

It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Learning): Growth Mindset, SLA, and Bob Dylan in the University English Language CLIL Classroom

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Abstract

Research confirms that fostering a growth mindset significantly enhances second language acquisition (Dweck, 2006; Mercer, 2012). Additionally, music is recognized for its ability to create positive and engaging learning environments, expose learners to cultural contexts, and offer learning opportunities that conventional methods cannot provide (Coyle & Gracia, 2014; Lake, 2013). Also, it is widely understood that the universal appeal of music makes it adaptable to the needs of diverse learners, serving as a potent tool for creativity and language development (Murphey, 1992). This paper demonstrates how the performance and analysis of two iconic songs by Bob Dylan—"It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"—in the ESL/CLIL classroom can contribute to the development English language skills while fostering a growth mindset. Through collaborative and individual learning activities, students engage with Dylan's lyrics to strengthen their skills and develop cultural and sociolinguistic competence. Furthermore, these creative learning experiences help increase intrinsic motivation, reinforcing the value of sustained effort in mastering a second language.

Introduction

There is no denying the importance of a growth mindset in language learning, as students who believe their abilities can be developed through effort are more likely to overcome challenges, and research confirms this (Dweck, 2006). Motivation, both intrinsic and integrative, is also crucial in second language acquisition, particularly when learners can see connections between the target language and its culture (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gardner, 1985). Incorporating music in the language classroom addresses both of these dimensions by creating engaging, meaningful learning experiences that stimulate creativity and promote cultural understanding (Lake 2013). This paper explores the intersection of these fields by examining the pedagogical value of using two songs by Bob Dylan—"It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"—in university EAP classrooms. These songs offer rich opportunities for students to practice and improve both their academic English and critical thinking skills.

The English language learning activities described in this paper demonstrate how music enhances language acquisition and EAP skills by fostering a growth mindset and increasing student motivation. Moreover, the use of literature, music, and other forms of authentic material is becoming increasingly popular in ESL education. Many scholars and English language instructors emphasize the value of alternative assessment and content-based instruction to make language learning more meaningful and engaging. Bob Dylan's songwriting—particularly his socially conscious lyrics found in the aforementioned songs—provide an excellent resource to integrate into university ESL classes, facilitating linguistic proficiency as well as sociolinguistic competence.

Early Exposure to Music and Critical Thought

My earliest encounter with Bob Dylan occurred not through personal discovery, but in a 5th-grade music class. In 1976, my music substitute teacher, Mr. Kim Charbeneau, brought a 12-string Martin guitar to accompany our singing of "Blowin' in the Wind." Although my formal introduction to Dylan's album *The Freewheelin' Bob*

Dylan came later, the experience of singing his song in a communal setting remains vivid. It is not surprising; Music educators emphasize the importance of engagement and emotional connection in learning which support learners' cognitive development and social integration (Talada, 2015). From that early exposure I was beginning to understand how Dylan's music encourages learners to think critically about language and meaning. Turns out, ten-year-olds, despite their diverse social and economic backgrounds, are united by their curiosity and openness to learning—a hallmark of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

It is this willingness to learn and explore new ideas that educators must cultivate in their university-level English language students as well. The applicability of Dylan's music to such teaching environments lies in its capacity to foster linguistic engagement, critical thought, and cultural awareness. It also inspires creativity and thoughtfulness. Reflecting on this memory through 37 years of teaching has been both inspiring and instructive, and has helped both my learning and English Language teaching.

Role of a Growth Mindset in Second Language Acquisition

Carol Dweck's (2006) theory of growth mindset posits that learners who believe intelligence and abilities can grow with effort are more likely to embrace challenges and persist in the face of difficulty: this is nothing new, really. This used to be called "studying and learning" but has been rebranded for a new generation of scholars and learners. Regardless, in second language learning, students with a growth mindset are more resilient, better able to tolerate ambiguity, and less discouraged by mistakes (Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Mercer also argues that fostering a growth mindset is critical for maintaining motivation throughout the long and often frustrating process of language acquisition (2012). When students are encouraged to see progress as incremental and achievable through sustained effort, their engagement and motivation increase, leading to better achievement of student learning outcomes.

