bianca who maintained) increased in his/her measurable usage of the two modals. No student in the experimental group showed a negative change; this is another reason the data supports the use of music in teaching the limited usage of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ in a senior high level 1 ELL classroom.
Table 4.2 Control Group, no use of music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-assessment</th>
<th>Post-assessment</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binti</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habso</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikran</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+40.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Experimental Group, use of music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-assessment</th>
<th>Post-assessment</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifrah</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasra</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamzam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+20.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding Question 2: Do the students prefer the use of music implemented in their instruction? Table 4.4 displays the control group’s individual opinions from the one-on-one interviews that were conducted two days after the post-assessment was administered. Table 4.5 displays the experimental group’s individual opinions from the interviews.
Before summarizing the students’ responses, it was necessary to consider the possibility of the responses not being completely accurate. Although the interviews were used in order to view the data in a qualitative manner (McKay, 2006) one cannot assume each student answered honestly. In addition to the students’ responses, trust factors in when conducting personal interviews. Roessingh (2006) claims a student’s response can only be accurate if there is a feeling of trust with the teacher conducting the interview. If the student does not feel secure, he or she may answer as quickly as possible in order to end the interview quickly. Another possibility is the students may answer what they feel the teacher wants to hear in order to gain a positive reaction from the teacher. The following table (4.4) shows the control group’s questions and responses.

Question #1: Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’. For the control group, the majority of students verbally demonstrated an understanding of the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ as taught in their limited usage within the lesson parameters for this particular research. Habso and Ikran both answered, “I don’t know.” Habso elaborated somewhat with her follow-up sentence of, “Can and will are words for us.” By this statement Habso showed she understood the two modals are words but it can be stated it was possible neither Habso nor Ikran understood the meaning of the two modals as presented in the lessons. Abdi appeared confident and answered the question well with his response, “That’s easy one. You know, can is like what you do, like I can eat. Will is talking about the future, like you know, I will go to McDonalds.” Abdi was able to answer the question as well as provide examples to support his answers.
### Table 4.4 Control Group, interview questions and responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>#1. Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’.</th>
<th>#2. Do you like music?</th>
<th>#3. Would you like to have music in class?</th>
<th>#4. Do you think using music in our lessons on ‘can’ and ‘will’ would be good or bad? And #5. Why?</th>
<th>#6. What did you think of our lessons on ‘can’ and ‘will’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binti</td>
<td>“Can is like, um, I can do it. Will is for the tomorrow.”</td>
<td>“Yeah Miss.”</td>
<td>“Yes!”</td>
<td>“Good ‘cuz we will like the music.”</td>
<td>“It’s nice, Miss.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>“You CAN do something. Will is talking about for the future.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Yeah, it’s okay.”</td>
<td>“That is nice to do, thanks for that.”</td>
<td>“I liked them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habso</td>
<td>“I don’t know. Can and will are words for us.”</td>
<td>“It’s okay.”</td>
<td>“Okay.”</td>
<td>“It is good. I like it.”</td>
<td>“Good. I always like English.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najma</td>
<td>“The can is do a action. Will means the future.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“It’s good so we can sing and dance.”</td>
<td>“They were good, I liked the lessons.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>“The can is for doing like I can go dancing. Will, I think is for the future-I think.”</td>
<td>“Yes, I like it for dancing.”</td>
<td>“Yes! Really Miss?”</td>
<td>“You know I like to dance so I want the music.”</td>
<td>“It’s okay. Maybe some music next time, huh?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikran</td>
<td>“I don’t know.” [difficult to hear]</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Yeah, okay.”</td>
<td>“I don’t know.”</td>
<td>“Fine.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdi</td>
<td>“That’s easy one. You know, can is like what you do, like I can eat. Will is talking about the future, like you know, I will go to McDonalds.”</td>
<td>“Of course.”</td>
<td>“Yes! You know I like the guys of music like T-Payne.”</td>
<td>“I will love it! Because I love to listen to my MP3. Can I do it now?”</td>
<td>“Ah, Miss. You know I love it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question #2: Do you like music? Every student answered positively to the question regarding their opinion on music. Each one seemed to enjoy music.

