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EXPERIENCE REPORT: VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH THE USAGE
OF MUSIC WITH KIDS FROM THREE TO FIVE YEARS OLD IN THREE
BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN FORTALEZA/CE

FORTALEZA

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Orientador: Prof. Dr. Diego Napoleão Viana Azevedo.

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ABSTRACT

The study is an experience report that reflects the impact of music in kids' second language vocabulary acquisition. In this sense, it discusses how students acquired the capacity to perceive, comprehend and reproduce vocabulary, with the exposure to music in a bilingual educational system. To do so, consideration was taken in three years of personal experience teaching young kids in three private schools located in Fortaleza, Ceará. It was possible to conceive the importance of music and its lyrics is a good strategy to stimulate the acquisition of new vocabulary in a second language. It helps manage behavior, mood, provides cultural and language structures input and helps the process of acquiring this new vocabulary. Further research on the same topic can improve the work done here by analyzing and focusing on a bigger sample of songs and centering attention to other linguistic aspects besides vocabulary, such as pronunciation.

KEYWORDS: Music, Second Language, Language Acquisition, Young Learners, Experience Report.

RESUMO

O estudo é um relato de experiência que reflete o impacto da música na aquisição de vocabulário de segunda língua em crianças. Nesse sentido, discute como os alunos adquiriram a capacidade de perceber, compreender e reproduzir vocabulário, com a exposição à música em um sistema educacional bilíngue. Para tanto, foram considerados três anos de experiência pessoal lecionando crianças pequenas em três escolas particulares localizadas em Fortaleza, Ceará. Foi possível conceber a importância da música e de sua letra como uma boa estratégia para estimular a aquisição de novo vocabulário em um segundo idioma. Ajuda a gerenciar o comportamento, o humor, fornece informações sobre estruturas culturais e linguísticas e auxilia no processo de fixação desse novo vocabulário. Mais pesquisas sobre o mesmo tema podem melhorar o trabalho aqui realizado, analisando e concentrando-se em uma amostra maior de músicas e concentrando a atenção em outros aspectos linguísticos além do vocabulário, como a pronúncia.

KEYWORDS: Música, Segunda Língua, Aquisição de Linguagem, Jovens Alunos, Relato de Experiência.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
L2	Second Language
SPH	Sensitive Period Hypothesis
SL	Second Language
SLL	Second Language Learning
YL	Young Learners

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1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to reflect about the impact of music in kids' second language vocabulary acquisition. In this sense, I am going to analyze and discuss how students acquired the capacity to perceive, comprehend and reproduce vocabulary, with the exposure to music in a bilingual educational system. To do so, I took into consideration my three year personal experience teaching young kids. Along my professional path until now, I have been through three private schools, all located in Fortaleza, Ceará. In all of these schools, music took a special and important role in my lesson plans.

Music has always been a big cultural and social aspect of society, with the advance in studies related to education, and specifically, Second Language Learning (SLL) it became an important field of research and discussion. Integrating music into teaching can significantly enhance the learning experience for young learners, working on enhancing engagement and language retention.

The lack of vocabulary is one of the biggest barriers in teaching young kids, especially when all of the classes must be in English. Without a broad range of words at their disposal, the students may find it difficult to fully understand and engage with the language, which can limit their ability to read, write, and communicate effectively.

My teaching experience happened in private regular basic schools that were bilingual or adopted a bilingual program. In this type of educational format, it is mandatory that all classes must be in English only, with zero use of translation, which makes communication and understanding between teacher and students hard at the beginning.

Reflecting on my work, it was clear the meaningful development in students' acknowledgement of the words, safety to reproduce the vocabulary and accuracy in using it in the right context. Besides the observation on vocabulary acquisition, I also perceived how songs could change the students' mood and interfere in their motivation and interest in the English classes. Taking all of that into consideration, I adopted the usage of music as a main strategy to get students to produce orally and establish a good rapport.

In this context and within my experience, I could observe in a general way music's potential of solving problems in different aspects of the classroom reality, such as: vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation and fluency and engagement and motivation.

To write this paper I considered and analyzed all the experience I had since the beginning of my career. I used songs in my classroom routines with the goal to observe its impact in students' vocabulary acquisition and all songs were carefully chosen in order to

promote a safe and successful learning environment. After acknowledging music as a tool to promote linguistic development and motivation, and in order to write this paper, I chose to analyze two songs for each experience I had.

