Reflections on the use of Musical Language to Help Promote Fourth-Grade Children's Writing Skills - A Case Study from Brazil

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Keywords: music; reading and writing practices; literacy.

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1. Introduction

Education in Brazil has faced major challenges in developing students' skills necessary for competent reading and writing training. According to O Edu (qedu.org.br - Brazilian Open Data Portal) in 2017 Prova Brasil1, 56% of the fifth-grade students showed proficiency in Portuguese and only 34% of the ninth-grade students demonstrated such proficiency.

In this sense, this article refers to a participatory and intervention type research; its objective was to investigate how music contributes to the development of specific knowledge about the written language in fourth-year students of elementary school that presented important lags in the literacy process, with a view to enhancing it.

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1 This is an assessment that forms part of the National Basic Education Assessment System (Saeb), developed by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep/MEC). The aim is to assess the quality of education offered by the Brazilian educational system based on standardized tests and socioeconomic questionnaires (http://portal.mec.gov.br/prova-brasil).

To conduct this discussion, this article presents theoretical aspects involving the epistemological basis of the Historical-Cultural Theory of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1991; 1996; 2010) and aims to reflect on the potentialities of music to introduce students to reading and writing practices. Vygotsky (1996) writes his theory based on studies of the genesis of higher psychological functions, seeking to construct explanations for the most complex human behaviors. For him, the higher psychological functions refer specifically to human behavior, which is sociocultural, as they develop in social relations mediated by culture. The higher functions have biologic based, that is, the elementary or lower psychological functions, which refer to automatic reactions, reflex actions and simple associations of biological origin. Therefore, the author evidence that the higher psychological functions and the lower psychological functions are on a common denominator: human behavior.

Higher psychological functions have a close relation to the child's cultural development historically and depends on social interactions, on the participation of each person in one's life (since birth) and the development of higher forms of behavior. All higher mental functions are internalized relations of social order, the basis of personality (child consciousness). This fact can be exemplified by language, understood in this context as the speech act, one of the higher psychological functions that develop through the most varied spheres of human activity and which plays a central role in social relations and behavior cultural interaction. It has two functions: cultural interchange (social interactions through speech) and generalizing thinking (conceptual elaboration) (Vygotsky, 2010).

In the case of written language, another higher psychological function, Vygotsky (1996) affirms that it enables a quality difference in the relation of the subject to the world that surrounds him, for both people and things. Of all the symbolic systems, it is the most complex, since it involves an apparatus of signs and a great system of linguistic signs, enlarging the forms of acting and the relations. In this way, it is necessary to emphasize that the comprehension of the language is very important because it makes the human to use it on an active and more complex form.
The demands of society show need for subjects to be more proficient in reading and writing. It can be said that written language allows people new and complex possibilities of communication, inclusion and social insertion. The search for ways is a commitment to be assumed with the students who have a difficult trajectory in this process. In this way, one can think of music to develop reading and writing learning, considering it a practice with the potential to motivate approach and involve students with literacy practices.

II. Possible Links Between Music, Written Language and Pedagogical Work

Following there are some considerations related to the review of the literature that seeks studies that can help in understanding what is researched and related to music as a potential for the development of written language. The review made it possible to reflect on the object of study, in addition to assisting in the initial planning of the present research. The following databases were used: the BDTD (Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações); the CAPES Journal Portal (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior); and SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online). At first, the choice of works was made based on their titles; in a second phase, the abstracts were read; and, finally, reading the texts in full. Thus, 12 (twelve) works were selected for the referred study.

From the detailed reading of each research, it was possible to build two categories in which ways of approaching music in pedagogical work are discussed: research that discuss music as a language (discursive perspective) and research that discusses music as a pedagogical resource. The first category, “research that discusses music as a language”, is anchored in five researchers: Sousa (2012); Fernandes (2014); Araújo (2012); Drago (2012); and, Dietzsch (2004). All of them bring evidence of a promising articulation between music and language, both oral and written, bringing concrete possibilities for expanding situations of language use and enriching the forms of appropriation of the mother tongue.

Through varied strategies, the researchers demonstrated that the use of the song lyrics genre contributed to the development of written text and expressiveness. Through song lyrics, both by renowned composers, as well as composers of songs representing specific cultures, such as rap (Fernandes, 2014), there was an “intimate relationship with the language to the point of recognizing it. In any communicative situations” (Sousa, 2012, p. 11), bringing, as a consequence, a qualitative gain, both in terms of involvement with language use practices, as well as in relation to the understanding of “language in use and the effects of meaning created by the utterances and utterances materialized in the speeches” (Fernandes, 2014, p. 123).

