

Reactions of Early School Students to the Language of Music

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to draw attention to the essence of music education in grades I-III of primary school (early school education) and students' understanding of the language of music. Music is an important element in the life and development of children who willingly participate in musical games and activities. This type of activity is important because it stimulates not only musical skills, but also influences the comprehensive development of students. In order to determine whether children understand the language of music, direct, participant observation was carried out among pupils from grades I-III of primary school. Its aim was to identify students' reactions while participating in music workshops. The collected research material and its qualitative analysis allowed us to conclude that the language of music is understandable and attractive to students. Adding general development values, it should be postulated that music education should be a permanent, everyday element of school education.

Keywords: Music, early school education, forms of musical activity, language of music.

Introduction

Music is ubiquitous in a child's life and accompanies him from the prenatal period. By influencing emotions, it evokes various moods and feelings, is a source of emotion, calms down, calms down, emboldens, stimulates and motivates to act (Watoła, 2008, p. 80). The aim of the article is to emphasize that the language of music is universal, it gives the possibility of full activity and expression of spontaneity for children with different levels of development of musical talents (Kwiatowska, Topińska, 1977, p. 353). The observation method was used for research purposes. This method was used to recognize the behavior and reactions of students of grades I-III of primary school to various forms of musical activity, and thus to the

language of music. Early childhood education students were deliberately selected because children aged 7–9 are very susceptible to artistic education in this area and willingly participate in all forms of musical activity. In addition, there is an intensive development of musical abilities and an attitude towards music is formed (Kisiel 2005, p. 29; Nogaj, 2017, pp. 9–17). Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students willingly take part in music workshops, and the language of music is understandable, attractive and gives them satisfaction and joy. Therefore, "music lessons" should be a permanent, everyday element of school education. This is important because properly conducted music education, in addition to the development of basic musical abilities and skills, has a huge impact on the general psychophysical development of students (Kamper-Kubańska, 2006, p. 520).

The Language of Music in Early School Education

A basic and important element in every culture and social group is the ability to communicate through various means of expression. Music as art and one of the elements of culture is a form of cooperation and communication between people. It fulfills a number of various functions: it teaches, develops, is a source of joy, educates, supports emotional, cognitive, social and physical development, and also has therapeutic functions (Lewandowski, 2014, pp. 39–42).

Currently, a musical work is treated as a message, a method of transmission from the creator to the recipient. This means that a specific set of signs, information about the inner experiences of one person – the creator – reaches the psyche of another person through a musical code/sign/language. To present music as a means of transmitting information, Ewa Klimas-Kuchtowa (1986) refers to Warren Weaver's communication model. According to him, musical transmission takes place on three levels:

- level A, the so-called technical – concerns the precision in the transmission of acoustic symbols;
- level B, the so-called semantic – related to the content conveyed by music;
- level C, the so-called aesthetic – focuses on the quality of the effect produced on the recipient by the meaning "hidden" in a given musical work.

Paula Trzaskawka (2014, p. 59) writes that the language of music can be divided into two categories. The first one concerns specialized terminology related to musical notation (musical signs), while the second one is related to all the feelings, sensations and emotions that arise in an individual under the influence of a given musical work.

Mirosław Kisiel (2005, pp. 33, 93) describes the language of music similarly, referring to Edwin E. Gordon's "music learning theory". In his opinion, this language is the so-called speech of sounds, which consists of a set of signs and meanings. Understanding music as a form of transmission/information/message from the creator to the recipient, the researcher distinguishes three basic meanings:

- emotional meaning – associated with the concept of a symbol/sign that is specialized, unique and irreplaceable, and the features of music (dynamics, duration, timbre), this is the so-called a represented symbol that is realized through feelings characteristic of mental life;
- aesthetic meaning – refers to the concepts: work, artist, recipient and the perception of music related to them. It's about the quality and value of the effect that a given work has on the recipient;
- semantic meaning – refers to the perception with which symbols convey a specific meaning through semantic symbols (agogy, dynamics, articulation, etc.).