In the face of this picture and after observing this progress in kids of such a young age, I propose this study, characterized as a practitioner research in the form of an experience report.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will be dedicated to present theories to support the results of this paper, which were based on the observation and reflection of my own experience in the classroom, as a second language teacher. It will be divided in two topics: 2.1 Teaching English as a second language for young learners and 2.2 Teaching English through music.

2.1 Teaching English as a Second Language for young learners

Young Learners (YL) is a term used in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) normally to talk about students under the age of 12. The age range that this term refers to may vary, since some years ago, it was also used to talk about any learner under the age of 18. Depending on the author, this definition can change, making it difficult for professionals of this field to go deeper in studies and research focusing on a specific age group.

Ellis (2014) raises the problematic and emphasizes the urge to better establish the terminologies in the ELT field. A more precise definition becomes necessary in order for Second Language (L2) teachers to make better use of the most proper approaches, materials, techniques and methodologies to the corresponding age group. In this work, I will use the term “young learners” to refer to students under the age of 12. Throughout the paper, I will also use the words “children” and “kids” as synonyms to young learners.

Since the focus of this study is on YL it is important to acknowledge that the first few years of our lives are the most important ones in regards to language learning. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), first raised by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and popularized by Lennberg (1967), claims that the younger the child is the easier it is for them to acquire a second language and reach a native-like accent and fluency. It is based on the premise that the period before the child hits puberty is crucial in their L2 development.

Meanwhile the CPH claims that it is impossible to acquire a second language after the

critical period, that being before puberty, there is a more modern and less strict understanding: the Sensitive Period Hypothesis (SPH). Patkowski, M.S. (1980) states that there is not such a thing as an absolute age limitation for a student to acquire a second language, but instead, there is a Sensitive Period where they are more likely to reach linguistic proficiency and a native-like level.

Both angles secure the value of beginning the L2 instruction as soon as possible in children's life, and also disclose the benefits in acquisition and proficiency level kids are able to acquire by this early exposure. Furthermore, we can also perceive and understand the relevance for the teachers to have the proper knowledge to provide students with the conditions that are conducive to learning.

With that in mind, and looking through the classroom reality perspective, it is important to provide little kids with as many chances as possible for them to learn. According to a research conducted by Hart & Ridley (1995), kids who had access to more vocabulary - words, different words, encouraging words, words that described things and questions - had a wider range of vocabulary than kids who did not hear as much language.

Children need repetition to better acquire vocabulary, they need to encounter words again and again and need to be given chances for them to find new meanings to the words they already know, teaching needs to include the recycling of words Cameron (2001). That is why the continued exposure to the same input throughout the process of learning is vital to the fixation of the content.

The YL I taught and observed in order to write this work are not only kids learning English, but kids learning English as a second language. Even though English is a global language and kids from a very early age may get in touch with the language in several situations outside the classroom, such as in movies, games and music, the classroom is where he or she is going to be in contact with the language on a daily basis; the teacher is then tasked with the responsibility to exposure students to the language and opportunities for learning through classroom activities (Cameron, 2001).

In order to clarify and have a notion on how kids are perceived as language learners, I am going to present Bruner's perspective, which we can take into account when talking about YL learning development.

Bruner (1966) divides the ways children store and encode memory and knowledge into three modes of representation: 1) Enactive representation (action-based); 2) Iconic representation (image-based); and 3) Symbolic representation (language-based).

He proposes that the first mode, the enactive representation, occurs between 0-1 years

old. He argues that kids encode and store action-based information, that through movements, children this age are able to remember previous events, working as a muscle memory.

The second mode, the iconic representation, shows itself in the age group of 1-6 years old. Whereas the first mode attests that the storage and coding process happens through movement, the second happens visually, through images.

The third and last mode arises from 7 years old on. In this stage, Bruner supports the notion that the storage and encoding now takes place as language, that being, in a form of code or symbol.

By exploring these three modes, we can identify different predominant learning styles in different children's life stages, according to Bruner (1966). To follow his point of view, it is important for educators to provide students the appropriate material and inputs to each state, in order for it to be effective, gradually changing the resources provided as the children grow and move to the next mode.