Question #3: Would you like to have music in class? As with question number 2, the feedback was unanimous; all students expressed the desire to have music used in
class. Habso’s response was more indifferent but she still answered, “Okay,” and her response was accompanied with a smile.

Question #4: Do you think using music in our lessons on ‘can’ and ‘will’ would be good or bad? Question #5: Why? With the exception of one student, every student was very excited about getting to use music in our lessons on ‘can’ and ‘will’. Abdi wanted to be granted permission to listen to his MP3 player following our interview and Jorge wanted to get up and dance for the class. Ikran was shy about the idea of dancing and gave a more hesitant, quiet, “I don’t know,” response. Ikran’s demeanor was very quiet and shy so this answer did not surprise me.

Question #6: What did you think of our lessons and ‘can’ and ‘will’? Again, most of the responses echoed the other ones. Jorge’s response of, “It’s okay. Maybe some music next time, huh?” demonstrated his mind was now focused on the idea of music. This made sense as the previous questions were asking about music. In addition to his responses, I could understand he comprehended, at least in the most basic form, the questions in the interview and he was linking the information from the previous questions to the current one.

Overall the responses of the control group to the interview questions demonstrated a basic understanding of the questions asked of them. It is interesting to me to see the responses of each student because it seems I can follow each student’s personality and mind frame.

Binti was an upbeat student who aspired to do well and please her teachers. This was demonstrated by her concentration in answering question number one and her
emphatic response to question number three. She said, “It’s nice, Miss,” when asked question number six. Binti’s excitement echoed Kenney’s (2008) article because her enjoyment of music linked with her desire to please her teachers may be the result of her positive and pleasant answers.

Ricardo’s answers were calmer and more relaxed; not surprisingly, this was his personality in class as well. He used more emphasis to make a point when answering such as, “You CAN do something,” where he said, “CAN,” strongly and his eyes opened widely. The rest of his answers were very to the point and concise.

Habso’s responses were more uncertain than the other students in the control group. She was a quiet and reserved student but she worked very hard in learning her English. I attributed her responses to the fact that she came from a family where the women were very submissive. I believed her answers were a combination of not always understanding, such as her response to question number one, and wanting to say the right thing, such as in the safe, if you will, answer of, “Okay,” to questions two and three.

Najma was a straightforward student, a strong listener and well-spoken. These characteristics were displayed in her responses to all six questions. Her grammar was still improving but her meaning was understood as in the response to question number one.

Jorge was embracing his new English. He was practicing at home and he was eager to learn more. This was evident in his answers as he used more words for clarification such as in his response to question number one. His answer to question number five was accompanied with a huge smile and his response for question number
six came with a little elbow nudge on the word, “huh,” as he was trying to appeal to my sense of humor to get more music used in class.

Ikran was another student of mine who was very reserved in mannerisms and in conversation. As with Habso, this was attributed in part to her cultural background. She also struggled with English and did not have literacy in her home language. Not only was she trying to learn to read English, she was trying to learn to read. Not an easy task. Once we finished the first question she appeared more comfortable and her answers came out louder and more clearly than the first one. She needed to feel secure before giving her opinion on a topic. Jongejan, Verhoeven, and Siegel (2007) give some insight into behavior like Ikran’s and they discuss some predictors of reading in language learners. Feeling secure is found to be an important part of giving an honest opinion.

Abdi’s spoken English has improved dramatically throughout the year. I believe he was ready for the next level of English instruction. He was well-versed in the cultural language of the United States and he blended in relatively well with his non-ELL peers. His speech was limited but not to the same extent as his other control group members. His response to question number two showed his conversational ability in informal discourse. He still struggled with the grammar but he was the most advanced student verbally in the control group.