Other research highlighted the power of the articulation of music with literature, both in the context of the discursive genre Tertúlia (Araújo, 2012), as well as with literary texts explored in other contexts, using different languages, such as painting, photography, and theater. (Drago, 2012; Dietzsch, 2004), to enhance the uses of writing and orality, interesting and motivating students to express themselves in different ways, constituting a way to use language in a meaningful and more elaborate way, in addition, to bring possibilities for reframing teaching practices.

The second category, “research that discuss music as a pedagogical resource”, was composed of seven searches: Eugênio, Escalda and Lemos (2012); Honorário Filho (2001); Monteiro and Mandrillo (2007); Correia (2010); Tizioto (2013); Bruning (2012); and Barros, Zanella and Araújo-Jorge (2013).

Four of the seven authors in this category (Eugênio, et.al., 2012; Honorário Filho, 2001; Monteiro and Mandrillo, 2007; Correia, 2010) are literature reviews, which mapped investigations that explored the influences of music for the development of language skills, both written and oral. They emphasized that the use of music as a strategy for teaching the mother tongue involves students, promotes more creative attitudes, enhances the imagination, aesthetic development, streamlining the teaching process.

The three field surveys (Tizioto, 2013; Bruning, 2012; Barros et. al., 2013) explored the use of music and its lyrics as a literacy practice, as subsidies for text production and as a strategy for diversifying and enriching classes, promoting methodological innovation. In summary, the 12 surveys made it possible to verify possibilities of exploring music in the teaching practices of the mother tongue, providing approximations of students with literacy practices, enhancing situations of language use and, consequently, promoting linguistic development, in addition to expanding the repertoire artistic, aesthetic and cultural. Also, studies have indicated that music can be a strong ally for the development of other higher psychological functions such as imagination, memory and critical thinking.

It is important to note that the works of Bruning (2012), Drago (2012), Araújo (2012) and Barros et. al (2013) are anchored in cultural-historical theory and emphasize music as a language, as a discourse, as a cultural artifact that can promote the insertion of children in the literate world. Thus, such studies enabled theoretical and practical reflection for the development of this research, serving as inspiration for the planning of interventions, theoretical foundations and data discussion. We emphasize that the studies cited, even involving different participants, brought relevant contributions to the design of the research presented here. The research carried out by Araújo (2012) and

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Drago (2012) were developed with students from the first-grade of Elementary School, although Drago has carried out a case study with a child with Down Syndrome in the class. Barros et. al (2013) and Bruning (2012) developed their investigations with teachers. Our research had seven students from the fourth year of elementary school as participants.

### III. Musical Language

According to Silvia Cordeiro Nassif Schroeder (2007), based on historical-cultural psychology, music can be characterized as a form of language, because it produces meaning, it is the product of a culture and relates to aspects of human life. For Almeida (2005), music and language are fields of knowledge, present in human cultures as social and historical fact; regions of meaning and personal identification (some like religious music and others do not), and instrument of communication. Music and language were configured as practices that were related to each other all the time. However, it is necessary to emphasize that music is seen, in this context, not in its specific aspect of musical writing, but as a form of communication, because it carries signs with meanings that are related in the social context in which they are inserted, being multiple, singular and collectives.

The working with signs is important for the development of higher psychological functions, especially written language; it is observed that there is a semiotic character in music, just as in speech and writing. In this way, music, speech, and writing have aspects of communication that involve meaning. In addition to considering music as a language, it is also considered a mediating resource, that is, a pedagogical resource able to problematize specific knowledge of the language. Music provides the necessary context for the study of language, assisting in the development of language and the process of literacy of students when valuing aspects of culture. The use of music in school for literacy enables the student to operate in another field, the musical and social practices, seeking processes of meaning that relate to language skills. As an example, song lyrics can be considered a type of text from which to promote interpretation, reflection, and argumentation of their content, providing an environment in which the student can express something.

Music also affects people and can contribute to the emergence of motives for a specific doing, such as reading and writing. The different ways that music affects the subject allows the comprehension of oneself and the world. Also, music is linked to concrete social situations of human activity, mediated by instruments and communication through language. When organized to act in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1991) of students, it can potentiate development by contributing to the approximation of these with social practices in the field of reading and writing.

From the mediation of the music and the researchers of this work, it was thought to emerge feelings that allow students to advance in reading and writing, influencing cognitive development processes and, at the same time, enabling a relationship with cultural-historical knowledge.

