DIDACTIC STRATEGIES THAT COULD BE USED TO INCREASE PUPILS' INTEREST IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines the benefits of stimulating the naturalistic intelligence of primary school pupils during "Music and Movement" lessons. Recent studies have revealed that, at this age, primary school pupils are very interested in the life of animals and like to spend time in nature, which indicates that their naturalistic intelligence is well-developed. The purpose of our research is to establish how we can stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils to increase their interest in listening to classical music. The research involved 19 primary school students, aged 8 to 9 years old, enrolled in second grade. The study revealed that most of the second graders were happy to listen to masterpieces composed by W. A. Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, that are mentioned in the school curriculum of the discipline "Music and Movement". The most effective didactic approach was listening to the songs in the presence of pets or from videos where animals were filmed while enjoying listening to music. After viewing the videos, pupils were interested in finding out more information about the music that they were listening to. The results could not be generalized, but the article can stay at the base of future research in the field of Educational Sciences. The content of the article is useful for teachers who can use similar strategies during "Music and Movement" lessons in order to increase the interest of their pupils in classical music.

Keywords:

Music listening; Classical music; Music and Movement; naturalistic intelligence; lesson; positive climate.

INTRODUCTION

Primary school pupils from Romania are studying the discipline "Music and Movement". The main objective of this discipline is to form competencies related to basic acquisitions from the domain of music and movement. The discipline is situated at the intersection of the curricular areas "Arts" and "Physical Education, Sport, and Health". The teaching approaches of this discipline include music listening, which can contribute to the familiarization of pupils with the basic elements of music and the most known musical genres.

The association of music with movement is considered a natural way to learn at this age and contributes to the harmonious development of the pupils, with benefits regarding their physical and intellectual development, motor coordination, and aesthetic taste. The discipline encourages pupils to be actively engaged in the study of music, through holistic learning processes.

This research paper examines appropriate modalities to increase primary school pupils' interest in classical music. The benefits of listening to classical music are recognized by researchers from various domains. The school curriculum for the discipline "Music and Movement" (2013) encourages teachers to organize for second-graders, learning activities that include the following classical music masterpieces: W. A. Mozart - *5 Contradances*, K. 609, W.A. Mozart - *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, IV. Rondo: Allegro, Ludwig van Beethoven - the *Violin Concerto in D major*, op. 61. Rondo: Allegro. These musical pieces are suggested to be listened to generate positive learning experiences for primary school pupils. To increase the pupils' interest in listening to classical music, we have decided to create learning contexts based on stimulating their naturalistic intelligence. So the main research question that guided our research was: How we can use the naturalistic intelligence of our pupils to make them more interested in classical music? During our investigation, we tried to outline several effective didactic strategies that could be used to develop the children's interest in listening to classical music. In the school curriculum of the discipline "Music and Movement" (2013), we found just a few methodological suggestions regarding the stimulation of the naturalistic intelligence of children. We have used a didactic experiment to establish if is beneficial to stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils, during music listening. Based on the result of the didactic experiment, we have proposed educational recommendations that could be used by teachers in order to increase their pupils' interest in classical music.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Music listening could be combined with movement, which allows pupils to manifest expressively and naturally. "Music listening is broadly defined as an everyday life activity, in which children engage in different ways and contexts, for different purposes, and with different degrees of involvement" (Boal–Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001, p. 104).

At this age, musical concepts are taught at an elementary level. Both music and movement allow pupils to express their emotions. Examples of learning activities included in the school curriculum of this discipline (2013; 2015) are movement games organized during music listening (in pairs or individually), specific body movements, free movements generated by the music, or games generated by the audition. The didactic activities based on music listening should take into account the age particularities of the pupils. The pupils' attention is oriented to observe diverse aspects such as tempo (slow or rapid) or differentials of expressivity. Also, watching animated movies, musical and ballet shows, or fragments of concerts is considered beneficial. Pupils are encouraged to express their emotions and reactions generated by the songs and music auditions, through activities such as mime games (during which pupils use body language to render the expressivity of the songs that were listened to) or spontaneous movements generated by the sequences of lesson based on music listening. During the activities, pupils are encouraged to show their reactions generated by music listening, through words, body movement, or with the help of other objects (e.g. masks). Also, pupils are encouraged to imitate animal movements from various musical video clips that they are viewing during lessons. Another important aspect is related to encouraging pupils to express in a free and creative way their impressions and emotional estate (using both music and movement). Examples of classical music composers and masterpieces of the Classical music era mentioned in the school curriculum of the discipline "Music and Movement" (2013) are Leopold Mozart (*Toy Symphony*), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*Eine Kleine Nachtmusik; 5 Contradances*; *The Magic Flute*-Overture; *Rondo Alla Turca*), Franz Joseph Haydn (Symphony No. 101 *The Clock* Part II and Part IV), and Ludwig van Beethoven (*The Violin Concerto* in D major, op. 61. Rondo: Allegro).

