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VOCAL EXPRESSION IN EARLY YEAR EDUCATION: A DIDACTIC EXPERIENCE WITH THE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF ZARAGOZA

WOKALNA EKSPRESJA WE WCZESNYCH LATACH NAUCZANIA: DYDAKTYCZNY EKSPERYMENT Z UDZIAŁEM STUDENTÓW UNIWERSYTETU W SARAGOSSIE

Abstract

This project is about an educational intervention with the early year student teachers in the University of Zaragoza. Through the voice and songs we find tools to develop different learning in a global and interdisciplinary way. New strategies are established to develop competence for learning acquisition using active and collaborative methodologies and taking in account the diversity of the students. In the process of this study participate students trained to be Early year teachers and professors from different areas in the Education faculty of the University of Zaragoza (Spain). The song will be used to stimulate emotions, develop sensibility, memory and imagination. Our principal objective with the course *Musical expression development* will be to transmit the 3rd year students the importance of the voice and songs as a way of expression in the learning process through a global and interdisciplinary approach. The results show the students lack of music knowledge, the importance of a good material selection and the change on the participant attitudes when they understand this process, as a positive experience.

Key words: vocal expression, song, early year education, interdisciplinary.

Streszczenie

Artykuł ten prezentuje edukacyjny eksperyment zrealizowany ze studentami Uniwersytetu w Saragossie. Muzyka stanowi narzędzie do rozwijania różnych typów uczenia się w sposób ogólny i interdyscyplinary. Biorąc pod uwagę różnorodność studentów, ustanowiono nowe strategie dla rozwijania umiejętności uczenia się, używając metodologii współpracy. W badaniu brali udział studenci kierunku edukacji wczesnoszkolnej oraz profesorowie różnych dziedzin edukacji, pracujący na Uniwersytecie w Saragossie (Hiszpania). Muzyka została użyta, aby stymulować emocje, rozwinąć wrażliwość, pamięć i wyobraźnię. Głównym celem było uświadomienie studentom, jak ważne są głos i muzyka jako drogi ekspresji w procesie uczenia w ujęciu ogólnym i interdyscyplinarnym. Wyniki ukazują braki w wiedzy studentów w zakresie muzyki, a także przybliżają zmiany w podejściu uczestników do projektu, gdy zrozumieli, na czym on polega.

Słowa kluczowe: ekspresja wokalna, muzyka, edukacja wczesnoszkolna, interdyscyplinarność.

Introduction

The voice is the most perfect and beautiful instrument that exist. Different recognized musicians such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner who dedicated their live to music productions, agree with this statement about human voice. The voice is the most valuable way of communication through which people transmit feelings and emotions and interact with each other.

Different curricula designs give especial importance to the correct use of voice as a way of communication. The voice and songs are usually used in the learning process for the different areas in the Early year education.

Children use songs spontaneously in their daily games. Different researchers such as C. P. Mizener, establish how students enjoy songs in the school¹.

Following this pedagogy idea, we want to transmit the importance of singing and working with songs in the schools through activities that develop vocal expression and taken from different perspectives.

Through music and especially through songs different learning areas can be developed. Several pedagogies agree on the idea in education “through” and “with” music.

Moreover as Vila² said, the music never comes empty of meanings. In this way, it should be logical to choose music as a cultural element to identify our selves, especially in our classrooms where we can find a big diversity in our students.

There is not any culture that does not have a traditional music repertory using human voice, sometimes it is solo or sometimes chorus, sometimes accompanied with dances or certain religious rites. Voice it is not only the first instrument for humans, but also the main instrument that almost everybody possesses and is able to use it at different levels.

J.R. Muñoz³ states: “Through singing feelings and emotions are expressed and it encourages disinhibition, integration, and generosity. Agosti-Cherban and Rapss-Hess (1988) highlight singing as [...] one of the first and easiest ways of collective music. It means to share something loved”.