### IV. Methodological Route – Research Design

It was a qualitative research, taking into account the following characteristics announced by Bogdan and Biklen (1994): a) it was developed in direct contact between the researchers and the researched environment, in which the latter is the direct source of data from which empirical material is produced; b) explored the detailed description of the data, which are presented in words or images, taking into account as much as possible of the reality experienced in its minutiae; c) emphasis on the process experienced during the investigation; d) observation of data made in an inductive and interpretative way; e) emphasis on the production of the meanings attributed by the subjects to different situations, making it necessary to consider the students' perspective, in order to have a rigorous record of what was produced.

It was an intervention research, in which intervention and investigation happen simultaneously when the researchers intervenes in the process, seeking to promote changes in the learning of the students involved. Such changes are not immediate, but they are due to the relationship between theory and practice and also between subject and object. The choice for this type of research is based on Rocha and Aguiar (2003). For these authors, the intervention research (PI) is a type of participatory research (PP). The PP is concerned with the role of the researcher in the investigated situation and its relationship, which needs to be trustworthy with the researched. As a subcategory of PP, IP "busca acompanhar o cotidiano das práticas, criando um campo de problematização para que o sentido possa ser extraído das tradições e das formas estabelecidas, instaurando tensão entre representação e expressão, o que facilita novos modos de subjetivação" (Rocha; Aguiar, 2003, p. 66).

According to Szymanski and Cury (2004, p. 359), intervention is a term “conhecido pelo seu sentido autoritário e impeditivo de livre expressão”³, that is,

2 "seeks to follow the daily practices, creating a field of problematization so that meaning can be extracted from established traditions and forms, establishing tension between representation and expression, which provides new modes of subjectification” (Rocha; Aguiar, 2003, p. 66, researchers translation).

3 “known for its authoritarian and impeding sense of free expression” (Szymanski; Cury, 2004, p. 359, researchers translation)
interference. However, *interventio*, from Latin, means “estar entre, sobrevir, asistir”⁴ (Szymanski; Cury, 2004, p. 359). In this research, we assume this concept of intervention seeking to mediate the relationships that students can build between music and the understanding of the use of their mother tongue, as well as to create a relationship of trust with them.

The intervention research was established in Brazil by “movimento institucionalista francês, na década de 60, e o latino-americano nas décadas seguintes”⁵ (Rocha; Aguiar, 2003, p. 67). In the late 1930s, in the United States, Kurt Lewin presented the first field researches as a reaction to the prevailing paradigms in the social sciences (positivism), thus inaugurating a new form of articulation between theory and practice in sociological investigations. The researcher assumes himself present in the research process, influencing with concrete actions in reality, with reflections and evaluation of results.

Given the above, the design of this research was constructed based on Vygotsky's studies about the higher psychological functions development. All forms of language make up the set of higher psychological functions and constitute, when they develop, a promotion in people's relationship quality considering the world in which they are inserted. In this sense, the role of the school in the teaching of written language is considered to be very relevant and we seek to present, with this research, a way for such teaching process to be more productive, providing effective learning results in students. Thus, the chosen option was to articulate the written language with the music, aiming to investigate how music contributes to the development of specific knowledge about the written language in fourth-grade students of elementary school that presented important lags in the literacy process, with a view to enhancing it. To this end, there was a partnership with a public school located in the city of Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, which resulted in the appointment of 7 students enrolled in the fourth-grade of elementary school. They presented important gaps in the process of developing writing and reading skills and who therefore declared that they did not know read and write, or did not like to carry out activities that involved such procedures.

In order to achieve the proposed objective, the research included a methodological design that articulated interviews with the participating students’ teachers and with the management team. Observations in the participating students’ classrooms, analysis of the text production each one’s notebook. Also planning, execution recorded by video of the 22 intervention meetings, as well as conversations with the participating students before the start of the series of intervention meetings and after their completion. These procedures will be detailed later.

In view of the complexity of the investigated phenomenon, Vygotsky (1997, p. 47) offered theoretical support for the construction of the methodological path in dealing with higher psychological functions. For the author,

El método ha de ser adecuado al objeto que se estudia. La psicología infantil, […], no sabía enfocar adecuadamente el problema de los procesos superiores. Esto significa que carecía de método para su investigación. Es evidente que la particularidad de aquel proceso de modificación de la conducta, que denominamos desarrollo cultural, exige métodos y modos de investigación muy peculiares.⁶

Following this line, through half the categories of analysis of historical-dialectical materialism - work, historicity of two factors and the material character of human existence - seeks to investigate concrete events historically lived in a dialectical movement, assuming that it is a mediation that occurs to the transformation of the two involved.