Overall, the control group appeared to demonstrate a basic to more complex understanding of the limited use of the two modals and they all stated they enjoyed the use of music in class.
Question #1: Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ For the experimental group the responses to this were overall very confident and correct. The students each seemed comfortable and open with their answers. There was little hesitant behavior except with Zamzam who took longer than the other students to formulate her response.

Question #2: Do you like music? The entire experimental group said yes to this question except for Zamzam who answered, “Not really. It’s okay.”

Question #3: Did you like using music in class? Here everyone said yes or answered in favor of using music. Zamzam said it was fine and Bianca, Carlos, Fernando and Ifrah all responded very positively as demonstrated with the exclamation points.

Question #4 and #5: Do you think using music with the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ was good or bad? Why? The responses to these two questions were unanimous as each student responded they liked the use of music as it made the lessons fun. Both Carlos and Ifrah talked about singing the songs at home. I was pleased with this as they both have younger siblings at home and I felt it was a great way to model to their siblings how fun school can be and it is possible the songs may stick with the younger siblings as well.

Question #6: What did you think of our lessons on the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’? Here again each student expressed pleasure with using music in the lessons. Bianca, Fernando and Ahmed all used the adjective ‘good’ to describe the lessons. Carlos, Fernando, Ifrah, Ahmed and Zamzam used ‘fun’ to describe the lessons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>#1. Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’.</th>
<th>#2. Do you like music?</th>
<th>#3. Did you like using music in class?</th>
<th>#4. Do you think using music with the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ was good or bad? And #5. Why?</th>
<th>#6. What did you think of our lessons on the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>“Oh, Miss, c’mon. Okay, okay, can is something you do and will is happens in the future.”</td>
<td>“Yeah, Miss. I love it!”</td>
<td>“Yeah Miss! It’s much more better with music.”</td>
<td>“It was good because I like the songs.”</td>
<td>“I like using the music in class. It is good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>“That’s easy Miss. What for the things you do, that is can. What for the future, that is will.”</td>
<td>“Yes, I am everyday listening on my MP3.”</td>
<td>“Of course! I am good singer.”</td>
<td>“It was very nice, I like to sing the songs at my house.”</td>
<td>“Oh it is very nice. I am having much fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando</td>
<td>“Nice one. Can is something you can have muscles to do. Will is for the future and tomorrow.”</td>
<td>“Yeah. It is very nice and good.”</td>
<td>“Easy one, Miss. Yes! I love music in my class. Can we have it tomorrow?”</td>
<td>“Are you serious? I love it! Music is good for me in school so I know things.”</td>
<td>“Oh Miss, you know I am liking the music very much. It is good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifrah</td>
<td>“Can is like when you do something. Like, I can sing. Will is talking about the future, like, I will come to your home.”</td>
<td>“Yes, it is my favorite thing!”</td>
<td>“Yes! My favorite is the song, <em>I will call you</em> (clap, clap), you know the song I am meaning? It is very nice.”</td>
<td>“It is very good, I sing the songs to my family at home.”</td>
<td>“I love it! My favorite song is <em>I will call you</em> (clap, clap). It is so fun!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>“Can is something you do. Will is something in the future.”</td>
<td>“Yes, it is good.”</td>
<td>“Yeah, it is cool.”</td>
<td>“It is good because I like it. Good songs.”</td>
<td>“Yeah, it is good. Pretty fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasra</td>
<td>“Okay, Miss. Can is for something you do, like, I can carry my bag. Will is for the future, like, I will go to school.”</td>
<td>“Yes, Miss. I like music every day.”</td>
<td>“Oh yeah, Miss. Music is very nice in my class. Can we do again? Please?”</td>
<td>“Oh yes. It is good because we are having fun in our class.”</td>
<td>“I like it! Oh, Miss. You know I like the music in our class. I’m always singing in the class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zamzam</strong></td>
<td>“Can for things you do. Will, I don’t remember. Huh? Can you tell me?”</td>
<td>“Not really. It’s okay.”</td>
<td>“Sure, it was fine.”</td>
<td>“Sure, it was fun to sing.”</td>
<td>“It was fun, I liked it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student receiving special education services.**
One difference between the two groups was evident in the length or depth of the
answers. The experimental group gave longer, more in-depth answers whereas the
control group seemed to be more concise and not elaborate as much. This was of interest
to me as the groups were divided very evenly in terms of students’ personalities and their
academic abilities as demonstrated in my class.