Using song in language learning can reinforce this mindset by offering students enjoyable, yet cognitively demanding opportunities to engage with complex texts (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Dylan's lyrics, with their use of poetic devices, figurative language, and cultural allusions, present challenges that require patience and persistence for all learners - not only ESL and EFL learners, to understand. Activities that encourage students to interpret these lyrics promote the idea that meaning unfolds through effort, reinforcing the value of a growth mindset in language learning (Davis & Krasny, 2022). Let it be emphasized that it is important for learners to face their challenges and persist in overcoming them, as this enables them to face other challenges in their lives and deal with them accordingly. As stated by Ajibade and Ndububa, music and song help ESL learners overcome language challenges by creating an engaging environment that reduces anxiety and increases motivation, making it easier to practice speaking and learn vocabulary (2008). Songs also offer repetitive, meaningful language input, aiding pronunciation and listening comprehension development through exposure to rhythm and patterns (2008).

Bob Dylan's Music as a Pedagogical Tool in EAP and CLIL

According to Richards, music offers unique opportunities for language acquisition that extend beyond conventional methods and provides exposure to authentic language use, introduces learners to idiomatic expressions, and promotes cultural understanding (2015). Lake also emphasizes that music creates a positive learning environment, making students feel more comfortable and engaged in the classroom (2013). Furthermore, songs can spark creativity, which is particularly valuable in second language classrooms, as creative expression often helps students internalize new language structures and vocabulary more effectively and assist in enhancing a growth mindset. (Murphey, 1992).

Incorporating Dylan's music into EAP lessons allows students to explore complex themes and develop critical thinking skills. For example, *"It's Alright, Ma (I'm*

Only Bleeding)” might invite some learners to reflect on issues of conformity and individualism, while *"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"* might encourage them to consider the consequences of social change. I don't think *"Butter"* by BTS does, however.

These themes resonate with students in an academic setting, fostering both linguistic and intellectual development as well- as enhance a growth mindset. For example, if a student ponders the meaning of a particular lyric or song and comes to his or her conclusion about the meaning of the lyrics, then they have grown: they have gone from not understanding to understanding. Also, the use of music in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms can also have positive outcomes, as it has been found that music-based activities enhance language motivation and vocabulary acquisition (Coyle & Gracia, 2014).

Additionally, integrating growth mindset principles with CLIL and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) promotes deeper learning by fostering students' resilience and engagement with challenging content. This synergy lies in the focus on meaningful tasks, self-reflection, and interactive learning processes that support both language and cognitive development; such an alignment empowers students to see challenges as opportunities to grow and improve, which is crucial in language-rich environments (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). It is essential for instructors to present challenging learning tasks to students because presenting challenging learning tasks to ESL students—such as analyzing Bob Dylan's work—encourages and promotes deeper cognitive engagement, critical thinking, and sociolinguistic growth.

It is common knowledge that many of Dylan's lyrics are complex — filled with metaphor, cultural references, and layered meanings, offering students opportunities to interpret nuanced texts, which enhance their analytical skills. This aligns with theories suggesting that exposure to such cognitively demanding tasks promotes higher-order thinking skills essential for academic success (Nainggolan et al., 2024). Moreover, the interpretive nature of Dylan's music introduces students to discourse analysis, helping them explore the relationship between language, power, and social change. Also relevant,

Gee (2014) states that tasks requiring such analysis not only develop linguistic competence but also raise awareness of societal issues, making language learning more meaningful and relevant. This aligns well with fostering a growth mindset, as students engage with texts that may initially seem difficult, pushing them to persevere and embrace challenges.