In case of this investigation, the work's category, gave base for reflections on the activities carried out, we met with intervention. The historicity category based the look about the facts, seeking to capture to the movement of changes in conducting two participants in relation to reading and writing practices. The category material character of human existence, enabled reflections about built production modes, defining new bases for the relationships between students with written learning and with reading and writing practices. Therefore, this research was based on the theoretical-methodological principles assumed or Vygotskyan presumption that “la conducta sólo puede ser comprendida como historia de la conducta”⁷ (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 68).

Now it is time to detail information about the participants and the procedures for the production of empirical material.

V. Participants

There are seven students participating in the research and the management team appointed them. All of them gave their previous consent, together with the parents’ authorization to participate in the research.

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⁴ “to be between, to survive, to watch” (Szymanski; Cury, 2004, p. 359, researchers translation)
⁵ “French institutionalist movement, in the 60s, and the Latin American movement in the following decades” (Rocha; Aguiar, 2003, p. 67, researchers translation)
⁶ “The method must be appropriate to the object under study. Child psychology, […], did not know how to adequately approach the problem of higher processes. This means that he lacked a method for his research. It is evident that the particularity of that process of behavior modification, which we call cultural development, requires very peculiar methods and modes of investigation” (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 47, researchers translation).
⁷ “behavior can only be understood as a history of behavior” (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 68, researchers translation).
The student João, according to the coordinator, had a very slow evolution for a child who was in the fourth-grade, despite having participated in all the reinforcements offered by the school. He also informed that he was a child who liked to talk to draw attention, also he was aggressive, not performing the activities proposed, showing no interest. Due to these behaviors, he had to change classes during the school year. His teachers also characterized him as a restless child who refused to do some of the activities. During observation in the classroom, the activity proposed by the teacher was the writing of a poem so that students, in groups, could introduce themselves to colleagues in other rooms. João did not participate in this activity; he stayed in the classroom instead of accompanying his group. However, he wrote the poem and the researchers had the opportunity to read it.

Isabela, according to the coordinator, entered the school at third grade without being literate. In the analysis of Isabela's notebook, it was possible to verify that she wrote in cursive letters, but used random letters that are not related to the dictated word. According to the coordinator, the student participated in all reinforcements, but there was no improvement. She explained that Isabela presented a complicated picture in relation to her learning and personal hygiene, which caused everyone to get distant from her. Her teacher mentioned this aspect as well. During the observation period, before the intervention meetings start, we witnessed a moment when Isabela laughed a lot and one of the classmates said, "Teacher, what is happening to Isabela?" In addition, another colleague replied, "What she has is retardation". It was possible to observe, in the classroom, that Isabela did an activity different from the other children. Her teacher informed that Isabela was unable to accompany the other colleagues and, therefore, passed other simpler activities to her.

Emanuel, according to the coordinator, was expelled from a school for being aggressive. He entered the middle of the 1st grade at the school where this research took place. He was literate, but he refused to make text productions more and more - proof of this is that, on the day of the class council, there were no productions in Emanuel's notebook to be evaluated. The coordinator explained that he was a very intelligent child, but had no interest in doing the activities. She also mentioned that he did not socialize and the children turned away from him because of his apathy – she said: "he doesn't even like music (...) the children turn away from him because he doesn't react to anything". The fact that Emanuel did not socialize was clear during the observation. He showed himself to be a quiet child, sitting at his desk and not even looking sideways.

Kaique entered the school in the 2nd grade and became literate in the fourth-grade. The text production notebook confirmed this information. Although the word list writing, it was clear that Kaique did not produce other types of text. In the coordinator's words: "He even pays attention, he does all the activities (...) and does everything with effort, he wants to learn (...) But he has a giant block (...)" Kaique's teacher confirmed that he is a student with great difficulty.

The student Jonas failed the 3rd grade and showed no progress. In the fourth-grade, although literate, he only copied things from the blackboard and refused to do activities when he was not interested to. According to the teacher he does not read or write alone, always needing mediation. This is confirmed in the initial observation in the classroom when the researcher sits next to the student to help him in an activity that almost all the children were already in the end of and he had not even started. When the researcher says "Are we going to read what you need to do in this activity?", He replies "but I can't read". In the initial conversation with the student, some of his speeches that call attention are: "I never know how to do it (...) I don't know how to write (...) I don't know how to read (...) I get distracted (...) it is very difficult"

Cláudia failed in the 3rd grade, and her writing did not progress. Likewise, in the fourth-grade there was no progress. In the coordinator's statements: "She doesn't produce. She went through all the reinforcements offered by the school." Cláudia's teacher informs that she has difficulties to read: "Cláudia doesn't read at all (...) When reading is silent (...) she only sees the images, she doesn't even try to read, she passes by. "She doesn't write either (...) she copies." This is confirmed in the classroom observation, when the researchers find, when reading the text written by Cláudia, in her notebook, isolated phrases and words copied from different places in the classroom. In a reading activity, it was possible to observe that Cláudia did not choose a book to read, but took the opportunity to organize the class's box book during all the time available for reading. In the initial conversation with Cláudia, some of her speeches were: "it is very difficult. (...) I'm like, (...) afraid (...) because I'm very slow (...) I don't want to make mistakes, you know? (...) I cannot".