All presented classifications allow us to conclude that music is a non-verbal form of the process of human communication, at the same time stimulating the comprehensive development of an individual, arousing emotions and building social relationships. Social communication involves the exchange of verbal, vocal and non-verbal signals, which encourages individuals to cooperate. Therefore, musical activity creates an opportunity for social contacts, during which music is the language of communication between people, at the same time influencing their emotional, mental, physical and cognitive state (Kokowska, 2015, pp. 161–162).

When referring the topic of musical communication to students of general education, one should remember that the basic element of music is sound and its features, as well as individual elements of a musical work, such as melody, rhythm, dynamics and agogics. Learning the language of music and its autonomous sound code occurs through listening and emotional and creative transformation of sound structures. The student treats the language of music as a way of communicating with the outside world

and builds his or her own world of values by learning about music, listening to music and actively participating in various musical activities and games (Kisiel, 2015, pp. 33,93).

A child's contact with music takes place in the receptive sphere, which involves the perception of sound material, and in the performing sphere, which gives the child the opportunity to express himself, among others. in singing, playing instruments or moving to music. By providing students of grades I-III of primary school with participation in various forms of musical activity, we enable the common sharing of emotions, cooperation in groups, musical communication, we stimulate interaction between peers and increase their emotional stability. By participating in the musical language, we shape positive peer/social relationships. However, in order for musical communication and its general developmental values to be realized, students in general education schools must have the opportunity to regularly, actively participate in music classes.

Making the Language of Music a Reality in the School Classroom

The basic determinant of conducting regular, valuable music classes should be teachers' knowledge and awareness of the values and functions that musical activity fulfills in the context of stimulating the comprehensive development of the child. These features include:

- cultural function-music (especially classical music) influences the child's cultural development, enables the child to develop a sense of aesthetics, and is also a form of relaxation and rest. Listening to the teacher's singing and classical music from different eras supports cultural development and leads to harmonious development in the spiritual sphere. By getting to know composers and their works, the child gains knowledge about the cultural and historical diversity of individual regions and countries (Malko, 1986, pp. 29–73; Suświłło, 2001, pp. 167–168).
- cognitive function – by participating in music "lessons", the student learns various songs, melodies, rhythms, pieces of classical music and elements of a musical work (mood, tempo, dynamics, etc.), thanks to which he enriches his knowledge of the surrounding reality and exercises and develops his mind. Among other things, singing and learning songs contribute to the development of speech, influence diction, improve memory, concentration, imagination and enrich the child's language (Ibidem).

- social function – children participate in singing, music and movement activities and while playing instruments and interact with their peers. This promotes establishing social contacts based on respect, cooperation and the joy of working together. Therefore, collective singing, physical games and playing instruments socialize, integrate the group and strengthen bonds with peers (Ibidem).
- motor function – music and movement classes satisfy the natural need for movement, stimulate the development of fine and gross motor skills, improve motor skills in terms of agility, speed, power, balance and eye-hand coordination. They develop the child's smooth movement, improve the body's physical fitness and endurance, and encourage active spending of free time (Ibidem).
- therapeutic function – regular, varied music classes with an appropriately selected repertoire of songs and pieces of classical music contribute to proper emotional development. These activities allow the child to be spontaneous, are a source of joy, eliminate emotional tension, encourage them to act, and teach them independence. This triggers the desire for psychomotor activity. Music helps express feelings and allows you to forget about various ailments (Przychodzińska-Kaciczak, 2003).

The language of music is implemented in the school classroom through the participation of students in five forms of musical activity. These are: singing, playing music on instruments, moving to music, musical improvisations and listening to music. Contemporary early school music education is determined by the level of musical competence of teachers. Unfortunately, the situation is very worrying. Research shows that teachers, due to lack of education regarding substantive and methodological preparation for the implementation of a musical educational path, are reluctant to conduct any music classes. The fear of inappropriate conduct of music "lessons" means that in grades I-III music is mainly limited to singing songs. Moreover, the teacher usually does not participate in singing, but uses ready-made recordings, which is detrimental to the proper development of singing in students (Kisiel, 2005, p. 77; Sacher, 2012, p. 238).