In third and fourth grade the activities are more complex, but the ludic content of the activities is maintained. Some of the composers mentioned in the school curriculum of the discipline "Music of movement" for third and fourth grade (2015) are Georg Friedrich Handel (*Water Music Suite* No. 2 in D major), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*Eine kleine Nachtmusik; Symphony No. 41*), and Ludwig van Beethoven (*The Symphony No. 6* in F major, also known as the *Pastoral Symphony*; *Für Elise*; *Symphony No. 5*, Part. 1).

Music listening plays an important role in the teaching and learning processes. They allow the development of the competencies of the pupils through movement games, improvisation, and expressive manifestation of feelings. Listening to music contributes both to developing pupils' aesthetic taste and increases their interest in listening to music, playing with musical toys, or playing with real musical instruments.

Music listening could also stay at the base of the exercises of stimulating the divergent thinking of the pupils, taking into account the role of creativity in allowing them to authentically express their ideas and feelings (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017).

In the study of this discipline, the learning experiences in nonformal and informal contexts are also important. Based on effective cooperation with the families of the pupils, teachers can achieve educational objectives. Parents could be real partners in stimulating the pupils' interest in the study of music and also can encourage pupils to listen to appropriate age songs, musical pieces or to realize other musical activities that will develop their competencies. The "Music and Movement" lessons are realized in a positive learning climate, where the pupils are permanently encouraged to be creative and to make constant progress. The learning contexts encourage the development of their self-esteem and improve their self-image. Music is present in our life and the reasons for listening to it are various. At this age, an objective of listening to music could be developing the musical taste of the pupils. Music listening play also an important role in developing the musical hearing of the pupils, training their musical memory, and also for developing their rhythmic sense.

According to the school curriculum of the discipline "Music and Movement", music listening can stay at the base of organizing authentic learning contexts (2013). The study of this discipline during primary school has positive effects on developing sensibility, self-discipline, ability to concentrate, creativity, self-esteem, and the ability to positively interact with other peers or adults. "Employing music listening as a means to stimulate creativity has yet, remained relatively unexplored—despite earlier scientific studies demonstrating a beneficial effect of music on human cognition" (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017, p. 12).

According to Gardner (1999), naturalistic intelligence is the ability, to observe, understand, classify, and manipulate natural elements. "Individuals with high naturalistic intelligence show an inclination towards the natural world" (Sadiku, Ashaolu & Musa, 2020, p. 1). Persons with high naturalistic intelligence like to spend time in nature to observe natural phenomena and are interested in understanding and resolving problems related to the environment (Pancu, 2021). "The teaching-learning-assessment process viewed from the multiple intelligences theory’s perspective refers to the optimal structuring of the teaching and learning environment based on the proper identification of the instruction context. " (Orban & Bocoș, 2011). Primary

school pupils like to spend time in nature, take care of their pets, and be involved in experiments or gardening activities. At the beginning of primary school, pupils are very interested in these types of activities. "Attention should be paid especially to the stimulation of the naturalistic intelligence of the children, in order to ensure the success of the educational activities realized during the preparatory grade" (Marin, D.-C., & Bocoș, M., 2022). Also, the new technologies could be used with success to stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of primary school pupils.

Some of the activities that could be realized at the primary school level in order to stimulate both the naturalistic and musical intelligence of the pupils are:

- Listening to songs about natural phenomena, and the life of animals and plants;
- Organizing or viewing musical shows, where pupils play roles of animals, flowers, or various phenomena from nature, etc.
- Spending time in nature while listening to music or the sound from surroundings;
- Creating musical instruments by using materials from nature;
- Listening to music in the company of pets;
- Watching videos with animals etc. (Pancu, 2021).

Recent research has revealed that listening to classical music has positive effects on pupils' well-being. Classical music listening before the learning process has positive effects on pupils' performances (Cansu, Akbaba, Ergül, & Özçelik, 2020; Thompson, Schellenberg, & Husain, 2001). "Music, especially music without lyrics, tends to help people pay more attention to tasks that require concentration" (Mendes, Diniz, & Marques Miranda, 2021, p. 19).

The main benefits of listening to classical music are related to stress reduction, developing and enhancing creativity, good functioning of the brain, a high level of productivity of learning, creating a state of happiness in the classroom, increased attention, improved social relationships, and enhanced emotional life (Boal–Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001; Gurgen, 2016; ViglMiitta, Ojell-Järventausta, Helmi & Saarikallio, 2023; Thompson, Schellenberg, & Husain, 2001; Laukka & Quick, 2011; Lesiuk, 2005). "Researchers have noted the centrality of emotions in several cognitive processes relevant to school education, including learning, attention, memory, and decision-making" (ViglMiitta, Ojell-Järventausta, Helmi & Saarikallio, 2023, p. 3). Recent research revealed that music influences depend on a series of factors such as the mood of the pupils or their psychological characteristics (Gerstgrasser et al., 2022). In this context, "it may not be advisable to leave the students completely alone in selecting the music used. Instead, teachers could share general experiences with their students about the emotional effects of music and encourage them to create their playlists for

different purposes, such as one for more concentration, one for more creativity, or one for a better mood" (ViglMiitta, Ojell-Järventausta, Helmi & Saarikallio, 2023, p. 9).