The perspectives and theories presented here are directly linked to my work as a second language teacher inside the classroom and all my observations and reflections were carried out while taking them into consideration.

2.2 Teaching English through music

Kids' first contact with music can occur even before they are born, in their mother's womb. According to Dr. Ibrahim Baltagi, in a video posted by Unicef's Youtube channel in 2019, the baby is able to listen to music around 16-18 weeks of pregnancy, and listening to music has a soothing and uplifting effect on the pregnant woman, and also a positive influence on the unborn baby.

Like presented above, humans may have contact with music even before birth, and it follows us along in life, impacting many aspects of our trajectory. Music can alter mood: songs are meant to evoke different types of feelings, such as happiness, sadness, excitement and even anger. Through the limbic system, music has the ability to bring about a broad range of emotional states (Murrock, 2005, p. 141). A teacher always wants to work with happy and content students, and that can be reached using music in the classroom. .

Kids tend to be more expressive than adults, they talk a lot, they make relationships easier, with each other and with the teacher, their filter is a little bit more loose than those of the adults, and that can help their learning process. Children often seem less embarrassed than

adults at talking in a new language, and their lack of inhibition seems to help them get a more native-like accent (Cameron, 2001).

Looking from a different perspective, at the same time that this disinhibition can facilitate kids' learning process, it can also become a barrier to untrained teachers. To catch the attention of young students for a long period of time throughout the whole activity seems to be a challenge to be overcome by primary teachers. In face of this scenario, it is important to bring to the classroom strategies that are closer to their reality, that speak their “language”.

With that being said, it is even more clear the importance of creating an exciting and welcoming environment to receive these kids that are about to study a different language, in order to promote wellbeing, motivation and the children’s feeling of identity with the language. I chose to do that in my classes through music.

And in fact, music is an excellent cultural input, since it embodies the cultural aspects of the country the music was made in. A good example of that are the traditional songs of each language that pass on the history, habits and traditions to the next generations along the years.

Regarding the classroom reality, according to an article written by English professors Marzieh Mashayekh and Masoud Hashemi (2011), the role of music in learning can be described in terms of enhancement of social harmony, motivation force, and tool for learning. According to Horn (2007) music is very similar to language, being a form of it, since their development have many similarities. Both music and language are means of communication and contain phonetic, syntactic and semantic components.

There are many factors that impact the proficiency of a bilingual child, including community support for bilingualism, the children’s feeling of identity with the languages being learned and with the members of the language communities associated with those languages, the sources of the two languages, the history of contact between the two languages and language groups, and the socio-economic status of the family (Nicoladis & Genesee, 1997).

Seeing through the same perspective as Cameron (2001) mentioned before, that teaching needs to include the recycling of words, music is a great way of seeking this goal, since the repetition of words allows students to face the same vocabulary over and over again, which facilitates the process of memorization of words and fixation of the content.

Piri (2018) follows the same point of view and states that songs are magnificent tools for learning vocabulary because they contain short words, conversational language and many pronouns spoken at a slow rate and repetitively, which allow students to acquire vocabulary

and reinforce words already learned. He writes that music is considered a strong factor in making the classroom environment a place where students can enhance their different skills in the second language, such as vocabulary range, listening, speaking, reading, writing and, as already presented, develop cultural knowledge.

Horn (2007) adds that listening skills are necessary for the acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL), and music is a valuable strategy to develop these skills and having well-developed listening skills is vital for the student to be able to learn, experience and understand language and music. She suggests that taking part in activities that give students the chance to experience speech rhythm by tapping the word using body movements - clapping, stamping - is a helpful aid to develop the ESL learner's acquisition. In terms of this paper, I will use the terms ESL and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as synonyms

Furthermore, listening to music allows the students to have contact with the second language being learned in a fun and casual way as well as creates an atmosphere to the class. The musical aspects of language - timbral contrast, melodic contour, rhythm - are used by children as a scaffolding for the later development of semantic and syntactic aspects of language (Brandt, Gebrian & Slevc, 2012).

In a preschool classroom, the teachers need to deal with the high level of student's energy. To use songs that give body movement commands, besides helping to develop language skills, it also helps students to release some of this energy and be more focused on the following activities, as well as willing to meet the teacher's expectations regarding behavior and oral production.