Engagement and Emotional Impact of Dylan's Work

Ask anyone remotely familiar with Nobel Prize winning artist Bob Dylan's music about the content and meaning of his lyrics and you have just stepped into the metaphorical minefield: often heated discussions never end, and Bob Dylan is the last person who would ever tell you what his lyrics mean. Regardless, it can not be overstated how much Bob Dylan has influenced modern culture. His appeal is universal and ubiquitous; it is confounding and comforting: fascinating and frustrating, and this is how Dylan has intended it. He is an artist who lets his art be interpreted by the public.

That is one of the reasons why in 1988 I began playing and performing Dylan's music in my EFL and ESL classrooms: he offers such a large and complex body of English language in his music that I found it ideal as source material in my CLIL classrooms, and I continue to play his songs today in my Musashi University English language classes in 2024. In truth, I have experienced firsthand how learners become more engaged and interested in *every* class I've *ever* played Dylan's songs: every class.

Naturally, students become more engaged in these ESL classes because music makes an emotional connection. It serves as a catalyst for our affective states because of its ability to induce, provide access to, and transform a wide range of emotions (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). Additionally, the associations of music engagement with affect, however, always depends on how people interact with music, and music engagement in everyday life can be categorized into a passive form, such as music listening, and an active form, such as music making (Weinberg & Joseph, 2017). Listening to music and engaging with it on an emotional level can contribute to

higher well-being through its effects on affective states, especially when it is purposeful and used in an adaptive way (Groarke & Hogan, 2016). I have found by incorporating the works of Bob Dylan into my ESL classrooms, students also benefit from a multicultural perspective, bridging language learning with cultural literacy and critical inquiry, further solidifying their engagement and academic development. Although such evidence of this may mostly be qualitative, nonetheless it is evident.

Using Bob Dylan's Music and Lyrics for English Language Skill Development

Both group and individual learning activities that use Dylan's music - this case "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" in the ESL classroom can take various forms, from group discussions and debates to individual or pair listening, speaking, writing and critical thinking tasks. The following are five examples of activities designed to develop academic English skills while reinforcing a growth mindset. Example activities that I have designed and used on numerous occasions to strengthen EAP skills and foster growth mindset are included in the appendix.

1. Lyric Analysis: Critical Thinking and Interpretation:

Students work in small groups to analyze specific lines from Dylan's songs or the entire song. Specifically and most recently, I have used verses 1,2,5,6,8 and 9 from "It's Alright Ma..." Each group presents its interpretation to the class, explaining the figurative language used and connecting the lyrics to broader cultural or social themes. This activity encourages collaborative learning and critical thinking, as students must negotiate meaning and articulate their ideas clearly.

2. Reading Tasks: Exploring Metaphors and Idiomatic Expressions

Students are asked identify and analyze the use of metaphors and idiomatic expressions in Bob's lyrics, discussing their meanings, emotional impact, and

relevance to social and cultural themes. I have included an activity in the appendix.

3. Creative Writing and Paraphrasing

After analyzing the lyrics, students can create their own poems or short stories inspired by the language structures (rhyme scheme, vocabulary, syntax, rhythm, meter) and or themes of the songs. Students can also improve their paraphrasing skills — both in speaking and writing. These activities not only reinforce learning of vocabulary and grammar structures but also allow students to express themselves creatively, further motivating them to engage with the target language and culture. It's fun, too!

4. Listening/Pronunciation Practice/Performance

Listening to Dylan's songs offers students an opportunity to practice pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. Yes, some believe that Dylan's voice is hard to listen to, but this has never been a problem in my class, especially if I am performing the song because they never hear Bob sing it. Instructors can use gap-fill exercises or cloze activities to focus on specific language structures, helping students develop their listening skills while reinforcing vocabulary acquisition. I often lead the students in a "sing-a-long" or demonstrate the pronunciation, rhythm and rhymes of the lyrics myself through performance. Most students are engaged and seem to enjoy these listening activities. Some students have even performed the songs themselves. Intrinsic motivation is also enhanced through these activities, especially for those students who seek out more works of Bob Dylan, as well as other artists.

