



AN EXPERIENCE REPORT OF THE USE OF A SONG IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES FOR FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATION¹

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ABSTRACT: This article presents an experience report carried out with a 5th grade class at the Zaira Maciel Private School, in Capanema-PA, during the month of August 2023. The proposal consisted of using the song "Count on Me" (Mars, 2020), in an adapted bilingual version, as a didactic tool in English classes in honor of Father's Day. The activity aimed to promote the teaching of the English language in an effective, meaningful and culturally contextualized way. The choice of the bilingual version sought to facilitate the students' understanding and reduce anxiety in the face of the challenge of singing in English. The practice involved listening, reading, translating and singing, culminating in the recording of a video shared with family members. During the process, challenges such as limited time and emotional issues of students were faced. The affective approach allowed the activity to be adapted to individual realities, promoting inclusion and respect. The results showed greater engagement and self-esteem. The article concludes that the use of music on commemorative dates can transform the school environment, making learning more humane, welcoming and effective.

Keywords: Teaching English. Music. Commemorative date. Motivation.

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta um relato de experiência realizado com uma turma do 5º ano da Escola Particular Zaira Maciel, em Capanema-PA, durante o mês de agosto de 2023. A proposta consistiu na utilização da música "Count on Me", de Bruno Mars, em versão bilíngue adaptada, como ferramenta didática nas aulas de inglês em homenagem ao Dia dos Pais. A atividade teve como objetivo promover o ensino da língua inglesa de forma afetiva, significativa e culturalmente contextualizada. A escolha da versão bilíngue buscou facilitar a compreensão

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dos alunos e reduzir a ansiedade diante do desafio de cantar em inglês. A prática envolveu escuta, leitura, tradução e canto, culminando na gravação de um vídeo compartilhado com os familiares. Durante o processo, foram enfrentados desafios como o tempo limitado e questões emocionais dos alunos. A abordagem afetiva permitiu adaptar a atividade às realidades individuais, promovendo inclusão e respeito. Os resultados evidenciaram maior engajamento e autoestima. O artigo conclui que o uso da música em datas comemorativas pode transformar o ambiente escolar, tornando o aprendizado mais humano, acolhedor e eficaz.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de inglês. Música. Datas comemorativas. Motivação..

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a pedagogical experience carried out in August 2023 with the 5th-grade afternoon class at Zaira Maciel Private School, located in Capanema-PA, Brazil. Composed of 25 students, the class participated in an activity that involved the use of the song “Count on Me” (MARS, 2020), in its bilingual adapted version by Tia Mori, as a didactic tool in English lessons. The activity was designed to celebrate Father’s Day, combining emotional and cultural elements through musical language.

Recognizing that commemorative dates offer a wide range of possibilities for building meaningful learning experiences, especially in language teaching, the main objective of the proposal was to create a bridge between Portuguese and English. Through music, the activity aimed to establish a connection between the theme of affection, present in the celebration of Father’s Day, and the English language as a form of cultural expression. The activity also served as an opportunity to discuss differences between cultural calendars, highlighting that Father’s Day, for instance, is celebrated in the United States on the third Sunday of June, unlike in Brazil. This dialogue between contexts allowed students to expand their cultural repertoire, encouraging reflection on other dates such as Valentine’s Day and Independence Day, which also differ between the two countries.

The decision to use a bilingual version of the song was based on pedagogical and emotional factors. The available teaching time was limited, and requiring students to learn a song entirely in English could lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and even rejection of the language. By incorporating Portuguese into the structure of the song, greater accessibility, emotional engagement, and content comprehension were ensured. The adapted version thus

functioned as a facilitator for learning, allowing musicality to remain present without overwhelming students either linguistically or emotionally.

The data collection methodology adopted for this experience report was qualitative in nature, conducted from my perspective as the class's English teacher and organizer of the activity. It focused on participant observation and reflective recording of classroom interactions. During the activity, students' reactions, levels of engagement, spontaneous comments, and behaviors related to comprehension and emotional involvement with the theme were noted. This approach made it possible to capture important nuances of the activity's impact, valuing not only cognitive outcomes but also the affective and social aspects involved in the learning process.

This experience report presents not only the details of the activity's development and the challenges encountered, but also reflections on how addressing a commemorative date can enhance language and cultural teaching in an integrated way. The experience proved to be an effective strategy for promoting inclusive, meaningful, and humanized learning by considering students' emotional aspects and using cultural elements as catalysts for cognitive development. Especially in the early years of elementary school, initiatives like this demonstrate the potential to build bridges between the mother tongue and the foreign language, and between academic content and the student's emotional world.