MATERIALS AND METHODS (RESEARCH METHODOLOGY)

The study also aims to find an answer to the following question: It is beneficial to stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of the children during "Music and Movement" classes? 19 children enrolled in the second grade were involved in a didactic experiment, during which all the pupils of the class were invited to listen to classical music, using three types of videos: videos of the orchestra, videos with natural phenomena, flowers, or beautiful natural places, and videos with animals which react to music in different ways. The title of musical auditions that were selected to be listened by second-grade pupils are mentioned in the school curriculum for the discipline "Music and Movement" (2013). Thus, during the didactic experiment were used the following classical music masterpieces: W.A. Mozart - *5 Contradances*, K. 609, W.A. Mozart - *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, IV. Rondo: Allegro, Ludwig van Beethoven - the *Violin Concerto in D major*, op. 61. Rondo: Allegro. We were interested in establishing which one of them is preferred by primary school pupils. After viewing the videos, individual interviews were taken with the children in order to establish how often they listen to classical music and which of the videos they watched enjoyed more. They were also encouraged to express their ideas and feelings regarding the videos. The research question was related to establishing didactic strategies teachers should use in order to develop pupils' interest in listening to classical music. The research was conducted in the school year 2023-2024. All the aspects related to the deontology of the research were taken into account.

RESULTS

At the beginning of the research, the pupils were asked to establish how often they listen to classical music. 14 of them mentioned they rarely listen to this type of music, while 3 of them mentioned they often listen to classical music. Also, at the beginning of the didactic experiment, the teacher put pupils in the situation of selecting their preferred modality to listen to classical music, giving them some examples (e.g. watching videos with classical music from YouTube, listening to music, going to concerts or shows, etc.). All the pupils preferred to view concerts, mentioning they enjoy trips and visits. Asked which of the other variants they prefer, pupils have mentioned that they would like to view videos, more than simply listen to music. The children were asked to listen to classical music videos through 3 modalities: videos with an orchestra on a stage, videos with natural phenomena and stages from nature, and

videos that present animals' reactions when they are exposed to classical music. During interviews, 3 of the pupils mentioned that they enjoyed most the videos where were presented flowers, plants, or other natural phenomena, while 16 of them mentioned that they watched with pleasure the videos where animals react in a natural way to the music. None of the pupils mentioned that their favorite modality of listening to classical music is viewing videos with recitals of an orchestra.

During interviews, pupils mentioned that during "Music and Movement" lessons, they would like to see often videos with animals reacting to music or videos that represent various contexts from nature. Some of the pupils mentioned that they would like to listen to classical music in the company of their pets, to see if they react to this type of music. They mentioned that would be happy to listen to classical music in nature or together with pets that could be brought into the classroom (as birds). At the pupils' initiative, two parakeets were brought into the classroom and their reaction to music was observed. The birds were very attracted by the music, which made the pupils very happy and excited about their presence.

DISCUSSION

All the pupils involved in the didactic experiment were happy to investigate animals' reactions to music. The results obtained revealed that could be beneficial to stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils, during the "Music and Movement" lessons. The research results are useful for teachers and can stay at the base of effective lessons, meant to increase the interest of pupils in listening to classical music. We have not found similar research in the educational field. The limits of the research are related to the small number of participants involved in the research. Future research should be organized with a large number of pupils from all representative areas of Romania. Our research outlined the benefits of listening to classical music through videos especially conceived for pupils who have a high level of naturalistic intelligence (are attracted by natural elements and prefer to spend time observing nature or animals). Future research could establish if using the didactic strategies that were applied during the didactic experiment presented in this research paper will improve the musical skills of the pupils (which ones and to what extent), and the impact of listening to music through videos, containing images with nature elements, on the level of development of the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils. Thus, it could be useful to implement a research program based on systematic stimulation of the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils during "Music and Movement" lessons in order to analyze his effects. Great modalities to stimulate the second-grade pupils' interest in classical music could be participating in concerts listening or to listen classical music in the presence of pets, by observing their reactions to the music. Pupils were also interested in viewing videos of natural

phenomena and unique places from nature. The results obtained are valuable for primary school teachers. If pets cannot be brought into the classroom, in the online environment can be viewed a large number of videos with unexpected reactions of animals while they are listening to music. Some of the videos are based on music players-animal interactions. They are an excellent didactic pretext to teach information about the musical instruments used. Also, beautiful places from nature or novel phenomena from nature could be presented to primary school pupils, while they are listening to classical music. Since there are a large number of videos on YouTube regarding this topic, it could be useful to establish which of them could be used with success in "Music and Movement" lessons. Didactic materials could be conceived, which could help pupils develop their knowledge regarding the life of the composers, and musical instruments, or related to the topic of songs that were listened to. Also, outdoor activities that combine music listening with movement can be organized with success in order to stimulate the naturalistic intelligence of the pupils.

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