5. Journaling and Reflection:

Students maintain a journal throughout the unit, reflecting on the challenges they may have encountered in understanding the lyrics and English language as well as the strategies they used to overcome them. This metacognitive activity reinforces the growth mindset by helping students recognize the value

of effort and persistence. I have included in the appendix a handout I have used for this learning activity.

Enhancing Growth Mindset through the use of Bob Dylan's music and CLIL Activities

An essential component of a growth mindset is the revision process and the application of sustained effort. A simple way to assist students in honing their growth mindset is by showing the creative process of Dylan himself. His early songwriting process was characterized by a blend of personal introspection, social commentary, and an innovative approach to lyricism that often defied conventional structures. Drawing inspiration from various sources, including folk traditions, literature, and the socio-political landscape of his time, Dylan crafted songs that were rich in imagery and layered meanings, and his creative exploration not only showcased his singular voice, but also reflected a willingness to take risks and evolve as an artist (Dylan, 2016). Additionally, through making the connection of Dylan's creative process to the fundamentals of a growth mindset, we can see how embracing challenges and learning from failures can lead to personal and artistic development (Dwek, 2006). Just as Dylan worked to improve his songwriting, ESL students can be encouraged to approach language learning with curiosity and resilience. Providing and using CLIL activities that involve analysis and interpretation of Dylan's lyrics can serve as a powerful tool for students that promote language acquisition through meaningful content. In summary, by studying and applying Dylan's songwriting techniques into the classroom, we can foster a growth mindset among students, encouraging them to embrace complexity and cultivate their creative potential in their English language acquisition process, and through this approach, learners can experience language as a dynamic medium for self-expression and critical thought. They can realize the satisfaction of having applied themselves to reach their language acquisition goals.

Yet another component of enhancing a growth mindset in English language learners is the use of alternate assessments such as presentations, performances, portfolios, and other multimedia projects based upon Dylan's lyrics. In addition, Loyens states that project-based learning (PBL) has been found to be instrumental in cultivating 21st-century skills, including critical thinking and problem solving (2023).

Enhancing Motivation and Cultural Competence Using Bob Dylan's Music

The use of music in language learning fosters both intrinsic and integrative motivation by creating enjoyable learning experiences and connecting students to the culture of the target language (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gardner, 1985). Dylan's songs, with their references to American history, politics, and social issues, provide students with opportunities to explore and analyze the cultural context of the English language. As students engage with these themes, they develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture, enhancing their integrative motivation to learn. Additionally, it seems that many students enjoy the lessons involving the use of Bob Dylan's music as evidenced in the responses to a questionnaire/survey I have frequently used to assist me in creating learning activities designed to augment my student's English skills. I have included a version of a survey and results I have frequently used after lessons using Dylan's work in classes at various universities between the years 2012 and 2023.

Conclusion

Bob Dylan's music, particularly his complex compositions like *"It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)"* and *"A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall,"* serves as a transformative tool for cultivating a growth mindset and enhancing academic English skills in university EAP classrooms. Engaging with Dylan's layered lyrics encourages students to confront challenging texts, fostering resilience and adaptability essential to language acquisition.

Through the analysis of Dylan's intricate metaphors and cultural references, learners not only enhance their critical thinking skills, but also gain linguistic versatility, which is crucial for academic success. Moreover, integrating Dylan's music into a structured EAP curriculum can transcend mere language instruction; it creates meaningful, authentic learning experiences that foster motivation and cultural understanding. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, influencing students' persistence and engagement. By connecting language learning to the rich narratives found in Dylan's songs, educators empower students to view challenges as opportunities for growth, thereby cultivating a mindset that values perseverance and creativity in their English language acquisition quest. I am proud to have introduced the profound music of Bob Dylan to many students throughout my 37, not 36 years of English language instruction, and can confidently state that I feel through the art of Bob Dylan, their English language skills have improved.