Raissa entered school in the 3rd grade. In the coordinator's words: "She can write, her texts are long, but the lyrics sometimes end up making her writing unreadable (...) she also changes some letters and refuses to do any activity she has to read (...) She can read, but she doesn't like it." In the initial conversation with the student, she says: "I have a lot of writing errors (...) and sometimes I forget the punctuation". In Raissa's written production notebook, it is possible to observe a writing that is really difficult to read, as its outline does not contribute to this.

The students group and the researchers met once or twice a week during the class period. They participated in specially planned activities, aiming to explore specificities related to the functioning of the
written mother tongue, having as main theme several songs chosen both by the researchers as well as by the students, from the moment they started to get involved with this literacy practice (listening, singing, reading and interpreting music). During an academic semester, 22 meetings took place, in spaces that varied according to the availability of use and material resources. The locations used were the computer lab and the art studio, the coordination room or a classroom that was unoccupied in the afternoon.

The computer lab and the art studio were the most used rooms, as they had a multimedia projector - which allowed the slides and the songs video clips to be presented and speakers, which made it possible to amplify the songs used, as well as the songs sang by the researchers. In the art studio had been musical instruments, which not only involved children in a musical environment but also enabled the researchers to use more resources for activities. Others important resources, like a blackboard and a large table that accommodated all students, allowed interaction among them.

These locations made it possible for the activities to be carried out in a richer way and in accordance with the researcher’s planning, in addition to allow greater contact between students. The coordinator’s room and the classroom were only used as a second option, when other activities took place in the rooms subsequently presented, as previously said; there was no specific place for the meetings. In these places, the space had reduced, children sat at common desks and tables and only one whiteboard was available.

A set of classes was planned for the intervention meetings. What guided the planning of these meetings were the songs and, based on these, it was defined which contents of the written language could be explored. The work produced from these songs, as a whole, involved exploring the lyrics of the song to enhance the reading and writing development, research about the authors of the songs, as well as the lyrics’ interpretation and specific linguistic content that the letters made it possible to explore.

VI. MUSIC AND WRITING: HOW THIS WORK WAS POSSIBLE

Based on the information obtained from each of the participating students, intervention meetings were planned to promote experiences with literacy activities and improve the use of written language that involves music, verifying whether it can contribute to the development of specific knowledge about the mother tongue.

There was a general structure for the referral of the interventions. Initially, a song was presented, played by one of the researchers or the children listened to the music and watched their clips; in the sequence, the children read the lyrics of the song and discussed the meaning.

The first song presented was Aquarela (Watercolor), composed by Toquinho and Vinícius de Moraes (1983). The work involved data on the life of the composers and other of their songs. After that, the goal was to explore what the children felt when listening to the song and its reading skills. It is important to emphasize that the lyrics contain many metaphors and, therefore, was proposed a collective rewriting activity of an excerpt from the song – chosen by children – about the meaning of the lyrics, besides the discussion and correction of this activity, to explore what each student needed to modify. There was also the “hangman game” for the children to reflect on the writing of the song title.

To continue exploring the meaning of the word Aquarela, there was a presentation of a video of the song Aquarela do Brasil (Watercolor of Brazil), composed by Ary Barroso (1939). The work involved the exploration and discussion of the lyrics of the song, its interpretation and the presentation of the life of the composer and the interpreter. After the presentation of the video, the students were also invited to express their feelings about Brazil. Drago (2012) inspired the emphasis that we attribute to the composer and the contextualization of the chosen music.

It could be observed that there was initial planning with certain songs and activities, but from the initial meetings, there was also a movement of the children to bring songs that they liked to be explored during the meetings. From that moment, the work was redesigned with these new songs. Song lyrics that favored the exploration of some specific content for the study of the language remained in full, the others were used as parodies, composed by the researchers and sung during different moments of the intervention meetings, with the specific objective of problematizing some related aspects to spelling.