As with the control group, the responses of the experimental group to the
interview questions demonstrated a basic understanding of the questions asked of them.
Like with the control group, I could see the personalities of the students in the
experimental group come out in their responses.

Bianca was one of the youngest students and she has had to work very hard to try
to show she is as competent as the other students. Her brother was in the control group
and I sensed some friendly competition between the two as well. Although her grammar
was quite good for this level, she still made errors such as in question number three with,
“It’s much more better.”

Carlos really did love music and came into my class everyday with his MP3
player on. It was no surprise to me when he mentioned it in his response to question
number two. Carlos also was one of my most advanced students in this group. He has a
strong grasp on English and he was also literate in Spanish. From my observations in
class I believe he did well in his classes in El Salvador. He would be moving on to the
next ELL level the following year.

Fernando, like Carlos, demonstrated a strong conversational grasp on English. He
spoke with me very well in terms of informal conversational English. His response to
question number four showed his understanding of conversation in English. He also did not need as much wait time as other students, he answered rather quickly and completely. He was also ready for the next ELL level.

Ifrah really loved the songs and this came up in two of her responses. She and Carlos also talked about singing at home. Ifrah did not have literacy in her first language so I was impressed she has advanced as well as she has this past year. She worked very hard and enjoyed English and I could see the difference that made in her progress. Her sister was in the control group and was much quieter. I believe part of her sister’s quiet nature was due to Ifrah’s outgoing and possibly at times over-shadowing personality. Ifrah was two years older than her sister so it was common to see the older sibling in a family be more dominant.

Ahmed had two sisters in class and he was definitely the stronger student in terms of academics. He had one older sister and one younger sister in class. He had some formal education in his home language and his sisters did not have the same opportunity. He had picked up on English very quickly. He was the silent observer in my class. He rarely offered to answer unless specifically asked but when he did answer he was correct. He was also ready to go on to the next level of ELL.

Nasra was a soft-spoken student who really wanted to excel in English. She was rarely off-task and she was a hard worker. As she did not have any formal education in her native country English has proven to be difficult for her. I was impressed at her conversational English in her response to question number one. She really appeared to have a solid understanding of the lessons. Her grammar was quite good even though
there were a few mistakes such as the one in her response to question number three, “Can we do again?”

Zamzam was the student who posed the most difficulty for me in terms of recording her responses as she was diagnosed with a hearing impairment this last fall. Along with learning English this past year she has been learning American Sign Language (ASL). Although I believed her to be quite intelligent she has had to work very hard to effectively communicate. Her answers did not follow the similar pattern when compared to her group members. She answered the first two questions with a little confusion and with a negative answer to her like of music. For the next question, however, she answered as though music was fine and in questions five and six she answered the use of music was fun. As she is still learning ASL the interpreter for her would have to recast some of the questions and on more than one occasion I was told by her interpreter, “Her signing isn’t making sense. It is just a bunch of random signs that don’t mean anything.” In these instances, the question was asked again and she signed the recorded response.

Discussion of Results

The results of this study suggest that using music to teach the basic meanings of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to a group of senior high level 1 English language learners increased their measured ability to use these modals. However, because the study participants included a small group of senior high level 1 ELL students, the findings are tentative and the results cannot be generalized.
In the case of my study, I created the lessons on the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ independently. I did not create all of the songs used in the lessons on my own; two of the songs were created by me, one was a song I had learned as a student during my middle school years, and the fourth song was created with the help of my students. Having the students involved in part of the process was an important component as schools have a responsibility to use varied approaches to completing a task (Christodoulou, 2009). It was important for me to involve my students in the lessons because I felt they would take a stronger interest if they were directly involved. Having them involved also demonstrated to them I wanted their input.