It is important to acknowledge that the kids in question are learning a second language but are most of the time not immersed in the target language. All sources of input are extremely precious when the only time the students are exposed to the Second Language (SL) is during the class. With that being said, it is also welcomed and valuable to use songs in moments of relaxation, play time and activities. In that way, even though the focus of the moment may not be the songs and the vocabulary in them, the input will still be provided, processed and acquired.

Kusnierek (2016) discusses the role music has in teaching vocabulary. She carried out a study with two groups of students, one group had lessons using music as a tool for acquiring vocabulary and the second group did not.

At the beginning of the study, all students took a pre-test before the classes and by the end they took a post-test to reflect on their vocabulary knowledge. The outcome of the

post-test was that the students in the group using music performed better than the ones in the group that did not use music.

In her work, Kusnierek (2016) claims that besides the power of evoking different types of feelings, a thought already supported by other researchers cited above, music can be used to develop better memorization and acquisition of vocabulary. In the article, Kusnierek (2016) says that using music inside the classroom is recommended, since it is common for it to be the main source of English outside the classroom.

Regarding vocabulary, Kusnierek (2016) shares the idea that using songs in the classroom environment is an advantage because they can bring a lot of linguistic information, such as: grammar, vocabulary items and pronunciation. It can be a resource students can use to help them improve, expand and build their vocabulary repertoire, and store this vocabulary into long-term memory, since repetitive lyrics and catchy tunes facilitates this process.

All things considered, it is clear that the usage of music is a valuable means to provide input in a Second Language Learning (SLL) classroom. Due to its repetitive language characteristic, the regular exposure to songs can help improve and expand kids vocabulary range, enhance their listening skills and help them scaffold different aspects of language structure.

Furthermore, in Kusnierek's (2016) work, there is evidence to suggest that music can also be used as a strategy to manage students behavior and become a valious tool in classroom management. Besides that, it can be used to provide cultural context and present the cultural aspects of the English speaking countries to the learners.

3 METHOD

As mentioned before, I have been a bilingual teacher at private schools in Fortaleza for three years, and during this period I went through three different schools. I will use my experience, perception, remarks and observations to draw conclusions on the given subject.

The method of collecting data I chose was observation, since I can make a more qualitative work using this method, which is what my research requires, all of the data was maintained and collected by me while teaching the classes using music as a tool for acquiring vocabulary to young learners, in my case, kids from three to five years old.

During the years I taught, I engaged in a large number of situations that allowed me to notice the impact of using songs in the children's vocabulary acquisition. By perceiving this tendency, I drove my attention to observing and reflecting whether using this resource as a form of input would benefit my students.

The classes in question occurred between 2021 and 2024. During these years, my students had a forty minute class daily in which I used at least three songs everyday. The songs used had different topics. Some of them were used just as a form of warm up before the class. Most of them were related to the lesson taught and had the target vocabulary in them, some others were used as a classroom management mechanism and finally, there were the ones used to wrap up the class and say goodbye.

All of the songs used were presented to the students many times so they could associate them with a certain moment in our routine or topic taught, enhancing the chances of correct association and memorization.

During the whole process I observed how they reacted and interacted with the songs while they were played and afterwards. When possible, I also observed them in other parts of their routine outside the English classroom to see if the songs came up in these situations. The quality of the research can be significantly enhanced by providing this additional data.

The focus of the research is in their improvement regarding vocabulary. This project has no intention of having a large scale since all the assumptions were exclusively made based on my perception and experience as a teacher of English as a second language in all the given context already presented.

At the end of the study, all of the data collected, analyzed and interpreted was sufficient to draw some conclusions on the matter.

4 EXPERIENCE REPORT

This section will be dedicated to lecture about my experience as an ESL teacher that used music as a tool to teach vocabulary to young learners.

This is a reflection based on my own experience and perception. It is important to mention that all my observations and personal remarks were done considering the theories and studies presented in the theoretical framework. All the classes were taught and planned by me.

I will divide my report into three parts, each one of them will be focused on a school I worked in and I will reflect about two significant songs I played to my students when I worked in each school.