1. Objectives

The principal objective of this project was for the 3rd year students taking *Musical expression development* to understand the importance of voice and

¹ C.P. Mizener, *Attitudes of children toward singing and choir participation and assessed singing skill*, “Journal of Research in Music Education” 1993, no. 41(3), pp. 233–245.

² S. Carabetta, *Educación Musical y diversidad*. “Eufonía Didáctica de la Música” 2011, no. 53, pp. 15–24.

³ J.R. Muñoz, *La voz y el canto en Educación Infantil*, “Eufonía Didáctica de la Música”, Barcelona 2001, no. 23.

songs as a way of expression in the learning process from a global and interdisciplinary approach.

It is important to consider that the legislation of Spanish education defines music in Early year education as integrated in the area of *language* knowledge: *Communication and representation*, as language art (music and arts).

The basic contents which refer to language arts are presented below:

- Voice and body exploration. Exploration of the familiar surroundings and basic musical instruments to produce sounds and rhythms, showing confidence in the personal possibilities.
- Sound and perception discrimination: noise-silence, loud-soft, high-low...
- Progressive participation in drama and dance activities, as well as other games that use music as a vehicle for self expression.
- Recognition and interpretation of certain simple songs.
- Interest for the local folklore.

2. Methodology and instruments for data collection

The principal objective was for develop in the students an understanding of the importance of voice and songs as a way of expression in the learning process from a global and interdisciplinary approach.

The Project was developed in three steps:

- In the first stage a questionnaire was elaborated with the purpose of examining the students' musical knowledge. They were students in the 3rd year of Early year teaching Education and they were taking a mandatory course, *Musical expression development*, during the second semester. This is a six credit course.
- In the second stage students gathered in small groups of four or five students. The students designed an educational music project understanding voice and songs as tools to acquire competences in different learning areas.
- In the third and last stage, students presented their projects.

3. Results

The data collected from the questionnaires showed that the students had a scarce musical knowledge. The questionnaires were applied to 100 students. Only 30% of them had specific musical studies and the other 70% had only musical knowledge provided from a general education. As we can observe in the graphic number 1, most of the musical studies from the 30% students with musical education were not official studies.

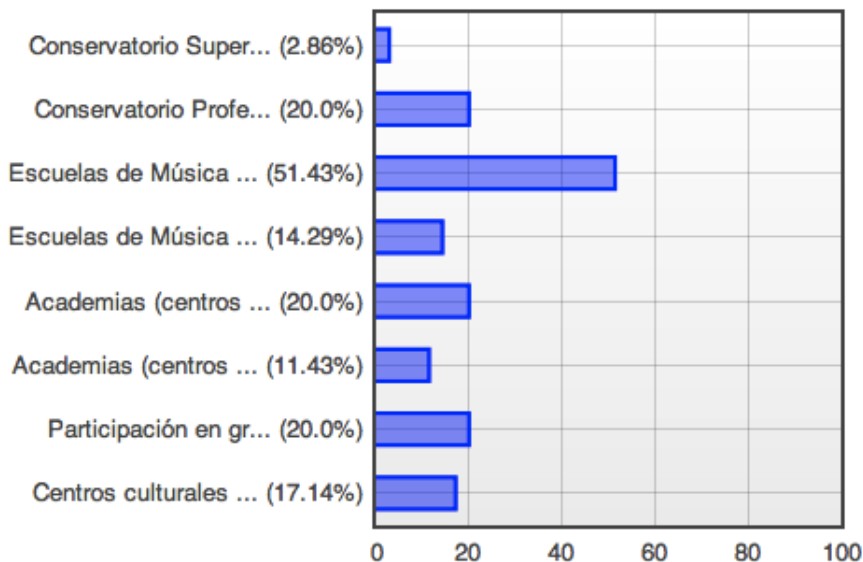


Figure 1

Moreover, as the results show the basic music language knowledge acquired in the elementary education are scarce. It is also important to point out that singing is the element that produces more difficulties from all the musical elements taught. This makes us reflex about the importance and relevance of this study.