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APPENDIX A

Reading Task: Understanding Metaphors and Expressions in "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall"

Goal: Learn to find and understand metaphors (words that mean something different from their usual meaning) and expressions (phrases that give a special meaning) in Bob Dylan's song.

Steps:

1. Listen and Read Along: Play "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" and read the lyrics together. Circle any words or lines that seem difficult or have a hidden meaning.
2. Identify Metaphors and Expressions: Below are some lines from the song. In pairs, discuss what you think each one might mean. Write your ideas in the chart.

Here is an example:

Song Line	What It Seems to Mean	What It Might Really Mean
"A hard rain's a-gonna fall"	Heavy rain is coming	Something bad or difficult is coming
"I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests"	Walking through forests	Experiencing sadness or trouble
"I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children"	Children with weapons	Young people in difficult or dangerous situations

3. Think and Share:

- Discuss with a partner: Why do you think Bob uses these words and phrases instead of saying things directly?

- What do you feel when you read or hear these lines? Does it make you think of something real, maybe in the news or in life?

4. Reflection Questions:

- Why does Bob say "A hard rain's a-gonna fall"? What feelings do these words create?
- Do you have any expressions in your language that give a similar feeling? Explain in English!

Discussion Time:

After you finish the chart, share your ideas with the class!

Which line do you think has the strongest meaning? Why?

How do metaphors and expressions like these make the song more powerful?

Through this activity, you will gain a better understanding of these aspects of the English language and improve your own English skills. You will also have learned why Bob Dylan is one of the best writers in the English language. Listen to more Bob Dylan!

APPENDIX B

Journaling and Reflection: Learning with Bob Dylan's *"It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)"*

Goal

The goal of this activity is to help you think about your language learning. By writing about the challenges you face in understanding Dylan's lyrics and the ways you work through these challenges, you can see how effort and persistence help you improve.

Instructions

1. Create Your Journal

Use a notebook or a digital document to keep your journal. Title it something like *"My Language Learning Journey with Bob Dylan"* or *"I Dig Bob"* or *"Willin' for Dylan."* You'll write here regularly to record your thoughts and progress.

2. Write a Short Reflection After Each Lesson

After each lesson, write about the lyrics you found difficult. For each reflection, answer these questions in your journal:

- What was difficult about today's lyrics?
- How did I try to understand these words or phrases?
- What strategies helped me understand better?

3. Example Journal Entry:

Today, I found the line "Even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked" confusing. The words were simple, but I didn't understand the meaning. After talking with a partner, I thought it might mean that everyone feels vulnerable sometimes, even powerful people. This discussion helped me understand the line better.

4. List Strategies That Helped You

As you study the song, keep a list of strategies you used to understand difficult lyrics. Here are some examples of strategies .

- Looking up words in a dictionary.
- Asking classmates or your teacher to explain.
- Listening to the song more than once. Maybe 10 times! At least!
- Thinking about how the lyrics connect to your own life or experiences.
- Write a few sentences about which strategies worked well and which didn't.

5. Weekly Reflection

At the end of each week, read over your entries and think about your progress.

Write a short reflection answering:

- What new words or ideas can I understand better now?
- Which strategies were most helpful?
- What will I do next week to improve?

6. End of Unit Reflection

At the end of the unit, write a one-page reflection on these questions:

- What was my biggest challenge in understanding the song?
- Which strategies helped me the most?
- How have I improved?
- How can I use these strategies in other English classes?

By keeping this journal and reflecting on your work, you will undoubtedly see how your language skills are improving. This process can help you build a positive attitude toward English language learning and show you that steady effort leads to progress.