4.1 First School - “Clean Up and “Mystery Box”

The first school I worked in was my first experience as a teacher and, most importantly, my first experience with kids in general. It was a private school that adopted a Canadian methodology. I worked there for ten months and taught five year old kids.

The first months in, I took my time to get used to young learners' behavior and learning process. After the initial adaptation, I had the chance to acknowledge the techniques teachers used and the importance in bringing the playful character to the classroom routine in order to accomplish and maintain students' attention and cooperation.

That playful character can be reached in several different ways: games, puppets, realia, technological tools, and my favorite, music. I have always been a musical person, so when I noticed I could use music as a pedagogical resource I adopted it as a part of every lesson of mine, I would find a way to fit music in my classes.

The first thing that came to my attention regarding the usage of music inside the classroom was its benefits to behavior management and improving motivation, later on, I could also notice the linguistic competences it could help my students develop.

In this first experience as a teacher, I was a teacher assistant of a senior kindergarten class, kids around the age of 4 and 5. The school established a routine that had to be done everyday in order for all the steps of the lesson to be accomplished.

It was a school that had many extra classes for the students, so their routine was full of moments of transition between different activities. In those moments, it was important that

they kept themselves and the space they were in organized, for the next activity to occur without any interference or problem.

I noticed that these moments of transition were a struggle, for them and for me. They would get so agitated that they could not focus on what needed to be done, organize for the next step of the routine, and I had a hard time trying to manage their level of energy and making them follow my commands.

In face of this, I decided to adopt the song “Clean Up” to help us achieve what needed to be achieved. These are the lyrics of the song (CLEAN..., 2016):

Clean up, clean up.
Everybody, let's clean up.
Clean up, clean up.
Put your things away. (CLEAN..., 2016)

It is an easy and simple song that gives commands and asks students to clean up. In just a few days playing the song, I saw that they were conditioned. Just by hearing it they already stopped what they were doing and engaged in the organization of the class.

Some more days after starting using the song, I noticed that not only they understood it and obeyed the commands, but they were also singing the song and humming it even when it was not being played.

Once they were already answering to the commands, singing the lyrics with and without the song on, they started using the vocabulary presented in the song in other contexts not related to the clean up moment specifically.

They were able to apply the vocabulary while talking to each other and to the teachers. One example of that was the word “everybody”, students would use it to call their friends attention, to tell a story about their personal life or even while playing pretend with toys.

One important thing to remark about the oral production of these students in specific is that, differently from the ones from the other two schools, this was a bilingual school, so even at the early age, students were already able to create big phrases and establish a conversation in the SL.

Even though their proficiency level was good for their age, it was common for them to create phrases mixing both languages, their native one and the L2. Their word choice was another factor that made me perceive the vocabulary improvement the song was providing them. When they created mixed phrases, they would always choose to say “everybody” instead of “todo mundo”.

They would create phrases like: “Everybody foi para o meu aniversário” or “Everybody, olhem pra mim”. When they produced phrases in their native language but chose to say that specific word in the L2, it made clear how comfortable they were with that vocabulary and how fixed in their mind was the meaning of it.

The song was played everyday, most of the days, more than one or two times. They had contact with the same input several times, the repetition of vocabulary mixed with their feelings about the song, since they loved it, enabled the memorization of the word and the storage of this vocabulary into their long-term memory.

The other song I am going to reflect about in this first experience is the “Mystery Box” song. It is a song used to introduce a pedagogical resource that consists in a box used to present to the class a surprise object related to what’s being learned. The lyrics of the song are just: “Mystery Box, Mystery Box, What’s inside the mystery box?” (MYSTERY..., 2016)

Everytime I was going to introduce a new lesson or that I was going to bring realia related to a lesson already happening, instead of just getting it and showing it to them I would put it inside the mystery box and create a little suspense and expectation about it.

In this case, I connected the song to a visual stimuli, they could see what I was singing about, that was an actual box that had a mystery inside. By doing that, I met Bruner's second mode of how children store and encode memory and knowledge, the iconic representation.

The days I used the mystery box I already told them about it in the beginning of the classroom, they loved it so much that they would simply behave better just by knowing that later on that day the mystery box moment was going to occur. Just by seeing the box they already started singing the song and they reached a level where they would sing it by themselves without me having to prompt the vocabulary.