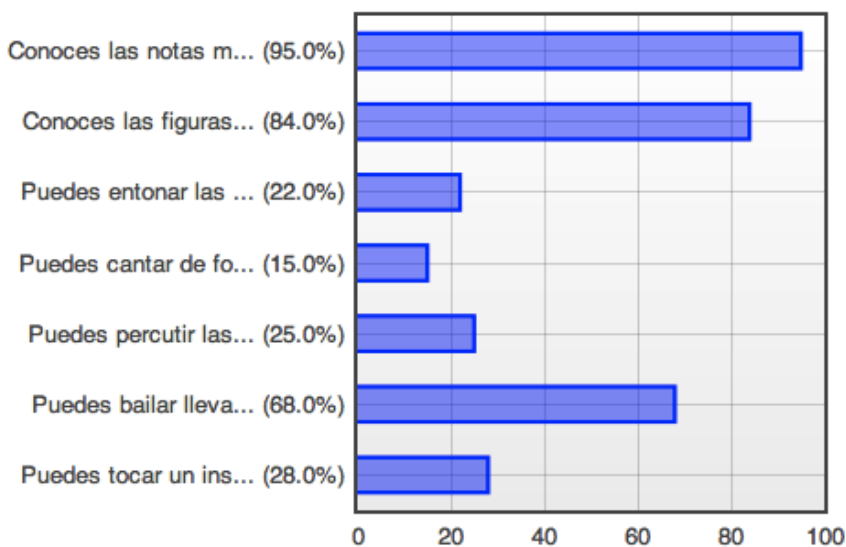


Figure 2

Another important data observed in this study was that only 29,7% of the students had had the experience to participate in any kind of musical group.

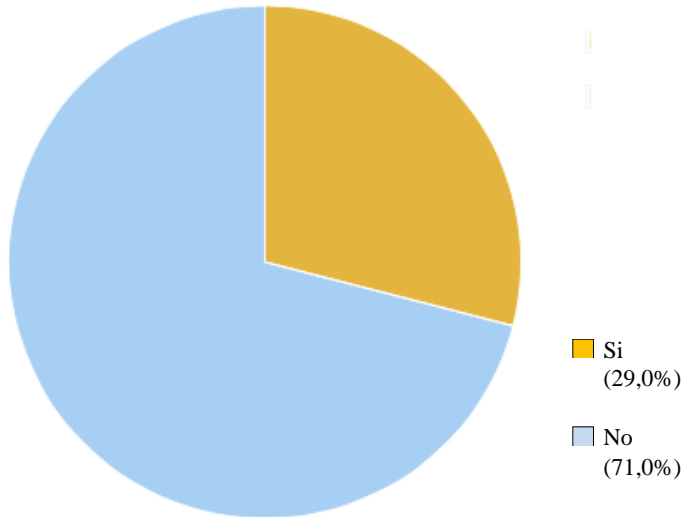


Figure 3

These experiences are classify in the following groups (graph number 4).