Armstrong (2003) says voices and instruments are two of the mediums used to teach to students with musical intelligence and although I did not have access to musical instruments with the lessons, my voice and the students’ voices acted as the main source of music. Along with our voices, hands for clapping were used to serve the purpose of percussion instruments when singing songs using pauses and syncopated beats.

Another component to the support of music is rhyme. Rhyming is a great tool to use orally in lower-level literacy lessons (Stone, 1994). It is a useful tool because the teacher can first model it and then the students have the opportunity to also create their own rhymes. From here, writing the rhymes down can help the students begin to understand the meaning of oral communication as it transfers to written communication.

Researchers have searched for a direct relationship between reading music and learning to read words (Darrow, 2008). By presenting music to my experimental group with the use of information on the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ my goal was to expose
them to both music and literacy. All of the songs used in my lessons were printed out and given to the students prior to each day’s lesson so they had the song to look at for reference, even if they were unable to read every lyric of the song. Not only does research support the use of music as suggested by Jolly (1975), Snyder (2000), Paquette (2008), Kent (2009) and others, but my students in the experimental group also really enjoyed the use of it with their lessons. Other research such as Fischler’s (2005) unpublished work discusses word instruction using rap music.

Kolb (1996), Cannon (2002), Pieffer (2004) and McIntire (2007) all wrote about the use of music to support learning a language. Even though the majority of the research I found supported the use of music, some points need to be considered before taking the data as an end-all solution. One such point is in the theory of MI (Gardner, 1999). Not every student has the musical intelligence nor does every student thoroughly enjoy music. For instance, it is possible Bianca in the experimental group (0% change) may not have musical intelligence and may have scored higher if she had been in the control group with no music. Because there were no tests administered to determine each student’s MI (as this was not the topic of the study) one has to admit some students may have scored very differently had they been placed in the opposite group. It is possible Ifrah and Nasra may have scored the same had they been placed in the control group; if they have linguistic intelligence (Gardner, 2009 and Kagan & Kagan, 1998) they would have, in theory, tested the same regardless of the addition of music to their lessons.

Although the research found for this study varies, it appears to be stronger in support of the use of music. From the research I have seen thus far and the data collected
in my own study on the use of music in literacy and the teaching of modals, it would appear to make sense one would be in favor of at least trying to use music to teach the basic functions of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ to senior high level I ELLs.

Chapter Overview

This chapter was a presentation of the results from the data collected under experimental conditions in my class. The results were then related to other research in the areas of music and the theory of multiple intelligences.

My research results indicate using music to teach the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ benefitted the students in the experimental group but may have hindered the learning of the modals for the students in the control group. The students in the experimental group showed more improvement with their use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ according to the data collected from their post-assessments. The control group seemed to show a decline in their ability to use the two modals when compared to the experimental group, which had one student maintain and the rest improve. By looking at my particular assessments, I can understand it may mean the use of music was beneficial in the lessons on the limited usage of the two modals.

Finally, one important observation I made was the enjoyment the students in the experimental group exhibited when I implemented music in the lessons. Not only did they appear to be more interested in the lessons than the students in the control group, but they scored much higher on the post-assessments. Because both groups scored similarly on the pre-assessment, I can interpret the more dramatic change in the post-assessment results as an indication of the positivity of the use of music in the lessons.
In Chapter Five I summarize the study, discuss the limitations and implications of the study, and give suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis focused on answering the following two questions: “Does the use of music help in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’” and, “Do the students prefer the use of music implemented in their instruction?” Based upon the pre-assessments, the post-assessments and the personal interviews, I concluded in my limited research of a particular class music did help in the teaching of the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ I also showed the students’ opinions in favor of the use of music in their lessons. This chapter serves to give a brief summary of the thesis, discuss the limitations of this research, discuss the implications, elaborate on topics of further research and state the conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

Motivation for Research

Upon compilation of the data, I will be able to take the new information and use it to teach future students when presenting the lessons on modals. If the music is found to enhance the use of the modals, it will be continued in my methods but instead of only teaching it to half of the class I will teach it to the full class. If the music is found to have no effect in either a positive or negative measure, I will reflect on the personal interviews to decide if I will continue to use the music; and, finally, if the musical approach will be found to have hindered the students’ understanding of the modals I will cease to use it in the future. An added bonus to the research is the possibility to educate other ELL
instructors and communications teachers in my district. In conjunction with this important group of educators, any educator who could use this information to help in his/her teaching would be beneficial to students.