Just like the Clean Up song, I would find students humming the lyrics all along the class. The vocabulary I can specifically talk about in this case are the word “box” and the phrase “what’s inside?”.

Since they had the visual help, they immediately linked the word box to its meaning and started using it to talk about other types of boxes. They started calling the container they put their sandals as sandals box and the one with extra activities the activity box.

They also caught “What’s inside?” very quickly. It was common for me to catch them playing “teacher and student”. They would hide an object inside a bag, a pot or sometimes even a box and the kid playing the student would ask: “What’s inside?”.

These are only a few examples I can mention out of many others I experienced using these two songs. By this first experience, I could attest that songs could be used as a

magnificent tool for acquiring vocabulary, and decided to carry this habit with me to the other teacher experiences I had in the following years.

4.2 Second School - “Rainbow Colors” and “See you later, alligator”

I started my work in this second second school with two advantages I did not have in the first one: I figured out how to deal and establish a connection with kids and I had already perceived the music potential inside a EFL classroom.

It was a private school, I worked there for a year and five months and my students were kids from three to six years old. This school worked with a bilingual program, different from the previous one, I taught five forty minute lessons a week. Although my time with students was significantly smaller, I had more freedom to plan my lessons as I wished, so I introduced music whenever I felt it was necessary and beneficial.

It was in this experience that I started introducing songs not only related to the routine, although I kept using them, but also related to the topics and subjects I was teaching. For example, if the students were in a unit that talked about fruits, I would play a song with fruits vocabulary or if it was about body parts I would play a song with the related vocabulary and so on.

The first song I am going to explore during this experience is called Rainbow Colors. I used this song to work on colors vocabulary, along with some other random vocabulary, since the lyrics of the song relate every color to a specific animal, fruit or vegetable that is the same color. These are the lyrics of the song (RAINBOW..., 2014):

Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
I see an apple, and it's red!
Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
I see a carrot, and it's orange!
Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
I see a lemon, and it's yellow!
Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
I see a frog, and it's green!
Rainbow colors everywhere
Red, orange, yellow, green
Rainbow colors everywhere
Blue, purple, pink!
Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
I see a fish, and it's blue!
Tell me, tell me, what do you see?

I see a flower, and it's purple!
 Tell me, tell me, what do you see?
 I see a flamingo, and it's pink!
 Rainbow colors everywhere
 Red, orange, yellow, green
 Rainbow colors everywhere
 Blue, purple, pink!
 Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
 Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
 Red (red)
 Orange (orange)
 Yellow (yellow)
 Green (green)
 Blue (blue)
 Purple (purple)
 Pink (pink)
 Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
 Rainbow colors everywhere
 Red, orange, yellow, green
 Rainbow colors everywhere
 Blue, purple, pink!
 Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink
 Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink.
 (RAINBOW..., 2016)

As it is possible to observe, like the previous songs already analyzed and according to the ideas in the theoretical framework, this song provides vocabulary input with a lot of repetition, allowing the students to better fixate the words and content.

My intention by playing this song to the kids was to focus on the colors vocabulary, it was awesome to observe that not only they could reproduce the colors but also the other words in the song, such as: rainbow, frog, apple, flower, and some others.

I perceived the students using the vocabulary to create phrases mixing their mother tongue and the L2, they created phrases such as: “Teacher, meu tênis é pink e blue.”, “Minha cor favorita é red” or still “A flower é purple”. While free playing, they would describe their toys using the vocabulary of colors and even correct themselves when a classmate used the Portuguese vocabulary to refer to the colors.

Everytime any of the elements presented in the song came up in some other classroom activity they would use the vocabulary they had already acquired, so when they saw frogs or rainbows along our classes, they chose to use the words in English instead of resorting to their first language.

Throughout the one year and five months I worked in this school, I received many parents’ feedback about their kids’ intimacy and safety with the L2. Parents told me that

the students kept singing the songs at home and even asked to listen to them. Some students would go to the school listening to the songs in the car, and parents also said that during their day to day situations they would randomly hum them.

In this first experience using songs inserted in the content I noticed an engagement enhancement, the kids seemed more interested and curious about learning, they also seemed happier when they acknowledged that a song was about to be played. They paid careful attention to the lyrics, trying to recognize the words we approached during the circle time and book activities.