Nowadays, in Poland we are dealing with the dominance of mass culture and related mass media, such as television, radio and the Internet. Although music accompanies a child's life and is ubiquitous, it is often worthless and inappropriate for childhood. This is due to contemporary culture, which is determined by the phenomenon of broadly understood

consumption (Melosik, 2003, pp. 19–35). These musical trends and musical idols "promoted" in the media negatively affect the youngest recipients and their delicate voices and emotions. General schools play a huge role in activating students musically and shaping their musical culture.

It should be remembered that musical education is not only about providing children with knowledge of music and shaping them into performers of musical works. It is also about stimulating comprehensive development, including the development of their personality, personal culture and preparation for participation in musical culture. However, education through art (including music), as Stefan Szuman wrote, can only bring specific results if we enable children to have regular contact with real, great art-classical, classical music. We cannot allow young people, including children, to derive satisfaction from contacts with "pseudo-art", the so-called low or popular art whose sole purpose is to entertain (Szuman, 1969, pp. 140, 420–421), and which is promoted in the modern world, especially in the world of media, as a source of profit for their creators and record companies.

Therefore, primary school pupils should be enabled to learn the rich and valuable language of music. This is possible through regular contact with good musical role models: with correct singing, a good repertoire for singing and listening, learning about classical music, enabling them to play music and movement, making music on instruments and musical improvisation. Thanks to regular musical activities, students learn the language of music, they will naturally learn to understand it and benefit from it.

Methodological Assumptions of Own Research

Taking into account the universality, attractiveness and values of the language of early school music education, it was interesting to recognize the reactions of pupils from grades I-III during music classes and their understanding of the language of music.

The basic research problem was to identify: What are the reactions of students of grades I-III to the language of music?

In order to obtain knowledge about the participation of early school students in music classes – their experiences, reactions, actions taken, activity (or lack thereof) – I used qualitative research. The chosen method was direct, participatory observation. As a researcher, I participated in music classes, which I also conducted and observed children's reactions. In order to supplement my observations, observations were also made by teachers from the classes where the research was conducted. For this purpose, they

received an observation sheet prepared by me. All pupils participating in music classes were observed, hence it was a group observation.

The observation took place in natural conditions, i.e. in a school classroom. The research was conducted at Primary School No. 1 in Chorzów as part of the research and teaching cooperation agreement concluded between the University of Silesia in Katowice and the above-mentioned School. The selection of respondents was purposeful. The respondents were students of grades I-III of primary school. 128 students took part in the research. 1st classes: 55 people (Ia – 19, Ib – 18, Ic – 18); 2nd grades: 38 people (II a – 16, II b – 9, II c – 13); 3rd grade: 35 people (III a – 18, III b – 17).

The surveyed students participated in music workshops. They lasted 45 minutes in each class and consisted of five musical plays using three forms of musical activity – movement to music, musical improvisation and listening to music. The pupils' reactions to classical music and various forms of musical activities in which the children participated were qualitatively analyzed. It was assumed, referring to the literature on the subject, that the following categories testify to the students' understanding of the language of music:

- active participation in music classes;
- smile and satisfaction during music activity;
- understanding all instructions related to a given musical activity;
- concentrating on music and music classes;
- expressing/presenting classical music through: words, movement, art work.

Table 1: Observation schedule: Reactions of students of grades I–III of primary school during music classes

Musical funs/plays				
Detailed description of children's reactions and behavior				
A movement story "Winter Walk"	Breathing exercises "Snowflakes"	Improvisation "Snowflake Dance"	Relaxation fun/ play "Winter"	Art work inspired by classical music
Class:	Number of students participating in workshops:			

Source: Author's own study

Results of Own Research

Reactions of Early School Students to the Language of Music

The basis for the empirical research was the participation of early school students in music workshops. They consisted of five plays using three

musical activities-movement to music, listening to music and improvisation. All activities were accompanied by classical music as (apart from forms of musical activity) the language of music. The detailed course of the research is presented in the table below.