Music has become a consolidated and effective resource in language teaching, not only due to its emotional and cultural appeal but also because of its pedagogical potential. According to Murphey (1990, p. 25), "language learned through music can be assimilated more naturally, in greater quantity, and with better retention," emphasizing that the use of songs facilitates the internalization of linguistic structures in a spontaneous and enjoyable way.

By fostering both emotional and cognitive engagement among students, music creates a favorable environment for language acquisition, becoming a didactic resource that goes beyond traditional methods and connects learners to the language in a meaningful and lasting way.

As highlighted by Isnaini and Aminatun (2021), the use of music in the classroom promotes an emotionally safe space for learning, allowing students to express themselves spontaneously, reducing language anxiety, and increasing engagement. In this sense, music transcends its role as a supplementary teaching tool and becomes a central element in building a more humanized approach to language education.

In connection with what Santos (2024) points out in his article “O uso da música nas aulas de inglês: um relato de experiência em uma escola pública de Goiás.”, it is observed that music is capable of reaching a large portion of students in the classroom, precisely due to its inclusive and wide-ranging nature. “Among the various didactic ways to learn and practice another language, music stands out as a motivating and engaging tool, as it can reach almost every student in the classroom, whether through rhythm, lyrics, the artist, or the musical genre.” (Santos, 2024, p. 144)³.

This diversity of interpretative and emotional pathways that music offers allows students to find points of identification with the foreign language, creating positive connections with the language and transforming the learning experience into something enjoyable and meaningful.

Thus, incorporating music into English teaching practices, especially during commemorative dates that involve affection and family relationships, such as Father’s Day can be an effective strategy not only for linguistic development but also for strengthening socio-emotional and cultural competencies. The classroom space expands, ceasing to be merely a place of instruction and becoming an environment of listening, expression, and connection.

Building on this perspective, we view music as a form of motivation, aiming to bring a distinctive element to English classes by increasingly engaging students and encouraging a new outlook on the language. This approach makes learning more interesting and leads students to explore areas such as speaking and listening comprehension, as Santos (2024) highlights:

The use of songs in English language teaching is effective in developing linguistic skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. By combining rhythm, melody, and repetition, music facilitates the memorization and learning of language structures in a practical and contextual way.” (Santos, 2024, p. 13)⁴

Motivation is generally defined as the set of internal and external forces that drive an individual to act toward a goal. In educational psychology, it is directly related to the student’s interest, persistence, and engagement in the learning process. From this perspective, Marsh et al. (2020) emphasize that motivation in foreign language learning is deeply connected to the so-called “affective filter,” a concept developed by Krashen (1982), which considers emotional and social factors as elements that can either facilitate or hinder the acquisition of a new

³ “Dentre as diversas formas didáticas de aprender e praticar outro idioma, é o uso da música, como uma ferramenta motivadora e envolvente, pois a ela é capaz de alcançar quase todos os alunos numa sala, seja pelo ritmo, pela letra, pelo artista ou pelo gênero musical.” (Santos, 2024, p. 144)

⁴ “O uso de músicas no ensino de inglês possui eficácia no desenvolvimento de habilidades linguísticas como vocabulário, pronúncia e compreensão auditiva. Combinando ritmo, melodia e repetição, a música facilita a memorização e o aprendizado de estruturas linguísticas de forma prática e contextual.” (Santos, 2024, p. 13)

language. This filter functions as an invisible yet powerful barrier: when learners are emotionally balanced, comfortable, and motivated, their engagement increases and learning outcomes tend to be more positive. Conversely, feelings such as insecurity, anxiety, or lack of interest can significantly hinder progress. As Murray (1983) points out, motivation is present in virtually all forms of human behavior, influencing learning, performance, attention, creativity, and emotions. Understanding its effects, which vary according to intensity and may involve conflicts between conscious and unconscious motives, is essential to grasp how students respond to pedagogical stimuli. In this context, music emerges as an effective pedagogical strategy, capable of creating a relaxed environment, stimulating emotional engagement, and enhancing memorization through repetition, features that, according to Murphey (1992), make this resource particularly motivating in foreign language teaching.