It is necessary to mention the work with the last song brought by the children, which resulted in collective singing. This strategy was very important for the children’s involvement with reading practices and contributed to the following meetings, in which the proposal was the composition of a song. As a result, the children worked intensely with written production and, consequently, reading. Then, it was made a collective text with the students and their structuring in song lyrics, exploring rhymes. There was still a recording of the students and one of the researchers singing. Specifically, the work of musical composition performed by the children had as objective to mark the end of the activities. The musical creation was recorded on a CD, delivered to each student as a symbol of the encounters experienced during the semester.

All the work from these songs involved the exploration of the lyrics of the song to enhance the
development of reading and writing. An example of music as a resource involved activities in which reading and writing were used for the problematization, deciphering, and discussion of the alphabetical writing system, while the exploration of understanding and interpretation were used to work music as a language. Thus, music assumed as a resource and as a language permeated all discussions of this research, it is important to consider that both specificities are not split, since the use of music in these two ways was articulated all the time. Even when the song was an excuse to discuss the writing of a word in the orthography field, children not only participated in the discussion, but they copied and wrote the word extracted from the song, and sang, danced and discussed the lyrics of the song, assigning possible meanings.

From the initial observation of the classroom, which took place before the meetings, it was possible to identify students who did not participate, were not interested or remained silent in the classroom. After the meetings, it can be observed that the children began to re-signify their relationships with reading, writing and with their colleagues.

By using different works that articulate music as a resource and as a language, it was possible to notice that students who, before the meetings, did not participate began to do it more and more, suggesting, responding and risking. Students who were not interested or remained silent in the classroom began to show interest and to re-signify their relationships with reading, writing and their colleagues, demonstrating attitudes of help and collaboration that revealed feelings of greater self-confidence. As an example, the students initially did the letter recognition, proceeding to the combination of them to produce sounds that made it possible for them to read. In the process, they helped each other and progressively acquired security to read alone:

(Researcher) And now? Shall we try to read together here? (Cláudia, while the researcher speaks, makes many negative signs with her head and performs body movements trying to hide with her cold shirt).

(John) Teacher, Cláudia doesn’t know how to read.

(Researcher) But we’re here to learn, aren’t we?

(Jonas) Teacher, I can’t read and I can’t write.

(Researcher) Then we will read together.

(Isabella starts to read in a low voice) Go ... go ... flying ... con tou ring... a huge ... line ...

(Researcher) It went from north to south. João, then what?

(John) Oh no.

(Isabela) Can I read the last one?

(Researcher) Yes.

(Isabela) I paint a... whi... white... sss sailboat...

(John) Sailing ... There’s so much of the sky and sea’s immensity in a blue kiss.

(Researcher) That’s it João.

(When the activity is almost over, Isabela asks to finish reading)

(Isabela) Teacher, I’m going to read the last one (…)

(Kaique) I want to read the ending.

(Students start to discuss who will read).

(Researcher) Let’s divide. Let’s start with Raissa. Come on, Raissa.

(Raissa singing) I draw on any sheet.

(Emanuel) In a sheet of paper I draw... (…)

(Researcher) Shall we try to read something Cláudia?

(Cláudia makes a negative sign with her head).

(Researcher) Do you know any of those lyrics there?

(Pointing to the slide).

(Cláudia remains silent)

(Researcher) For example, what are the letters of the first word in the third sentence?

(Cláudia) A N D.

(Researcher) A N D! And then?

(Cláudia) T H E.

(Research) Great! So you already read, AND THE ... and then, what is written?

(Cláudia is silent)

(Researcher) Isabela, are we going to help Cláudia?

(Cláudia) F U.

(Researcher) What forms F and U?

(Isabela) F U.

(Researcher) That, and the future ...

(Emanuel gets up from his seat and goes to his bag, takes a ruler and goes to the slide of power point, indicating the letter that his colleague has to read with his ruler) Wait a minute. I had a teacher idea (Emanuel keeps pointing with his ruler what Cláudia needs to read (…)

Even though, Cláudia signaled that she did not want to read and Isabela explained that she did not know how to read, it is observed in this section that the dynamics that organized the intervention meetings brought a new condition to promote the production and participation of students. Students who did not read, who did not like to read or who did not understand what they read began to want reading and raise hypotheses for their meanings. Small movements of changes in children’s relations with reading were beginning to be identified. More active children, more participants wanting to take risks, wanting to read and, even more, looking for ways to help each other.

Another clipping evidence that students being attentive to the orthographic issues during writing times, taking as the main memory aid the parodies built by the researchers during the meetings:

(Emmanuel) Teacher, before P and B there is always M. Before P and B (she speaks emphasizing the words). As is G, it is N (the reference word was SINGING).