The second song I analyzed was a song used to model routine, in the bye bye moment. This song makes several rhymes using famous expressions allied to sound similarities. These are the lyrics (SEE YOU...2019):

See you later, alligator
 In a while, crocodile
 Gotta go, buffalo
 See you soon, raccoon
 Be sweet, parakeet
 Take care, polar bear
 In a shake, garter snake
 Hit the road, happy toad
 Can't stay, blue jay
 Bye-bye, butterfly
 Give a hug, ladybug
 Toodle-loo, kangaroo
 Time to scoot, little newt
 Till then, penguin
 Adios, hippos
 Hasta mañana, Iguana
 Blow a kiss, goldfish
 Get in line, porcupine
 Out the door, dinosaur
 On the bus, octopus
 To your house, quiet mouse
 What I'm really tryin' to say is...
 Good-bye! Bye-bye bye!
 (SEE YOU..., 2016)

Although because of the rhymes at the first moment this song may seem a little bit complicated for kids to sing and properly pronounce the words, it is super catchy and fun and soon it became their favorite one.

Students had a blast trying to speak fast enough to follow the lyrics and even competed among themselves to see who could do it without making any mistakes. Just like

the other songs, vocabulary presented in it came up in many other situations, such as: describing things, telling stories, free play time, circle time, activities and spontaneously throughout school routine not related to the English classes.

The classes took place in my own classroom and it was equipped with a multimedia set, so kids would have the auditory and visual input at the same time, which made it easier for them to associate the words to their meaning, since they saw the images as they heard the sound.

The video of this song is very appealing to children, the graphic representation of the animals is very cute and funny. Students had the habit of choosing their favorite animal and tried their best to learn their part of the song. The images also helped them make cultural associations, they associated the mouse to Mickey Mouse and the ladybug to the character of the cartoon Miraculous Ladybug.

This closeness of the animals to their reality, given that some of them were related to cartoons and cultural aspects of their lives outside the classroom, made students develop a sense of identity with the language and create a friendly relationship with the L2.

By analyzing this experience, my hypothesis that music is a resourceful tool to promote vocabulary acquisition, manage mood and provide cultural context got even stronger. My perception of the job done led my class planning in the third and last experience analyzed in order to write this work.

4.3 Third School - “Friday” and “Five Little Monkeys”

Out of the three experiences as a second language teacher I can attest that this one was the best one. It was also a private school, like the previous ones. I worked there for a year and three months and my students were kids from three to six years old, it also adopted a bilingual program. I arrived with the baggage of the background knowledge and wisdom I accumulated so far and with my identity as a teacher well established, as well as how I wanted to be perceived by the students and what I wanted to evoke in them.

I came to the conclusion that my job as an English teacher is to provide students a safe, healthy and fun environment where they can express themselves and carve their path into learning a second language in the most enjoyable way possible.

Music helped me accomplish this objective so far, so of course it would also guide my teaching into this new experience. This school also adopted a bilingual program, like the previous one, and the classes followed the same schema: five forty minute classes per week.

However, this school did not provide any multimedia equipment, so my students no longer had the fortification of the visual input or, at least, the technological one. Since I was not able to show students the videos of the songs anymore, I developed other ways of providing them with visual input. I am going to discourse more about that when I analyze the songs.

The first song I am going to analyze in this experience is “Five little monkeys jumping on the bed”. These are the lyrics of the song (FIVE...2016):

Five little monkeys jumping on the bed.
One fell off and bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor and the doctor said,
"No more monkeys jumping on the bed!"
Four little monkeys jumping on the bed.
One fell off and bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor and the doctor said,
"No more monkeys jumping on the bed
(FIVE..., 2016)

I used this song linked to the content they were studying, that was a story about a monkey named Chico. Chico’s story was a part of the bilingual program adopted, and it provided big books and a stuffed animal of the character.

As it was expected, Chico was a sensation among the children, they all loved him and wanted to listen to the story several times. Although I knew the story by heart, I always used the book, so they could properly relate the vocabulary spoken to its meaning by visualizing it.

The story had many characters, places and words related to the life and habits of monkeys. Its focus was on family vocabulary, day and night and monkeys eating habits. It’s a short and very repetitive story, but soon I perceived that although kids loved Chico, they were kind of bored during the story.