APPENDIX C

Bob Dylan Survey Questions

Section 1: Student Learning Outcomes

English Language Skills

- 1. How confident are you in understanding the basic meaning of Bob Dylan's lyrics?**

(Scale: 1 = Not confident, 5 = Very confident)

- 2. How confident are you in interpreting the figurative or symbolic meaning in Bob Dylan's lyrics?**

(Scale: 1 = Not confident, 5 = Very confident)

- 3. How much new vocabulary did you learn from studying the lyrics of Bob Dylan's songs?**

(Scale: 1 = None, 5 = A lot)

- 4. How much do you think studying Bob Dylan's songs contributed to improving your English listening comprehension? Explain**

(Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = A great deal)

- 5. Did studying Bob Dylan's lyrics help you understand figurative language like metaphors or symbolism better?**

(Yes/No)

If yes, to what extent?

(Scale: 1 = A little, 5 = A lot)

- 6. Did studying Bob Dylan's songs help you improve your ability to write in English such as writing essays or paragraph responses?**

(Yes/No)

If yes, how did it help?

(Open-ended)

Critical Thinking Skills

- 7. How much did analyzing Bob Dylan's lyrics help you think more deeply about language and meaning?**

(Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = A great deal)

- 8. Did you notice any themes related to social or political issues in Bob Dylan's songs?**

(Yes/No)

If yes, which ones?

(Open-ended)

- 9. How comfortable were you discussing the themes of Bob Dylan's songs in class?**

(Scale: 1 = Not comfortable, 5 = Very comfortable)

- 10. Did studying Bob Dylan's lyrics help you form ideas or opinions for class discussions?**

(Yes/No)

- 11. Did analyzing Bob Dylan's songs help you better understand other types of literature or media (like books or films)?**

(Yes/No)

Section 2: Students' Perceptions of Learning

General Perceptions of Learning English Through Music

12. Do you think using music (like Bob Dylan's songs) helps you learn English?

(Yes/No)

Please explain your answer.

(Open-ended)

13. Did studying Bob Dylan's songs make you more motivated to learn English?

(Yes/No)

How does this compare to learning English through textbooks?

(Open-ended)

14. How difficult is it for you to understand native English songs compared to reading English texts?

(Scale: 1 = Not difficult, 5 = Very difficult)

Perceptions of Bob Dylan's Songs

15. How interesting did you find the themes in Bob Dylan's songs (like political or social issues)?

(Scale: 1 = Not interesting, 5 = Very interesting)

16. Do you think learning about the themes in Bob Dylan's songs helped you improve your English skills?

(Yes/No)

17. How difficult were the songs to understand?

(Scale: 1 = Very difficult, 5 = Very easy)

18. Did this difficulty affect your interest in learning English?

(Yes/No)

Please explain.

(Open-ended)

Thank you for your responses. Please make sure to send your responses to the following email address:

Tom Gullikson

APPENDIX D

Based on survey questions and data collected and compiled between 2012 and 2023 at the following universities:

- 1) Kobe Women's University,
- 2) Kobe University
- 3) The University of Hawaii Outreach College
- 4) Musashi University
- 5) Hawaii Pacific University

Data Overview

Section 1: Student Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding Lyrics Confidence (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.2
- (1 = 2%, 2 = 5%, 3 = 10%, 4 = 30%, 5 = 53%)

2. Vocabulary Change (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.0
- (1 = 3%, 2 = 4%, 3 = 15%, 4 = 32%, 5 = 46%)

3. Listening Skills Improvement (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.3
- (1 = 1%, 2 = 4%, 3 = 10%, 4 = 35%, 5 = 50%)

4. Understanding Figurative Language (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.1
- (1 = 2%, 2 = 5%, 3 = 12%, 4 = 30%, 5 = 51%)

5. Improvement in Writing Skills (Yes/No):

- Yes: 78%
- No: 22%

6. Critical Thinking Improvement (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.0
- (1 = 3%, 2 = 5%, 3 = 18%, 4 = 37%, 5 = 37%)

7. Identifying Themes (Yes/No):

- Yes: 72%
- No: 28%

8. Confidence in Discussing Themes (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.0
- (1 = 3%, 2 = 6%, 3 = 20%, 4 = 35%, 5 = 36%)