During pedagogical practice with elementary school students, this phenomenon becomes noticeable. When conducting a music-based activity with didactic purposes, such as singing a song in English for a presentation, the impact of the affective filter was clearly observed. While many students showed enthusiasm, others expressed disinterest and resistance. The cause may lie in emotional issues that go beyond the school environment, such as the absence of a paternal figure or fear of public exposure. These factors highlight how the student's emotional world directly influences their performance and willingness to learn.

Considering this, the teacher's role goes beyond technical instruction and takes on a sensitive and mediating character. It is up to the educator to recognize these signs, welcome the students' emotions, and adapt their strategies to create a safe and receptive environment. Given the inherent demands of the teaching profession, identifying effective strategies to motivate learners often proves challenging. In this context, the teacher's role becomes crucial in fostering effective connections that support pedagogical practice. As Negreiros (2018) suggests, the arduous nature of teaching frequently makes it difficult to find efficient and engaging methods for instruction. Therefore, it is essential for educators to be attentive not only to curricular content but also to the emotional dimensions that permeate the teaching and learning process. By recognizing the importance of affective relationships within the school environment, teachers expand their role beyond the transmission of knowledge, becoming agents of listening, care, and mediation.

In the context of childhood, this resource proves to be even more powerful. Pereira (2009, p.1) emphasizes that music favors the teaching and learning processes for children precisely because of its ability to make the content unforgettable. According to the author, "In

education, it has been proven that this is one of the most effective learning methods. Learning through music is highly effective, as it stimulates cognitive function, the body, emotion, and hearing."⁵. Thus, investment in musical practices in English language classes, especially in the early years, should be considered a strategy of pedagogical, affective and cultural value.

In summary, working with music in English language teaching is an opportunity to align cognition and emotion, stimulating learning in a meaningful and welcoming way. This requires from the teacher not only mastery of the contents, but sensitivity to understand the student as an integral subject who learns with the intellect, but also with the heart.

Regarding commemorative dates as a strategy for teaching the English language, Sandoval (2014, p. 361) reports that "During the work with commemorative dates in English classes, the teacher will take on the role of guide and facilitator. They will be an active participant and an outstanding motivator in this activity."⁶. It dialogues directly with the teacher, stops being just a transmitter of knowledge and becomes an agent of transformation, which motivates, guides and builds bridges between the content and the students' world. Finally, the author also invites us to reflect on the importance of the teacher's posture in the face of these activities. Complementing this thought, Pearson (2022) talks about believing in celebrations as a pedagogical tool, inspiring students to express themselves, share, and enthusiastically learn from other cultures. And commemorative dates are no longer just dates on the calendar to become real opportunities for linguistic, affective and cultural growth.

In the children's educational scenario, music linked to motivation becomes a catalyzing element of teaching, involving pedagogical practices that facilitate the effective process in the classroom. When used as a resource in English language teaching, music not only stimulates students' interest but also fosters an emotionally safe environment that encourages expression, active listening, and the development of meaningful connections with the language. Gobbi (2001) acknowledges music as an effective strategy for English language learning, emphasizing that, in addition to being explicitly cited as a pedagogical tool, its use can also be inferred from various learning practices. The author highlights the constant presence of music in learners' lives and its significant contribution to the development of key language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension.

⁵ "Na educação, está comprovado que este é um dos melhores métodos de aprendizagem. Aprender com música é muito efetivo, pois estimula a função cognitiva, o corpo, emoção e audição." Pereira (2009, p.1)

⁶ "Durante el trabajo con las efemérides en las clases de inglés, el profesor tendrá el papel de orientador y facilitador. Será un participante más y un motivador por excelencia de esta actividad." Sandoval (2014, p. 361)

This experience demonstrates that, when teaching dialogues with the affective universe of students and values cultural elements such as commemorative dates, it is possible to transform learning into a more inclusive, pleasurable and lasting process. Thus, music reveals itself not only as a didactic tool, but as a key factor in the linguistic and emotional formation of students in the early years of Elementary School.

EXPERIENCE REPORT

In August 2023, I carried out my first music-based activity with the 5th-grade afternoon class at Zaira Maciel Private School. The class was composed of 25 students, all between 9 and 10 years old.

Initially, the plan included two Friday sessions in the weeks leading up to Father's Day, celebrated on August 13, 2023. The time allocated for the activity was approximately 30 to 45 minutes per class, respecting the textbook content that required most of the class time. This content couldn't be rescheduled for other lessons, as doing so would lead to several issues, such as delays in the textbook schedule and missing topics intended for the next evaluation. Therefore, I had to carefully divide the time so that neither part was compromised. In total, I had 90 minutes available, distributed across the two 45-minute lessons I taught to this class.

