

## **Ethnocultural technologies of vocal training of students of pedagogical universities of China**

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**Abstract:** The training of music teachers in China's pedagogical universities is based on strategies for linking national cultural traditions and innovative education systems in other countries. Today, special attention is paid to the training of music teachers, which is due to the increased demand of children and parents for music education. The deepening of such training is facilitated by the special specializations of students, which allow them to acquire knowledge and performing skills in a particular type of musical activity in the final semesters of study at the university. But, since students receive education in pedagogical universities, this performance training should be based on Chinese ethnocultural traditions, and be organically combined with pedagogical training. The article examines an ethnocultural technologist based on the traditions of the national Chinese opera, contributing to the formation of stage skills necessary both for staging an opera performance by students and for replenishing the pedagogical baggage of a school music teacher. The introduction of this technology into the "Performing Arts" subject of the "Vocal Music" specialization among fourth-year students has shown its effectiveness both for staging fragments of opera performances, not only by Chinese but also by Western composers and for replenishing the pedagogical skills of future music teachers.

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**Keywords:** *Music teacher, Student education, Technology, vocal training, The specifics of Chinese opera.*

### **1. Introduction**

In modern China, great attention is paid to the training of teaching staff for schools and kindergartens. Despite a large number of school teachers who graduated from pedagogical universities, there are still not enough teachers in kindergartens. In this regard, there are questions of more effective and active training of teaching staff in these educational institutions. This problem is found in the training of teachers in various school subjects, including the subject "Music". Today in China, music education is in demand; a large number of children and students want to study music. In this regard, departments for the preparation of music teachers for schools and teachers for kindergartens are opening at pedagogical universities. As a rule, future students wishing to get the speciality "Music teacher" enter the speciality "Musicology". Studying in this speciality, each student, depending on individual preferences, musical abilities and learning outcomes in the first two courses, chooses in-depth training (specialization) in musical performance: singing, including opera, playing musical instruments - flute, piano, violin, as well as on Chinese folk instruments - pipa, guzheng, yangqin, erhu, bamboo flute. To identify the place of work of graduates of pedagogical universities who underwent specialized music training and graduated from Changchun Humanities and Sciences College in Changchun, Jilin province, a survey was conducted, which showed that out of two graduates of students in 2020 and 2021, only 2 people began to work in the opera house. Theatre, several people continued their studies at universities in other states, and most, about 75%, began to work in schools, kindergartens, in centres for teaching music to children and adults. Thus, the entire process of education at the university, including

specialization, should take into account the need for musical and pedagogical training of students. Including in the mainstream of such specialization as "Vocal Music", in the content of which there are several disciplines, among them - "Performing Arts", a subject were students stage performances of fragments of opera performances. An analysis of the content of such a subject in Chinese normal universities: Henan, Shanghai, as well as at the pedagogical universities of Hunan, Anshan, and the capital Beijing showed that the goal of mastering such a subject by students is to prepare an opera performer for the activity, but not a teacher teaching music to children and youth. In this regard, the problem arises of combining performance and pedagogical training in a single training on the subject of "stage skills". The first is necessary for deepening the performing skills (the art of singing), the second - for further work with children in school or kindergarten. For the formation of the experience of stage skills among students undergoing this specialization in pedagogical universities in China, firstly, the experience of foreign vocal pedagogical schools (Russia, Germany, Italy) is most often used, and secondly, the content of such training lacks a combination of performance with pedagogy, as a rule, students are trained in the same way as opera performers. 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 indicate the possibility of ethnocultural foundations and technologies for the formation of ethnic competence, the development of spiritual and moral qualities of the personality of children [1, 2,]. The need to introduce ethnocultural traditions into the vocal education of students is also considered by Chinese authors, but only from the position that students should know about ethnocultural singing traditions and reproduce them in performance [3, 4]. However, the ways of using ethnocultural foundations for 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 both at the level of theoretical justification and at the level of pedagogical practice.

## 2. Theoretical and Methodological Basis

### 2.1. Participants

Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, People's Republic of China was selected for the experimental work. The experimental group included 30 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, on the subject "Performing Arts", the preparation of students was carried out based on ethnocultural technology, combining performing and pedagogical training, in contrast to the traditional techniques used in this subject. This traditional technology includes the mastery by students of some movements of the hands, body, head, including dance movements, then technical diction exercises and singing fragments of an opera performance. At the beginning and the end of the experimental work, diagnostics were carried out, allowing to obtain the result of the formation of students' stage skills according to several criteria.