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8 In Portuguese, this is a spelling rule that does not vary.
Another participant starts spell the word LAMP.

Cláudia says L A, L A, L-N, P, P...

Researcher asks L-A-N?

Cláudia responds A-N.

Emanuel asks Why is N? What letter comes next?

João says Ahhhh, now I understand!

Cláudia thinks and answers Emanuel's question P. Emanuel asks P, So, why is N?

Cláudia and Emanuel sing Before P and B always comes M.

Emanuel asks Do you understand? LAMP!

Cláudia responds LAMP.

Emanuel says It's easy, right? (...)

Emanuel continues to help Cláudia during the whole activity) (... Hey teacher, Cláudia is already getting better, look.

Researcher says Very cool! It is because of your help. Really cool!

Emanuel speaking to another participant – Kaique: Kaique, would you like a tip? When you confuse a letter, you stop (...). Emanuel thinks a little, and then continue. Kaique, do you want a tip? If you sing the song very slowly you will understand. Emanuel sings the parody constructed by the researchers, “Before the P and the B always comes the M and after the Q always comes the U, uh, uh...” 9

There was, therefore, a class movement to participate and give an opinion on the construction of the writing of the words, becoming conscience of normative aspects of the language. The interesting thing here is that Emanuel who realizes that music works as an auxiliary memory resource remembers the parody created by the researchers for the exploration of an orthographic standard. Once again, the help movement appears. Emanuel socializes the discovery with Kaique.

The information from the coordinator and the teachers about the aggressive behavior of Emanuel and João was not confirmed during the intervention meetings. Based on the clippings presented, Emanuel is always very attentive to the needs of other colleagues and always tries to help. Regarding João it is possible to identify that he had, during our interventions, a considerably good development, after all, shown to have progressed in his learning. Likewise, in the interventions, proved an uninhibited child, who exposed his views and doubts, participatory, interested and concerned about his colleagues, helping them.

An example of an episode in which João shows himself to be participative, was when looking for differences between the use of the possessive pronouns SEU (your) and TEU (there is no correspondence in English) in the lyrics of a particular song. In Portuguese, the possessive pronoun VOCE (you) and the possessive pronoun TU (in this case, there is no correspondence in English). João rose from his place and, as he pointed out the differences he found, anda wrote de letter song in two ways, like this 10:

From the lyrics of the songs, João advanced in understanding the functioning of written language and some formal aspects of language use. He improved the relationships between sounds and letters, appropriated some orthographic rules, as well as ways of putting himself in written speech.

We can infer from the analysis of the empirical material that João was overcoming some of his difficulties concerning writing and reading. It was observed in the episodes presented that João always asked to read the lyrics of the songs during the meetings. We may consider that João approached reading and writing practices and appropriated important language skills. These aspects are confirmed in the final conversation with him after the closing of the intervention meetings:

(Researcher) João, what do you remember about our activities?

(John) We sang a song, made our CD, learned to read and write... write fast.

(Researcher) Quick? Why before you didn't write fast?

(John) No, I wrote slowly. I read, but I stopped at reading harder lyrics. I'm enjoying reading, writing and studying. (...) In addition, when we sing the song we learn fast.

9 The parody was based on the song Bang, by Brazilian singer Anitta. The students chose the music and to value what they brought, this music was turned into a parody. See full information at Forner, 2018, p. 141. Acess: http://tede.bibliotecadigital.puc-campinas.edu.br: 8080/jspui/handle/tede/1114

10 In Portuguese, possessive pronouns keep relationship with personal pronouns and in the written form: VOCE/SEU and TU/TEU.
João’s teacher confirms the student’s words in his final interview:

(João’s teacher) João had an evolution; I think he did improve. João, he had a serious problem like the one: he didn’t stop to think, he would answer anything to end it soon. Now he stops, he thinks, what am I going to do? What do I have to do? Improved reading, writing. It would be nice if I could go on because my fear now is to stop and regress, understand? If it were possible to continue, it would be perfect, because I think it worked very well. Before, he had a hard time, so he said, “Oh, I won’t do it ...” he would start to disguise, do something else, draw, play, anything not to do what he had a hard time. Not now, he has difficulty he will even succeed.

Thus, in the intervention meetings, João showed a different recognition of the school, when he said that he liked to study. He was available to help colleagues, to read and to write whenever the researcher needed help, thus presenting a different attitude from the one found before the meetings. His teacher in the final interview praised this attitude of helping colleagues when she says that João and his colleague had a much larger contact: “one helps the other (...) and it really helps”.