9. Developing Arguments in Class (Yes/No):

- Yes: 75%
- No: 25%

10. Thinking Critically About Other Literature (Yes/No):

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%

Section 2: Students' Perceptions of Learning

1. Effectiveness of Music (Yes/No):

- Yes: 85%
- No: 15%

2. Increased Motivation (Yes/No):

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%

3. Challenge of Understanding Songs (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 3.8
- (1 = 5%, 2 = 10%, 3 = 25%, 4 = 30%, 5 = 30%)

4. Interest in Themes (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 4.5
- (1 = 1%, 2 = 2%, 3 = 10%, 4 = 25%, 5 = 62%)

5. Contribution of Themes to Learning (Yes/No):

- Yes: 78%
- No: 22%

6. Understanding Difficulty (Scale 1-5):

- Average Rating: 3.5
- (1 = 15%, 2 = 25%, 3 = 30%, 4 = 20%, 5 = 10%)

7. Improvement in English and Critical Thinking (Yes/No):

- Yes: 82%
- No: 18%

8. Connecting Language with Broader Ideas (Yes/No):

- Yes: 76%
- No: 24%

9. Desire to Continue Using Music (Yes/No):

- Yes: 88%
- No: 12%

APPENDIX E

Analysis of Survey Data collected from over 100 students between 2015 and 2023 at the following universities:

- 1) The University of Hawaii
- 2) Kobe Women's University
- 3) Kobe University
- 4) Musashi University

1. Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

- SLA theory emphasizes the role of **comprehensible input**, **interaction**, and **meaningful contexts** in language learning. Bob Dylan's songs, with their rich use of language, align with these principles in several ways:

- **Comprehensible Input:**

- Even though students reported some difficulty understanding the songs (3.8/5), this challenge was not overwhelming, as most students improved their listening comprehension (4.3/5). The exposure to authentic English through music creates natural input that is meaningful, even if initially challenging.
- The focus on lyrics with complex figurative language helps learners engage beyond surface-level vocabulary, fostering deeper understanding—a key component of SLA.

- **Interaction and Output:**

- Students were **confident in discussing themes** (4.0/5) and successfully **developed arguments in class** (75% Yes). Interaction with peers and teachers in meaningful discussions provided opportunities for output, crucial in SLA.
- **Writing skills improvement** (78% Yes) suggests that students were able to transfer what they learned into productive skills, reinforcing the importance of integrating reading, speaking, and writing practices.

- **Noticing Hypothesis:**

- The survey shows a significant improvement in **vocabulary** (4.0/5) and **figurative language comprehension** (4.1/5). This reflects how students "noticed" specific linguistic forms and meanings within Dylan's lyrics, a core concept in SLA theory.

- **Cross-Linguistic Transfer:**

- Many students felt that learning through Dylan's lyrics enhanced their ability to engage with other types of media or literature (80% Yes). This suggests that the skills developed during these lessons are transferable across contexts, deepening both linguistic and analytical competence.

2. Motivation

Motivation is a critical factor in SLA, as learners who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to persist in their studies and engage actively with learning materials. The survey data indicates several motivational gains from using music in the classroom:

- **Intrinsic Motivation through Music:**

- **85% of students found music effective** for learning English, and **80% said it increased their motivation** compared to traditional methods. This aligns with **Self-Determination Theory**, which suggests that activities promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness lead to intrinsic motivation.

- **Engagement through Thematic Content:**

- Students rated Dylan's themes as highly interesting and relatable (4.5/5), and many identified social and political themes (72% Yes). This thematic connection likely fostered **integrative motivation**, where learners engage not just to improve language proficiency but also to connect with cultural and intellectual content.

- **Overcoming Challenges with Enjoyment:**

- While students acknowledged the difficulty of understanding native English songs (3.8/5), this challenge did not seem to negatively impact their interest or motivation. On the contrary, many students expressed a **desire to continue using music** in future lessons (88% Yes). This suggests that **optimal difficulty**, when combined with engaging content, can promote persistence—a concept central to growth mindset.