If methods are found via my research to improve the teaching of modals, these methods can help to serve other teachers at any level when they present lessons on modals (especially because there are more modals than the two I am investigating). One such place I would be able to share this information would be at in ELL district in-service or at a staff meeting. Often times as teachers we can get burned out or resort to using the same thing over and over again. By presenting some new ideas with the lessons already done, I believe the other teachers would stand a much higher chance of actually using the lessons in their own classrooms. Or, maybe my lessons could spark another new idea for a teacher to create and implement; this would also be a way to help other educators.

Another motivational factor of mine in teaching the two modals is to help my students from making mistakes. I have had students who have not understood how to use these modals and the results of the misuses are not positive. The students end up confusing the person they are talking with and the student becomes frustrated in himself or herself. Trying to eliminate such errors before they occur is an additional goal of my teaching; sometimes a little pro-active teaching can truly help in maintaining a student’s self-confidence and level of motivation.

Summary

This research looked to answer two questions regarding the use of music to teach the limited use of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’ Through the use of pre-assessments,
post-assessments and personal interviews, the data was analyzed to offer answers to the two questions. The fourteen senior high level 1 ELLs who participated in this research indicated an overall preference for the use of music in their lessons. The overall scores on the post-assessments showed a majority of the students improved in the understanding of the limited use of the two modals. The students in the experimental group appeared to have improved to a higher degree than the students in the control group, according to the collected data. Because the experimental group was the group exposed to music with the lessons, it can be said that with my specific class the use of music helped in their instruction. Both groups claimed they enjoy the use of music and they both expressed the desire to have music used in future lessons.

Limitations

The limitations that may have affected the study might include tiredness, noise level, environment, scholastic activities, extra-curricular activities and out of school events. As research states, tiredness can affect a student’s performance in numerous ways such as the lowering of test scores and the level of attention a student is willing to have in class (Smith, 2005). If my students were tired, they might not have scored as well as they could have on the post-assessments.

My goal for the classroom environment is to have a room that is welcoming and encouraging. I have tried to reach this goal by displaying work from my students around the room and by displaying different artifacts from around the world on one wall. If a student feels uncomfortable with seeing his or her work, this could result in the student
feeling uncomfortable. The result of this feeling may be the inattentiveness of the student.

This research was conducted towards the end of the school year. In a senior high school this is the time of year that includes prom, graduation preparation, the state track tournament and the state speech tournament. Although none of my students were involved in these activities there is a great deal of excitement and tension in the hallways. Some of my students had relatives or friends who were involved in some of these activities and this may have served to distract my students’ thoughts during the school day.

One seemingly major event all of my students were involved in was the school-wide yearbook handout and signing. Regardless of their grade level this was a major excitement for my students. As they are somewhat separate from the majority of their English-speaking peers, the opportunity to feel a commonality such as receiving a yearbook and getting time to mix with all students in the gym for yearbook signing is a big ordeal for my students.

Another category of limitations is the out-of-school limitations that I have no control over. It is possible the home lives of my students are not easy or can be stressful. I have multiple students who work to take care of family members or who help out a great deal around the house. These types of situations can occupy a great deal of time in a student’s day. The result of these external factors may be that my students are tired, more agitated, or less able to focus during my class.
Also, as I have numerous sets of siblings in my class, there may be competition between my students stemming from home that I am unaware of and this can affect a student’s performance as well.

Other limitations include not being able to measure different levels of musical intelligence a priori, which may have influenced the results of the study. The limited number of participants also served to limit the results of the study and the short duration of the study is another limiting factor. Results will need to be checked against further data.