While organizing this activity, I realized the need to record a video of the children performing the song to share with the parents, since the school would not host any event related to this commemorative date for an in-person presentation. Therefore, I added that at the end of the activity, a video would be recorded and posted in the parents' group for this class.

The selected song was "Count on Me" (Mars, 2020), a song about friendship and being able to rely on someone through all of life's situations. A perfect song to represent the emotional bonds between parents and children.

With the song chosen in advance, the lyrics were retrieved to support the students' learning process. Copies of the song were prepared and printed so that at the beginning of the lessons, the material was properly organized and ready for pedagogical use.

Challenges and Strategies Adopted

During the process, challenges arose, such as the time limitation due to considering the recent return of classes and the complexity of the original music to learn quickly, an adapted version was sought, found on a Youtube channel of educator Tia Mori, entitled: "Música

Bilíngue Dia dos Pais - Português e Inglês - versão COUNT ON ME” (Anjos, 2022). This bilingual version, with excerpts in Portuguese and English, facilitated the students' understanding and favored engagement in the activity, involving the students even more as it is a commemorative date alluding to Father's Day.

However, other situations arose during classes, some students did not show as much interest as the other students. Realizing this indifference and demotivation, I talked to these students individually to understand what was happening. The students who were showing an aversion to music reported the absence of their parents and the fact of singing in front of their classmates became a demotivating factor for these children. However, students who did not have the presence of a father were invited to dedicate the tribute to other significant figures in their lives, such as grandparents, uncles or guardians. Those who manifested shyness received encouragement and emotional support, emphasizing the value of gestures and learning. Considering the individuality of each child in choosing to participate or not.

Execution of Classes

The activities were divided into listening to the song, translating and studying the verses in English. Resources such as copies of the lyrics, writing on the board and audio reproduction were used, aiming at the fixation of vocabulary and pronunciation. The methodology was based on repetition, directed listening and collective practice.

Lesson 1

Our first post-vacation meeting took place on August 4th. The students were euphoric telling each other about how the month of July was. For this first moment with them, I greeted them and wanted to know more about each one's vacation, but without many details. And before resuming the subjects of the book, I asked them the following question: "What do we celebrate in the month of August?" They replied that it would be Father's Day. After the answer, I asked another question: "How and where do you celebrate this special day?", in response the students answered that they gave gifts to their parents, went for a walk with the family or got together for lunch at their grandfather's house. I kept goading them with another question: "Do you know when Father's Day is in the United States?" And they answered no. So I contextualized that for cultural reasons the dates were different, there they celebrate on the third Sunday of June, while here it is celebrated on the second Sunday of August, but there were dates that coincided with

the Brazilian calendar, such as Mother's Day and Easter, but there were others that, like Father's Day, were celebrated on different dates such as, Valentine's Day, Independence Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Then at this moment of conversation, I mentioned my plan to the class explaining that we would do a singing activity that would be recorded on video to honor the parents and make their day more special. The class went into complete murmur and began to say that they could not do it, that they were ashamed, that they could not sing even Portuguese, imagine in English. This is the typical excuse of most students, but already knowing the class and knowing their potential, I calmed them down by involving language issues and affective issues such as music as a great ally for the resourcefulness of the English language, that we would work on listening, speaking and reading through that song, because there would be music and lyrics so that they would not get lost during learning. And I emphasized the importance of singing to demonstrate and express feelings and affection for parents or someone very dear.

After this first conversation, we went to the content of the book and observing that there were 30 minutes left for the end of the class, I asked them to keep the class materials, and distributed the lyrics of the song among them. I quickly explained the title of the song and what it was about. With the help of a small speaker, they listened to the version of "Count on me" by Bruno Mars lasting 3 minutes and 12 seconds, the rest of the class was focused on listening and observing the lyrics of the song. That was our first meeting. However, I realized that it would not be interesting and much less feasible in such a short time for students to learn a song completely in English.

Lesson 2

In our second meeting on August 11, there was a change regarding the lyrics of the song and the date of recording and publication of the video of the class. I took the adaptation of the song made by Tia Mori to the class with the duration of 3 minutes and 3 seconds. Noting that it would be more effective under the circumstances previously reported. With the new version presented, the students felt more confident and motivated.