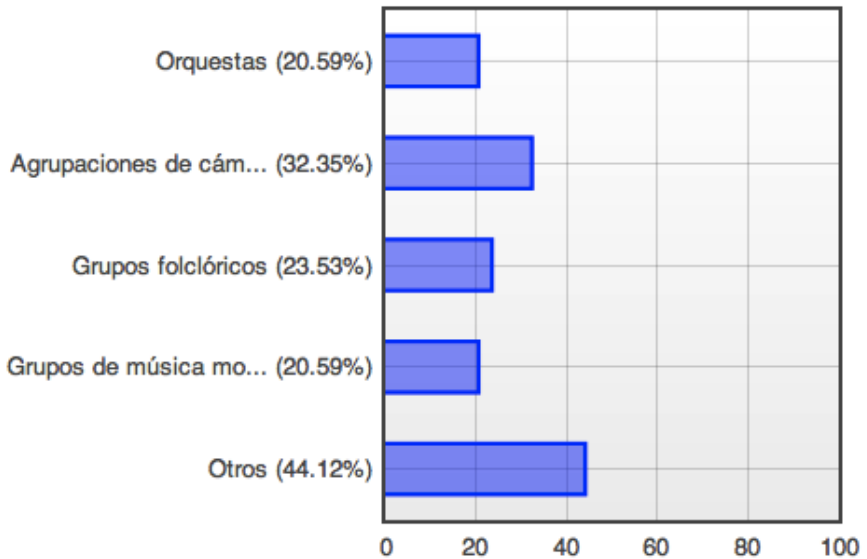


Figure 4

In the second stage, a total of 12 groups of students were created. The topics selected by the students are listed below with their project objectives and songs proposed:

N	TITLE	PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE	SONGS
1	Adventure in the space	To acquire space knowledge in a fun way.	La canción de los planetas (planets' song).
2	Ska in the classrooms	To express emotions and feelings through oral language and other kind of languages.	Noé
3	Songs to work with time	To know English vocabulary for the weather.	Good morning, There are seven days...
4	Farm animals	To discover and work with domestic and farm animals.	En la granja de pepito (Pepito's farm).
5	The two wolfs	To build up values and the emotional development in the child.	Érase una vez (Once upon a time). El reino al revés (Back-words kingdom).
6	Nanuk the Eskimo	To know the way of leaving of the Eskimos.	Nanuk
7	The Spring		La primavera, Vivaldi (The Spring, Vivaldi).
8	The animals' carnival	To develop the corporal structure through the movement.	El carnaval de los animales, Saint-Saëns. (The animals' carnival, Saint-Saëns)
9	The rainforest rythem	To know the animal in the rainforest and their habitat.	Canción de la selva (The rain forest song).
10	What is the weather today?	Differences among the four seasons.	Ha dicho el hombre del tiempo (the weather man said).
11	The magic flaut	Instrument recognition.	Fragmentos de la Flauta Mágica, Mozart. (Pieces of The magic flaut, Mozart).
12	Singing under the water	To work with the water cycle.	Danza de la lluvia (Rain dance).

In the third and last stage, the students after designing their projects, they presented them to their classmates.

Below we are going to present one of the projects developed by a group of five students with the objective of building up values and the emotional development in the children.

This project complied the basic competence established in the curriculum by the legislation.

The specific objectives established were:

- To identify and dramatize feelings and emotions through different kind of languages: verbal, gestures and musical.
- To show interest and love for music and dance as well as to progressively participate in musical activities.
- To reproduce and create basic sounds with the voice and body, discovering all their possibilities.
- To work with rhythm, beat, accent, form and structures and song characteristics.
- To know and develop the body structure through the use of different body perceptions.
- To express liberally sensations and emotions produced by songs.

The students initially propose a project which focuses on actions in artist and expressive situations.

The methodology proposed follows a global and interdisciplinary approach. It presents the students as active learners through a meaningful learning experience. The teacher will be sensitive and affective and use games as an essential tool in the learning process based on affect and confidence.

From here the students propose a set of activities using songs in which students become the main characters in their own learning process. Through these activities, students experiment music as well as learn to express their feelings and emotions developed in the objectives proposed.

Conclutions

It is established the lack of musical knowledge of the students in the 3rd year of Early year teaching Education. Due to this hole in the students' education, students did not felt able to use music, voice and songs, to develop their educative projects.

However, after working with vocal and physical confidence, a as well as an study and an analysis of the musical elements part of the songs, contributed to a better comprehension and confidence in the students using the voice and songs in their projects.

Finally, the students evaluated very positively the work developed and understood the necessity of using music in the Early year educations to acquire and develop different educative competences.

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