

Ethnocultural technology in musical and pedagogical training of students of pedagogical universities of China

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Abstract: This study aims to develop and implement an ethnocultural technology that integrates Chinese traditional artistic practices into the musical and pedagogical training of students majoring in vocal music at pedagogical universities. The technology incorporates methods such as Gundoku (expressive group recitation), melodeclamation (poetic recitation with musical accompaniment), and the Mei Lanfang gesture system, all rooted in Chinese opera traditions. An experimental study was conducted with 84 fourth-year students at Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, China, during the 2020–2021 academic year. Results showed significant improvements in students' stage performance skills, vocal clarity, expressive movement, and pedagogical competencies, such as conducting choral groups and using expressive speech in teaching. The technology effectively bridges performance training with pedagogical application, enhancing both artistic and teaching capabilities. These findings suggest that ethnocultural methods can enrich music teacher education, with implications for curriculum design and intercultural music pedagogy.

Keywords: China Pedagogical Universities, Ethnomusical technology, Performing and musical-pedagogical skills, Student training.

1. Introduction

In modern China, great attention is paid to the training of teaching staff for schools and kindergartens [1, 2]. Despite a large number of school teachers who graduated from pedagogical universities, there are still not enough teachers in kindergartens and schools. In this regard, there are issues of more effective and active training of teaching staff in these educational institutions. This problem is related to the training of teachers in various school subjects, including the subject “Music.” The entire process of education at the university, including specialization, should take into account the need for musical and pedagogical training of students. Such specialization as “Vocal Music” is included in the mainstream. In the content of this specialization, we identified several disciplines, among them – “Performing Arts,” a subject where students stage performances of fragments of opera performances. An analysis of the content of such a subject in Chinese universities: Henan, Shanghai, as well as at the pedagogical universities of Hunan, Anshan, and the capital of China Beijing showed that the goal of mastering such a subject by students is to prepare an opera. Unfortunately, the student acts as a vocal performer in the process of opera production. The formation of pedagogical skills of students when teaching music to schoolchildren in opera performance does not occur.

In this regard, we determined the problem of combining performance and pedagogical training in a single training on the subject of “stage skills.” The search for ways of the interconnection of these two directions made it possible to single out the technology of ethnocultural training of future music teachers in Chinese pedagogical universities. This technology is based on Chinese national artistic traditions, which, unfortunately, are still little used in university music pedagogy. Some authors [2, 3] point to the possibility of studying ethnocultural foundations and the formation of ethnic competence in the process of obtaining certain ethnocultural knowledge [4]. The need to introduce ethnocultural

traditions into the vocal education of students is considered by Chinese authors, but only from the position that students should know ethnocultural singing traditions and reproduce them in performance [1, 2, 5]. However, the ways of using ethnocultural foundations in musical and pedagogical training of future music teachers in scientific research and methodological works of the authors have not yet been determined. The highlighted problem, the solution of which is of interest to numerous pedagogical collectives of Chinese normal and pedagogical universities, required its solution at the level of theoretical substantiation and the level of pedagogical practice.

The introduction reveals the problems of musical and pedagogical training of students in the Chinese normal and pedagogical universities. The Materials and Methods section substantiates the idea of the need to train students based on national culture, including music, to consistently combine musical training with pedagogical. The way to implement this idea is ethnocultural technologies, including the “Gudoku” technique, melodeclamation with musical accompaniment, which forms the speech skills of future music teachers, as well as the Mei Lanfang system, which contributes to the formation of conducting skills for managing the choir of schoolchildren. The section “Results and Discussion” presents the components of ethnocultural technology, the structure of classes developed on the basis of this technology. The results of the introduction of technology are considered by comparing the initial and final stages of the experimental work, which was carried out at the Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, Changchun, People’s Republic of China. In conclusion, we assumed that ethnocultural technology has a positive effect on the dynamics of the formation of musical and performing skills of students, as well as on the formation of pedagogical skills of a music teacher. In addition, we indicated the research prospects, connected with the introduction of the “mask” technology or with the development of other criteria for measuring the formation of musical and pedagogical skills.