Reflecting on that, I decided to google for songs that could help me improve students' engagement about the subject, during the research I came across the already mentioned song. I played the song during all the three weeks Chico’s story was approached and it completely changed kids’ mood about the classes.

Along with the song, I used the stuffed animal to act on the lyrics and it caused widespread laughter every time I pumped the monkey’s head into the ground. The classroom environment definitely changed and everyday they arrived anxious and excited to listen to the song and watch the monkey bump his head, they even got sad when we had to move on to the next content.

By mere chance, there was a big tree outside of the classroom, right in front of the door, which was the house of a family of common marmoset, a common type of monkey in Fortaleza. I first recognized the students using vocabulary from the song when they called my attention saying: “olha, teacher, two monkeys”. I took advantage of those moments as much as I could, after all, I had the opportunity to explore the realia with students.

I used those moments to recast as much vocabulary as possible and try to scaffold some more, making driving questions about the knowledge they had acquired with the story. During these times kids used the numbers vocabulary presented in the song to count the monkeys and even used to ask: “cadê a mommy dos monkeys?” when there were only baby monkeys.

This song ended up being a good fit to enhance participation, altering mood and promoting vocabulary acquisition inside the EFL classroom.

The next and last song I am going to analyze in this work is called “Friday” by Rebecca Black. All of the previous songs I analyzed are songs especially written and created for kids, but this one is not. Even though it was not created for this target audience, it can be used because of its simple vocabulary and ordinary theme, it talks about a girl that is excited for the weekend to come. These are the lyrics:

I used this song to work on the days of the week vocabulary and it was played every friday. During the whole week the students helped me to fill in the calendar with the day of the month and the day of the week. On the last day, that is friday, as a way of celebrating our week and the two free days to come, we listened to the song.

At the beginning, during the first few Fridays they were being presented to the song, children seemed a little confused and surprised. They obviously perceived that the song they were listening to was not a kids’ song, at first they were a little insecure about it, but once they familiarized themselves with the song, it became a positive aspect, they felt more mature listening to it precisely because they knew it was not made for their age.

Because it was only played on the last day of class, it created an exciting environment that flew over the classroom throughout the whole week. I could notice kids using the vocabulary presented in the song because everyday they would ask: “teacher, hoje é friday?” or “teacher, amanhã é friday?”.

They also used the vocabulary of the other days of the week to answer questions about it and to correct themselves, for example: “hoje não é friday, hoje é tuesday” or “amanhã é sunday, e não tem aula no weekend”.

Out of all of the songs I used in my lessons throughout three years as an English teacher, this one was the students' favorite. They did not simply sing it, they shouted it, especially the referee and the days of the week vocabulary.

I also used this song as a tool for managing behavior and cooperativity. Because of the short time of the class, if the routine did not occur as planned, there would be no time for listening to it, and that was the worst scenario ever for them, so they would help me and themselves in order for every step of the class to occur in the planned time.

5 FINAL REMARKS

In this paper, I explored my experience using music as a tool for teaching vocabulary to young learners. Through the perspective of my own perceptions and examination, I raised the hypothesis that music can be used to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and motivation.

Based on all the theoretical framework presented and on my individual report, experience and reflections, it is possible to say that music is a powerful tool inside an EFL classroom. It helps manage behavior, mood, provides cultural and language structures input and helps the process of acquiring and fixating vocabulary.

Having the opportunity of teaching young learners was an enriching experience for me, their love and authenticity helped me shape the teacher that I am today. I am glad with my decision of choosing music as a tool to enhance the quality of my lessons and I feel professionally and personally fulfilled, I know my job was done the best way it could have been and my mission with my students was accomplished.

Considering that the objective of this study was to analyze if the usage of music inside an EFL classroom had a beneficial impact in students' vocabulary acquisition process, the impossibility of analyzing a bigger number of songs was a limitation I faced during the development of this paper, but even with this barrier, I achieved the goal of proving my initial hypothesis. Further research on the same topic can improve the work done here by analyzing and focusing on a bigger sample of songs and centering attention to other linguistic aspects besides vocabulary, such as pronunciation.

The observation and reflection I did in order to write this work enriched my trajectory as a teacher and a student, and it will impact my further practice inside education and the academy.

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