João also helps the researcher. As in the episode in which he asks to write on the board and demonstrates that he has learned to mediate the discussion of how words are written, helping colleagues to reflect and then writing the word on the board.

Another important aspect to highlight is that João began to reread what he wrote, being receptive to the researcher’s request, starting a self-correction movement. He also demonstrated to have understood the orthographic aspects worked. Although in the written production these questions have not yet been consolidated, it shows that the knowledge produced by João is in the development process and they, therefore, need successive mediations to become real development indeed (Vygotsky, 1996; 2010). Continuation of work such as that presented in this research would be necessary.

The experiences lived in the meetings enabled important learning. We consider that the meetings promoted João’s rapprochement with reading and writing practices, affecting him positively.

In the final observation, in the classroom, it was possible to confirm the aspects pointed out by João and his teacher: João was in a pair with his colleague and was helping her. He wrote his text with interest and concern, and there was an evolution in the spelling aspects. Few words were written outside the convention, and when asked by the researcher to read them again, João quickly identified the errors and corrected them in his notebook.

Therefore, from the mediation process in the classroom, we observed significant changes in children’s behavior and learning. In addition to the development of reading and writing practices, it is worth mentioning the moments when Isabela called the attention of colleagues to pay attention to what the researcher said. She assumed the role of mediator in several situations. The moments when Emanuel applied to read, write and help his friends, and the moment when Jonas was volunteered to create the cover of the class CD, making a drawing representing all the children who participated in the meetings and the researcher. This drawing can show how much Jonas was motivated to help in the realization of this collective CD project, as well as showing that the student was feeling belonging to the group. We observed, therefore, the creation of an affective positive bond of proximity between all.

Image 2: CD cover by student Jonas

The interventions carried out at each meeting promoted discussions and problematizations about the functioning of written language, based on the lyrics of the songs. Situations were experienced, which as evidenced by Sousa (2012), promoted the contextualization of the written language, allowing children to understand what they were reading, refining their ideas, extending the use of linguistic resources, and advancing their understanding of the functioning of the Alphabetic Writing System, especially in spelling. The activities explored the reflection on the language and the possibilities of text production. The children could perceive themselves as active subjects of the teaching-learning process, to develop different forms of expression. In addition, research may arouse student interest, as Dietzsch (2004) has already pointed out, by reading and writing through music in the classroom.
VII. Conclusion

The research confirms that the mediation processes, in an intentional and planned way, considering students’ needs, their doubts, their experiences and encouraging them to engage in interesting reading and writing practices, is fundamental for the internalization of a set of behaviors and more elaborate psychic processes. Considering music as a specific area of knowledge that enables the involvement of the sense of aesthetics, of the specific textual genre, of enjoyment (pleasure of listening to it), it is possible to assume it as a sociocultural practice that enhances students’ interest in written culture. The possibilities promoted by the use of music, specifically from the song lyrics, allowed the accomplishment of a contextualized study of the written language and the use of different strategies to carry out the activities. Also the functional use writing to remember, as well as the group discussion involving problematizations on the themes for the construction of knowledge collectively. All this experience possibilit the appreciation of the comprehension and meaning attributed to the activities by the children, the valorization of their writings and their own reflections for correction.

Music, when related to social practices, as a semiotic system, acts and enable the development of higher psychological functions, being recognized as a form of language that communicates and presents the potential for the development of reading and writing skills of the human.

Thinking about the diversification of pedagogical practices that explore the functioning and use of language in different contexts promotes possibilities that are more fruitful for bringing students closer to reading and writing practices. Such an approach contributes to the processes of linguistic analysis and reflection to happen in a more significant way, creating the need to know and be concerned with the rules that govern the writing system in any language. Searching for ways that students’ access to linguistic knowledge is guaranteed is a way of enabling education for citizenship. To be competent in the uses of the mother tongue is to establish a qualitatively more complex relationship with people, with the world around them and with themselves. It is developing more and more superior psychological functions.

The articulation of written language with other forms of language, such as music, certainly offers many reasons to read and write, involving students in a symbolic, creative and imaginative context, which are the basis for the transfer of meanings and senses to the written language, whatever the mother language.

Finally, the influence of the music and the mediation of the researchers were characterized as important factors to the children’s learning, contributing to the literacy process. The research presented, for the educational field, a favorable scenario of reflection on a significant and engaging work with the written language, aiming at the development of the students, expanding their language skills and contributing to the discussions in the scope of teacher training and practices pedagogical approaches to literacy.

References Références Referencias

Reflections on the use of Musical Language to Help Promote Fourth-Grade Children's Writing Skills - A Case Study from Brazil