2. Materials and Methods

The research aims to create a technology aimed at developing students’ operatic performance and pedagogical skills based on Chinese ethnocultural traditions. The objectives of the research included the analysis content of the concept of “technology,” the ethnocultural traditions of opera performance, identification of the possibility of pedagogical potential, determination of the structure of stage classes that form musical and pedagogical skills among students-future music teachers in schools and kindergartens in China. To identify the components of technology, we found certain methodological positions regarding the concept of “technology.” We consider this concept as an informational component of education, calling it “smart technologies” [6], a methodology that includes a set of methods for individualizing student learning [7], a model for the development of musically gifted children [8], an algorithm for the actions of a teacher and students to achieve a certain result training [9]. In the technology developed by us, we adhere to its interpretation as an algorithm of actions, since it is associated with singing education, in the process of which a sequence (algorithm) of actions of the teacher and students is necessarily included: for the formation of a singing installation and vocal breathing, then, the formation of sound formation and roundness sound. The next step in the methodology of creating an ethnocultural technology was the identification of the traditions of the ethnic musical, or, more precisely, the singing culture of China, which were supposed to affect to achieve result in the formation of the student’s vocal and pedagogical skills. Since the problem was related to vocal performance and training, the possibilities and characteristics of Chinese opera were studied first of all. Similar ideas about the possibility of Chinese opera in teaching students vocal art are found in the works of researchers [7]. The musicological analysis allowed us to determine specific features of opera, such as speech insertions, which are not at all typical for European opera (except the opera by Carmen J. Bizet, which initially, in the first edition, had speech inclusions). Consequently, the tasks of the subject of “stage art,” based on the characteristics of Chinese opera, must include the formation of the skills of clear and expressive pronunciation of words. Expressive, clear speech is a necessary component of pedagogical activity.

One of the primary features of Chinese opera is the special movement system of the actors. The criterion for an actor's activity on the stage of Chinese opera is beauty [5], which manifests itself in singing, movement and the behavior of the actor on stage. The methodological basis of ethnocultural technology was the work on speech, which is indispensable for opera musicians and a music teacher at school, as well as work on mastering hand movements according to the Mei Lanfang system, which was used in opera productions [10]. The same gestures are used by teachers when conducting a children's choir in music lessons at school. Based on the position of the authors on the development of the acting skills of theater actors, the structure of classes in the discipline "performing arts" was developed. However, if the authors [11, 12] pointed to two separate disciplines in conservatories and theater universities, then only one discipline was chosen for our research. The structure of this discipline included training in stage movement and stage speech. The purpose of this discipline was the formation of the acting, musical and pedagogical skills of students.

2.1. Description of the Components of Ethnocultural Technology and the Structure of the Lesson

Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, Changchun, People's Republic of China was selected for the experimental work. The experimental group included 84 students who successfully passed the exam in academic vocals and had the desire and ability to study in the specialization "Vocal Music." In this group, within the subject "Performing Arts," we carried out the preparation of students based on ethnocultural technology, combining performing and pedagogical training, in contrast to the traditional techniques used in this subject. At the beginning and the end of the experimental work, we carried out diagnostics that allowed us to obtain the result of the formation of students' stage skills according to several criteria.