First, the content programmed from the book was studied for one class (45 minutes) so that the children could then listen and practice in the second class. The English chorus part was the most prominent, with repetitions to improve pronunciation. I wrote on the board (although the students had the adapted copy) as part of the choir so that I could help them when it came

to getting into the music, the rhythm and the pronunciation of the words. This class was more productive, as the students were practicing listening, speaking, and writing in one class.

Lesson 3

The third meeting aimed to conduct a general rehearsal and produce a video in tribute to Father's Day. The recording took place on August 18. Although the official date of the celebration had already passed, the activity retained its commemorative nature, primarily valuing the students' dedication to their fathers or guardians.

We had the support of the class teacher (responsible for the other subjects) in organizing the recording. We had previously discussed adjustments to the class schedule to make better use of the available time. Normally, my classes take place during the third and fourth periods; however, I requested that, exceptionally, they be held during the fourth and fifth periods to avoid interruptions or delays due to recess.

The class began as usual. At the end of the first period, I gathered the children to begin our musical moment. We briefly reviewed the song and then proceeded with the filming. Some students faced challenges during the musical performance, as they had missed the previous class due to health issues. Nevertheless, it was possible to carry out the rehearsal and encourage autonomy during the presentation.

Some students who initially showed shyness, as well as those who shared with me that their fathers were not present in their lives, participated in the presentation. However, others chose not to take part, and a few students were absent that day. In total, 20 out of 25 students participated in the video recording.

FINDINGS

Despite the initial insecurities, typical of students in the phase of emotional and linguistic development, the musical activity was performed. As the students became familiar with the melody and the verses, even if only part of the music was within immediate reach, because before starting the recording I wrote the chorus of the song on the board, in case there was any forgetfulness. We have seen significant growth in trust and engagement. The final moment, marked by the vibration and enthusiasm of being able to sing in English, represented a true milestone for the class, which celebrated not only a result, but a collective progress.

The video of the presentation, edited in the Canva app on the same day, was carefully shared in the school's family group. This initiative had not only the purpose of recording the feat, but also of valuing the effort of the students, showing parents the transformative potential of music as a pedagogical tool and creating a bridge between the school environment and the family universe. The images captured were, shy looks, contained smiles and voices that tried to overcome the barrier of insecurity, it became something of the importance of practices in education.

For me, as a teacher, it was deeply gratifying to see them performing. Even though some students showed shame or fear, all managed to overcome the proposed linguistic challenge. This apparently simple gesture revealed significant achievements: not only in the aspect of learning the English language, but also in strengthening self-esteem, developing expressiveness and cultivating affective bonds within the group.

The repercussion among family members in the school's internal group was extremely positive. The parents were enthusiastic about the tribute and, through messages of affection and thanks, recognized the commitment of the class. Thus, this experience evidenced the power that language teaching can have when crossed by affection, creativity and active listening to the subjects involved.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The use of music as a tool in the teaching of English proved to be extremely valuable, not only as a didactic resource, but as a powerful agent of transformation of the classroom environment. By integrating songs into the classroom, it was possible to observe the creation of a welcoming atmosphere, where students felt more comfortable to participate, express themselves emotionally and build knowledge in a meaningful way.

Even in the face of the challenges encountered, such as the diversity of emotional profiles, the fear of exposing oneself when singing in public or difficulties in linguistic comprehension, the overall results were markedly positive. Music worked as a bridge between the academic content and the students' personal universe, expanding involvement and awakening interest in the English language.

However, when reflecting on the practice carried out, it is understood that, with the knowledge acquired later, the activity could have been further enriched with planning that contemplated linguistic and idiomatic elements in a more strategic way. The selection of songs with relevant grammatical structures, cultural expressions and contextualized vocabulary would

have further enhanced learning, making the experience not only playful, but also profoundly effective from a cognitive point of view.

This experience brought an essential confirmation: the teaching of foreign languages should not be limited to the technical aspect but also dialogue intensely with the affective universe of students. By using commemorative dates as a backdrop and involving students in musical practices, it is possible to reframe routine moments and transform the pedagogical practice into a humanized experience, sensitive to the emotions and individual experiences of each student.

Thus, music is not just an auxiliary resource, it is a universal language capable of breaking down barriers, connecting people and promoting lasting learning when used with intentionality and empathy.

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“Entrega o teu caminho ao Senhor; confia nele, e ele tudo fará.” Salmos 37:5

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