One component in the research that was not a limitation was the assessments because they were authentic (McKay, 2006) in that they included the students themselves. I did not have to be concerned or take into account the names of students or items that were photographed. The students know each other’s names and all items in the photographs are items the students talk about and use on a daily basis.

Physical Limitations

The one physical limitation I had to consider in my research occurred with my student Zamzam who is learning ASL this year. She is receiving both ASL services and ESL services this academic year. Due to her sign language the ASL interpreter at times had difficulty understanding Zamzam. In these situations, the ASL interpreter would tell me she did not understand Zamzam’s sign language and the question would be repeated to Zamzam. It is possible the ASL interpreter and Zamzam may have not understood each other and the result of this misunderstanding would be the misreporting of Zamzam’s responses.
Although all students had their vision and hearing tested upon admittance into the district, it is possible a student may not have had good hearing or vision and this could have affected the learning or responses to questions in both assessments and interviews.

**Implications**

The implications of this research for the students are that they may have improved their understanding of the limited usage of the two modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ and that they will think about using music in the future when trying to learn something. An implication for the experimental group is the students may have paid attention longer or were more involved because they enjoy music and it was used in their lessons. Conversely, it is possible an implication for the control group was they may have scored higher and enjoyed the lessons more if they were taught with the use of music. An implication for all students was the interaction skills they used as they were posing for the camera and participating in their lessons. The experimental group interacted more than I had ever observed as they commented on the songs and worked together to make suggestions such as the syncopation in the song used with ‘will’ (Appendix G). All students demonstrated growth in their oral language skills during the personal interviews.

A possible implication of this research for me is the development of future lessons with music. If it was an avenue I was interested in, I could possibly look into creating CDs of my lessons and developing and marketing more intensive curriculum for ELLs.

**Further Research**

While analyzing the data and beginning to interpret the results I was continually thinking of future research related to my topic. There seem to be numerous routes I could
take with further research. One aspect to be looked into further is the comparison of students who use musical devices such as MP3 players and students who do not listen to music often. According to the interview responses, the students who used MP3 players seemed to have quicker, more thought-out responses. The research could be ELLs who use electronics such as MP3 players and cell phones and the link to their success in English.

Another topic for further research could be the link between an ELL’s advancement in English when comparing ELLs who are literate in their L1 to ELLs who are not literate in their L1. This idea came up when I was analyzing the post-assessment scores. Overall, the scores were higher in the students who had literacy in their L1. Although one would assume an ELL would score higher in English literacy if literate in his or her L1, it would be interesting to test this theory out in my classes.

A third topic for further research that came into my mind was the topic of gender. I had an almost fifty-fifty split with my students in regards to gender. It would be interesting to see the results of a future class if I would group the students by gender. Yet another area of further research could be the use of other multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999) to teach English. I could continue to focus on the modals with the support of the naturalistic multiple intelligence or I could continue to use music to teach other English components such as the parts of speech or difficult-to-spell words.

Researching the amount of prompts given to one group versus another group is an additional area of research. While completing my research for this particular study, I had to remain acutely aware of how many prompts I was giving each group. It was important
to use the same number of prompts and not give the experimental group more prompts with the music. If I would have given them more prompts, the results would have been less valid for the particular research I was conducting. I feel I worked very hard at maintaining consistency with my prompts in both the control and experimental groups during my research.

Conclusion

This research proved to be an interesting and enjoyable topic for both my students and me. I have often used music in different aspects of my teaching and now I will continue to use music as well as add the new songs created for this research to my teaching repertoire. I look forward to sharing my research results with my senior high colleagues as well as with my district’s kindergarten through twelfth grade ELL teachers. Many teachers strive to make learning fun for their students, regardless of the students’ ages, level and abilities. Through this limited research I believe I have found another way to help my students learn and enjoy their time in my classroom.
APPENDIX A

Pre-assessment administered to all participants

*To further protect students’ privacy, pseudonyms have again been used.
Pre-assessment administered to all participants.