Table 1: Reactions of students of grades I-III of primary school to the language of music implemented in music workshops

Further elements of music workshops	Reactions of the surveyed students to the language of music
<p>1. A movement story titled "Winter Walk" (calm classical music in the background – Claude Debussy, "Moonlight")</p> <p>The teacher reads a winter story, the content of which is presented by the children with movement. There is music in the background.</p> <p>It was winter, snow was falling from the clouds. (children imitate falling snow with finger movements, from a straight position with arms raised above their heads to a squat position – several repetitions).</p> <p>A teacher decided to go for a winter walk with children. Everyone went to the locker room (march around the room).</p> <p>They put on hats (movement – imitating dressing individual pieces of clothing), scarves (movement), jackets (movement), shoes (movement) and gloves (movement) and went outside (march).</p> <p>The children noticed that someone had built a snowman in the park, the snowman had a head (we draw a head in the air – a circle), a belly (draw the second circle) and a leg (the third circle), the nose was a stuffed carrot (imitative movement), coal eyes and buttons (imitative movement).</p> <p>There was another snowman next to it (the children themselves draw a snowman in the air, just like before).</p> <p>The children kept going (marching around the room).</p> <p>Snowflakes swirled around (children spin, run on their toes, "wave" their arms).</p> <p>The children noticed that sparrows were flying above them, but they did not fly away to warm countries (imitation of flying).</p> <p>It was getting colder, the children stamped their feet to warm them up (movement) and blew their hands (we alternately breathe and rub our hands).</p> <p>The teacher decided that we should go back to school (march).</p> <p>Everyone entered the locker room, took off their gloves, hats, jackets, scarves, changed their shoes and went to the hall. (children show individual activities, march to the benches and wait for the song to end).</p>	<p>Almost all surveyed students (127 people) were interested in playing. The pupils actively participated in classes, were concentrated and creative. During the plays, the students were happy and smiling. Only one boy from the second grade was not interested in the workshops.</p>

<p>2. Breathing exercise "Snowflakes" Children sit on the carpet, stretch their hand in front of them and place a small piece of cotton wool on their hand – a snowflake. In the background you can hear the song "Aquarium" by C.Saint-Saens from the series "Carnival of the Animals", for a break in the music and the teacher's verbal signal: "we blow gently" – the children blow the snowflake gently and for a long time so that the flake does not fall from the hand, only he moved on it, when he heard the words "we blow hard and short" – they blew hard and short to make the petal fall down, jump down to the carpet. We take short breaks between blowing – the children fix a snowflake in their hands, holding the snowflake between their hands and rolling it. This is a conscious break to prevent dizziness.</p>	<p>The children fully participated in the fun (128 people). They focused on breathing exercises and listening to classical music. During the activity, they were focused, interested and smiling. At the same time, they were calm and quiet. When asked if they had heard snowflakes in music, they eagerly talked about their experiences and observations.</p>
<p>3. Movement improvisation "Snowflake Dance" to the song "Aquarium" by C. Saint-Saens, from the series "Carnival of the Animals" Children turn into snowflakes and, using a ribbon (made of tissue paper) or a scarf, improvise a snowflake dance with free movement, they walk around the entire room, run on their tiptoes with scarves and move to the music, their movement is improvised</p>	<p>Most of the respondents willingly participated in the fun. The children were happy, relaxed and smiling. Observations show that movement improvisation was difficult for selected people. Especially the boys who started to lose concentration and goof around during the classes. One boy from class II did not take part in the improvisation.</p>
<p>4. Relaxation game "Winter" to the song "Winter" by A. Vivaldi from the series "The Four Seasons" There is music in the background. Children lie on the carpet with their eyes closed and imagine winter. Task for children: "Lie down on the carpet, close your eyes and imagine winter. You will listen to a song titled: "Winter". Try to guess what winter is hidden in this song and tell me about it later. After listening to the song, there is a conversation about children's ideas.</p>	<p>All students were interested in playing, concentrated and relaxed. They were able to listen to a 3.5-minute piece of classical music in silence and concentration, looking for winter images in it. After listening and creating imaginations, everyone eagerly talked about what they "saw" in winter music. The children's statements were rich in content, varied and interesting, and consistent with the character and mood of the text they listened to. Even students who, according to teachers, have serious problems with concentrating on a daily basis were very engaged in the task. Nine people in one first grade could not talk about their ideas, but they listened to the music with concentration.</p>

5. Art work inspired by classical music, "Winter",

A. Vivaldi

Children present the ideas created when listening to the song "Winter" for the first time in the form of an art work – on colorful pieces of paper from a technical block (dark blue, navy blue), using white paint or toothpaste. They are accompanied by classical music in the background.