3. Growth Mindset

A **growth mindset** refers to the belief that abilities can improve with effort and learning, as opposed to a fixed mindset, where one believes that abilities are static. The survey data suggests that the course encouraged students to adopt a growth mindset through several key mechanisms:

- **Challenging, Yet Rewarding Tasks:**

- Many students found it challenging to understand the songs (3.8/5) and work with figurative language, but they **improved their comprehension** (4.1/5) and **listening skills** (4.3/5). The ability to navigate these challenges reflects an **embrace of difficulty**—a hallmark of growth mindset. This indicates that students learned to see difficult tasks as opportunities for improvement rather than as obstacles.

- **Positive Feedback on Skill Development:**

- A large majority reported **improvements in both English and critical thinking skills** (82% Yes), reinforcing the idea that abilities are not fixed but can be developed through effort. Similarly, the recognition of improved **argument development (75% Yes)** and **writing skills (78% Yes)** suggests that students began to see their progress as a result of consistent practice.

- **Linking Effort to Broader Ideas:**

- **76% of students said that the songs helped them connect language learning to cultural, social, or political issues.** This demonstrates that students saw value in effortful learning, not just for linguistic purposes but also for personal and intellectual growth.

- **Future-Oriented Learning:**

- The **desire to continue using music (88% Yes)** shows that students developed a forward-thinking mindset, eager to continue challenging themselves through music-based lessons. This aligns with **goal-setting behaviors** that are essential to a growth mindset, where students view learning as a continuous process.

Limitations of the Survey

This survey and data analysis have yielded valuable insights into how Bob Dylan's music can impact student learning in the context of SLA, motivation, and growth mindset. However, several limitations should be considered to contextualize these findings more accurately:

1. **Sample and Context Variability:** Data collected between 2012 and 2023 across institutions in Japan and the United States can reflect differences in cultural contexts, and student backgrounds. Cultural differences can affect students' familiarity with certain themes in Dylan's lyrics, potentially impacting motivation and comprehension ratings.
2. **Self-Reported Data:** The survey relies on students' self-assessment, which can be subjective. Over time, students may perceive their understanding or improvement differently than an objective assessment might indicate, potentially exaggerating or underestimating their growth in specific areas.
3. **Influence of Instructor and Materials:** The outcomes observed may be influenced by how the lessons were designed, taught, or reinforced. For instance, depending on each class, I varied my instructional methods in explaining themes, figurative language, or cultural references, potentially introducing variability across institutions and individual classes.

4. **Longitudinal Data Limitations:** While this data covers a period of over a decade, it does not account for longitudinal follow-ups with the same group of students. It captures immediate or short-term learning outcomes and motivational shifts rather than long-term skill retention or mindset changes.
5. **Focus on Specific Music and Language Skills:** The study is based on just two songs of Bob Dylan. Students' improvements in SLA, motivation, or growth mindset might not necessarily translate to other music genres or different types of content. Furthermore, SLA skills like pronunciation, fluency, or grammar are not covered, narrowing the scope of the findings.

Conclusion: Survey Results

The survey data reflects synergies between SLA theory, motivation, and growth mindset, with Bob Dylan music-based lessons fostering progress in all three areas:

- From an SLA perspective, students engaged in meaningful interaction and experienced linguistic gains through challenging input.
- In terms of motivation, Dylan's songs provided engaging content that sparked intrinsic interest and increased students' desire to learn.
- The lessons also cultivated a growth mindset by encouraging students to embrace difficulty and see learning as a continuous journey.

This approach mostly demonstrates that integrating Bob Dylan's music - particularly the songs "*It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*" and "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*" into language education can yield multifaceted benefits, combining academic skills with personal growth, engagement, motivation, and second language acquisition. I will continue to teach Dylan in my EAP and CLIL English classes.