Fill in the blank with can or will.

1. If it snows Sadiyo and Surer_______ be the girls who help clean the snow.

Fill in the blank with can or will.

2. Susana and Sadiyo _____ use their cell phones.
Fill in the blank with can or will.

3. Frangil _____ listen to music.

Fill in the blank with can or will.

4. At 2:30 the girls _______ leave school.
Fill in the blank with can or will.

5. Hector _____ show us the word ‘tomorrow.’

Fill in the blank with can or will.

6. Tomas ________ carry the big box.
Fill in the blank with can or will.

7. Susana says, “Tomorrow ________ be Friday.”

Fill in the blank with can or will.

8. If Shukri gets Moe’s keys, she ________ drive after school.
Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

9. Sadiyo_______ teach us about American history tomorrow.

Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

10. If Ebla studies hard, she ________ get an A+.
Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

11. Mrs. DeVore _____ finish her work before summer comes!
APPENDIX B

Post-assessment with all participants

*To further protect students’ privacy, pseudonyms have again been used.
Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

1. If it snows Sadiyo and Surer ______ be the girls who help clean the snow.

2. Susana and Sadiyo _____ use their cell phones.
Fill in the blank with *can* or *will*.

3. Frangil______ listen to music.

Fill in the blank with *can* or *will*.

4. At 2:30 the girls _______ leave school.
Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

5. Hector ____ show us the word ‘tomorrow.’

6. Tomas _______ carry the big box.
Fill in the blank with can or will.

7. Susana says, “Tomorrow ______ be Friday.”

8. If Shukri gets Moe’s keys, she ______ drive after school.
Fill in the blank with **can** or **will**.

9. Sadiyo_______ teach us about American history tomorrow.

10. If Ebla studies hard, she _______ get an A+.
Fill in the blank with *can* or *will*.

11. Mrs. DeVore ______ finish her work before summer comes!
APPENDIX C

Personal Interview Questions for Control Group
Personal interview questions from control group.

1. Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’

2. Do you like music?

3. Would you like using music in class?

4. Do you think using music with the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ would be good or bad?

5. Why?

6. What did you think of our lessons on the modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’
APPENDIX D

Personal Interview Questions for Experimental Group
Personal interview questions from experimental group.

1. Tell me what you know about the modals ‘can’ and ‘will.’

2. Do you like music?

3. Did you like using music in class?

4. Do you think using music with the modals ‘can’ and ‘will’ was good or bad?

5. Why?

6. What did you think of our lessons on the modals ‘can’ and ‘will?’
APPENDIX E

First Handout with Lesson on Helping Verbs

--Read by Control Group (no music notes)

--Sung by Experimental Group (with the music notes)
First Song with Lesson on Helping Verbs (to the tune of London Bridges)

Be,
Am,
Is,
Are,
Was, were, been,
Has, have, had,
Do, does, did,
Can,
Could,
Shall,
Should,
Will,
Would,
May,
Might,
Must, Being
APPENDIX F

Second Song with Lesson on ‘Can’
Second Song with Lesson on ‘Can’ (tune of London Bridges)

🎵 The word can is a verb,

Is a verb,

Is a verb,

Is a verb,

The word can is a verb,

And it’s a noun ---

like a can of soup [spoken very quickly] 🎵
APPENDIX G

Third Song with Lesson on ‘Will’
Third Song with Lesson on ‘Will’

🎶 I will go home (clap, clap)

I will call you (clap, clap)

I will be (clap, clap—pause)

A teacher (clap, clap) 🎵
APPENDIX H

Fourth Song on Lesson with ‘Can’ and ‘Will’
Fourth Song on Lesson with ‘Can’ and ‘Will’

🎵 The verb can is physical (flex muscles)

I can lift (gesture to lift something),

I can listen (gesture to the ear),

I can dance (dance a few seconds),

The verb can is physical—I can do it! (shout)

On to the next verb, the verb will;

The verb will is in the future (pointing forward)

I will go,

I will see you,

I will do it tomorrow 🎶
REFERENCES