In the seventh semester of the 2020–2021 academic year, we conducted an experimental study on teaching students to use ethnocultural technologies. In addition to the well-known technical exercises for quick pronunciation of words (tongue twisters), expressive highlighting of words in a phrase, observance of pauses and caesura in speech, we used the eastern (Japanese, but appeared in the regions of China) "Gundoku" method [13]. One can use the Gundoku method in the collective expressive reading of a text (e.g., the text of an opera aria or an opera duet), when students can expressively, each in their own way, read the entire text of an aria and duet. We should also note that this method is actively used in teaching children (e.g., a foreign language.) Additionally, one can also use this method in a music lesson, for the expressive performance of songs by roles or songs in musical phrases. Melodic recitation (melodeclamation) to music can help to form an expressive pronunciation of the text. This type of creativity is very popular in China. In Chinese artistic culture, reading a poetic text to the accompaniment of sounding music, including the accompaniment of a symphony orchestra, is an extremely popular art form that is perceived with great enthusiasm by Chinese audiences at concerts. Melodeclamation was used in the following way: during the lesson, students recite poems in a few lines to the accompaniment of an opera aria, duet, trio or even a choral fragment, accompaniment of the musical fragment from the opera, which is supposed to be staged in the performing arts class. On the basis of these provisions, the structure of the lesson on "Theatrical art" is built: (1) traditional moving warm-up and speech technique, (2) reading "Gundoku" with hand movements (gestures from Mei Lanfang), (3) melodic invocation to music (accompaniment) a fragment of the opera that the students and the teacher are going to stage, also using Mei Lanfang's gestures, (4) a rehearsal of the opera fragment, including repetition of speech intonation and types of movement, (5) an analysis of a fragment of the opera by students, (6) homework on repetition of the movement along with pronunciation and singing.

Classes using this technology included staging the Chinese and operas by foreign composers. At the same time, the students had to perform poetic lines of arias, duets in the original language of the opera. For example, during Mozart's production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, students spoke the words of the duet of Susanna and the Countess in Italian. Graceful hand movements designed by Zhou [10] were also used in this opera.

The technology was included in the process of passing the “Performing Arts” subject by students during the seventh semester. At the end of the semester, a concert demonstration of fragments of Chinese opera productions was presented: “The Plain,” composer Jin Xiang (trio Da Xing, Jing Zi and Jia Mu); Mulan Psalms, composer Guanxia (first act, Mulan trio, mother and father); opera performance “The Marriage of Figaro” by the composer Mozart (duet of Suzanne and the Countess “The Wind is Blowing”).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results of the Initial and Final Diagnostics of the Experiment

For the initial and control diagnostics, we identified the following criteria for measuring the formation of stage skills: pronounce the texts of poetic works in singing expressively (works mastered by students in previous semesters in individual vocal lessons); reading a poetic text to music in the form of melodeclamation (verses of ancient Chinese poets were used); singing a familiar work with the inclusion of movements corresponding to the development of the artistic image of the work. The first criterion assessed the expressiveness and clarity of pronunciation of words when singing. According to the second criterion, we assessed the expressiveness, clarity of pronunciation of the text, the coincidence of the text of the poetic work with the sounding musical work, its dynamic shades, tempo and caesura. We used the third criterion to assess the expressiveness and beauty of the movement, the coincidence of movement with the development and dynamics of the musical image of the work. The results of the initial and control diagnostics for all three criteria in unity (without differentiation into small indicators of each criterion) are presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows the number of results of low, medium and high levels, calculated as a percentage at the beginning and end of the experiment.

Table 1.

Initial and final assessment results for three levels of stage skills formation among students of the Changchun College of Humanities and Science, Changchun, China.

Levels	Experimental stages	
	Initial assessment(%)	Final assessment (%)
Low	46	14
Medium	29	28
High	25	58

Note: The table compares the percentage of students at low, medium, and high levels of stage skills formation before and after the implementation of the ethnocultural technology. Significant improvement is observed, particularly in the high-level category.

Thus, at the beginning of the experiment, the students showed the best result according to the first criterion. According to the second criterion, only a few students successfully coped with the tasks of reading poetry to music, most of those who completed the task of recitation did not cope with the dynamics of sound and the accurate performance of several caesurae. We obtained the lowest score for the third criterion. The result of 46% of the low level was mainly associated with the search and implementation by the students of the movement corresponding to the image of the vocal work. This result is explained by the cultural peculiarity of the communication of the Chinese, who in conversation with each other use little expressive movements of the arms, head and torso. Thus, 29% of the average and 25% of the high level are mainly achieved when performing tasks related to reading a poetic text. This aspect was facilitated by the intonation features of Chinese colloquial speech, as well as individual vocal lessons, in which vocal articulation was formed. At the end of the experiment, we observed the greatest dynamics when students used expressive movements in the singing process. However, 32% of students with a low level of skills formation according to this criterion, almost immediately moved to a high level. The teachers noted that the ability to use certain movements in the process of singing had a positive effect on the interaction of students when performing duets and trios. One should note a 1 % decrease in the execution of tasks at the average level is due to the transition of this percentage to a high level. Thus, the results presented in Table 1 confirmed the effectiveness of ethnocultural technology for

the development of students' stage skills.