All children were very eager to create art work inspired by music. In the same classical music, they had previously "saw" certain images, which they presented in artistic form. The students were focused and engaged.

Source: Author's own study

The observations of the students clearly show that all pupils were interested in music and willingly participated in all elements of the workshops. (Only a few boys were distracted at times and were not interested in selected parts of the workshops. However, all the girls enjoyed the classes and actively participated in all elements of the workshops).

Children's involvement in musical activities and active participation in all plays proves that:

- music and various forms of musical activity are attractive to pupils;
- the language of music inspires children to act;
- the universality of the language of music means that each student experiences and engages in games according to their needs and abilities;
- musical message affects the emotions of pupils – children derive joy and satisfaction from musical activity;
- the language of classical music calms and soothes the subjects;
- children can present the abstract language of classical music using concrete elements – movement, stories, art work.

The above-described reactions of the respondents to the diverse and at the same time difficult, abstract language of music prove that it is fully understandable and attractive to the pupils.

Conclusion

Referring to the scientific literature and conducted research, it can be stated that conducting early school music classes has a positive impact on the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of students, namely:

- satisfies the natural need for movement, improves physical and motor skills;
- shapes proper breathing and strengthens the diaphragm, which is important in the speaking process;

- oxygenates the body, accelerates blood circulation and metabolism;
- activates the imagination;
- shapes attention and concentration;
- shapes musical culture;
- sensitizes;
- relaxes the mind and body, eliminates emotional tension, calms down the hyperactive and activates the shy;
- develops creativity and independence in carrying out tasks;
- integrates the group;
- is a source of joy and satisfaction from undertaken activities.

It should be emphasized that the language of music education is understandable and interesting for pupils from grades I-III of primary school. The research shows that students willingly took part in subsequent workshop games. They were interested and focused. It was also noticeable that being active in classical music gave them joy and was attractive. Only a few students had problems concentrating.

Conversations with teachers also show that students with behavioral difficulties, hyperactivity, problems with attention and concentration participated in all the games, calmed down and were able to listen to the 3.5-minute piece of music "Winter", which proves the therapeutic power of classical music and about the psychophysical relaxation that is possible when listening to a carefully selected repertoire.

To sum up, music classes in integrated education are very popular among children and are very important for their proper and comprehensive development. Children's involvement in various forms of musical activity proves that they understand the language of music. Therefore, it is important for the child's contact with music to be frequent and as varied as possible from an early age. It is a big mistake not to enable students to develop comprehensively through interesting, creative musical activities that give them a lot of joy and a sense of satisfaction from their artistic activity and shape their culture and musical sensitivity.

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Abstrakt: Cílem článku je upozornit na podstatu hudební výchovy v I.–III. ročníku základní školy (předškolní vzdělávání) a na porozumění žáků hudebnímu jazyku. Hudba je důležitým prvkem v životě a rozvoji dětí, které se ochotně účastní hudebních her a činností. Tento typ činností je důležitý, protože stimuluje nejen hudební dovednosti, ale ovlivňuje i všestranný rozvoj žáků. Za účelem zjištění, zda děti rozumí hudebnímu jazyku, bylo provedeno přímé zúčastněné pozorování u žáků I.–III. ročníku základní školy. Jeho cílem bylo zjistit reakce žáků při účasti na hudebních dílnách. Shromážděný výzkumný materiál a jeho kvalitativní analýza umožnily dospět k závěru, že jazyk hudby je pro žáky srozumitelný a přitažlivý. Připočteme-li obecné rozvojové hodnoty, je třeba postulovat, že hudební výchova by měla být trvalou, každodenní součástí školního vzdělávání.

Klíčová slova: hudba, předškolní vzdělávání, formy hudebních činností, jazyk hudby.

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