3.2. Discussion Results

In terms of discussing the results obtained, we note the largest and the smallest dynamics of the formation of stage skills for each criterion at the end of the experiment. We observed the greatest dynamics according to the third criterion. At the initial stage, it was the combination of movement with singing or reading poetry that was the weakest point in the stage preparation of students. If the vocal performance was of high quality, then the stage movements were minimal and often did not correspond to the artistic image of the vocal and poetic text. The students' hand movements were especially inexpressive. At the end of the experiment, they included expressive and beautiful movements corresponding to the musical and poetic work, which also allowed them to successfully interact with stage partners. There is a dynamics in speech development, namely, in the texts of Chinese and foreign operas (Italian). Students performed faithful caesuras, clearly pronounced some sounds in Italian opera that are not in Chinese (e.g., the sound "r"). Fewer dynamics were observed according to the first criterion, but the ability to use expressive articulation when singing was already formed among students at the individual vocal lessons in the first - sixth semesters of the study. The results of the primary diagnostics were higher than according to other criteria, so the dynamics of the development of this skill were not so significant.

Chinese authors Lin [1] and Zhou [10] in their research, raise the question of the need for musical and vocal training in the traditions of Chinese musical culture. However, the authors mainly consider the possibilities for Chinese students to study excerpts from national operas. In our research, continuing their ideas, we present national systems of musical and artistic creation (gundoku, melodeclamation, Mei Lanfang movements), which can be used as methods that make up ethnocultural technologies. In addition, we develop the ideas of the Chinese author Shen [12] on the possibility of combining chanting and movement based on the methods of Mei Lanfang. Unlike other teaching methods and technologies for Chinese students, our ethnocultural technology, implemented at the Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, Changchun City, People's Republic of China University, allows us to combine vocal teaching with musical and pedagogical skills.

4. Conclusion

The introduction of ethnocultural technology based on the specifics of Chinese opera made it possible to eliminate the following shortcomings in the stage skills of students at Changchun Humanities and Sciences College Changchun City, People's Republic of China: to highlight climaxes in phrases with hand and body movements, actively pronounce words (while singing), make correct caesura while singing, use movements that correspond to the dynamics and emotional tone of the music, include a variety of expressive movements in interaction with the characters of opera performances in the stage experience, pronounce a poetic text. The elimination of deficiencies in the formation of stage skills among students made it possible to increase the level of the performing and pedagogical culture of students. Beautiful, logically structured speech, the ability to expressively perform a vocal work, the ability to include Mei Lanfang's gestures in the process of controlling the choral singing of students in a music lesson, as well as in conversations when introducing students to classical musical works - all this is included in the arsenal of pedagogical tools necessary for high-quality teaching of music lessons at school. The developed ethnocultural technology contributed to the formation of performing skills among students: the ability to combine singing and movement, the ability to pronounce the text correctly, to use certain movements in opera performance. At the same time, the introduction of this technology into the teaching of students showed that it has a positive effect on the development of pedagogical skills among students: to clearly and emotionally master speech, use non-verbal (motor) means of communication in stories on a musical theme, and master the manual technique of managing a children's choir. The technology understood as a sequence of actions, allowed us to form a lesson structure for students, consisting of several sequentially performed stages. The technology was based

on traditional Chinese techniques: the movements of Mei Lanfang, Gundoku, melodeclamation. Prospects for working on the problem are the identification of other Chinese cultural traditions, for example, the inclusion of the national Chinese mask in the process of teaching students, expanding the range of diagnostic methods for the formation of performing and musical-pedagogical skills.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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