### 2.2. Methodology and Conceptual Framework

To identify the components of technology, there were certain methodological positions regarding the content of the concept of "technology". The authors consider this concept as an informational component of education, calling it "smart technologies" [5], a methodology that includes a set of methods for individualizing student learning [6], a model for the development of musically gifted children [7], an algorithm for the actions of a teacher and students to achieve a certain result training [8]. 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, etc. 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 the result both in the formation of the student's vocal performing arts and in the formation of his pedagogical skills. Since the problem was related to vocal performance and training, the possibilities and characteristics of Chinese opera were first of all studied. Similar ideas about the possibility of Chinese opera in teaching students' vocal art are found in the works of researchers [9].

The musicological analysis made it possible to determine that in many specific features such an opera has speech insertions, which is 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. One of the 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 [10], which manifests itself in singing, in movement and the behaviour of the actor on stage. Chinese actor and director Mei Lanfang has created a specific design for the actor's actions when his movements are flexible and vibrant. For this, he developed a system of ambivalent movements, when, to demonstrate an active forward movement, he must first take a step back, which makes the aspiration of a step forward brighter. Mei Lanfang also developed the actor's graceful hand movements [11]. It should be noted that in the Chinese theatre, for centuries, a system of actor's hand movements has been worked out and created - "denying" hands, "hiding" hands, "grabbing" hands, "crying" hands, "resting" hands, etc. The rude character was expressed widely spread fingers, while the elders are characterized by restraint and constraint in their movements [12]. However, it was Mei Lanfang who developed the systematization of hand gestures. Mei Lanfang developed gestures (movements of hands, fingers) while studying many works of art: Chinese paintings, statues, as well as real-life phenomena. So, he studied the handprints of Buddhist statues, he was interested in the plastic embodiment of the hands of the female statues of Jing chi, as well as the movements of certain characters or movements or statics in paintings of natural phenomena - trees, flowers. After continuous analysis and selection of such movements, Mei Lanfang selected 53 gestures that are still mastered by every Peking Opera actor. Note that Peking Opera differs from Chinese opera. The latter includes works by contemporary Chinese authors, and in terms of the manner of performance, it includes the European singing system. In Peking opera, the manner of singing is close to folk, Chinese, including a high singing formant. In addition, such an opera contains elements of martial art and acrobatics. Generalization of the works of Chinese musicologists on the peculiarities of Chinese opera, as well as the directorial activity of Mei Lanfang, made it possible to identify the methodological basis of ethnocultural technology: the introduction of colloquial insertions into the process of an opera performance, a certain system of movements, including hand movements, developed by Mei Lanfang.

### **3. An experiment on the Implementation of Ethnocultural Technology in the Teaching of Students in the "Stage art"**

An experimental study on teaching students using ethnocultural technology was carried out during the seventh semester of the 2020-2021 academic years. The stages of the experimental work were: initial diagnostics of students, implementation of the developed technology, control diagnostics. Let us consider the skills of students, the formation of which took place in the process of using ethnocultural technology, from the standpoint of the relationship between performing (vocal) and pedagogical skills. These include speech skills or clear and expressive diction. To participate in an opera performance, a student had to correctly and expressively pronounce words, both vocal opera numbers and speech inserts. The teacher also needed this skill, since in the classroom at a music lesson he must be able to perform a song with clearly pronounced words so that the students understand the content song, he must also, for example, before listening to a piece of music, interest children with an expressive story about him or about the work of the composer who composed this work. Therefore, in the technology, in addition to the well-known technical exercises for quick pronunciation of words (in tongue twisters),

expressive highlighting of words in a phrase, observance of pauses and caesura in speech, the oriental (Japanese, but that appeared in regions of China) method "Gundoku" was used [13] ... The Gundoku method can be used in a collective expressive reading of a text, for example, the text of an opera aria or an opera duet, when students can expressively, each in their way, read the entire text of an aria, a duet or an opera ensemble using phrases. Melodeclamation was one of the ways to get clear and expressive speech. 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 this 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, i.e., accompaniment of the musical fragment from the opera, which is supposed to be staged in the performing arts class. Formed skills when reading poetry by the "Gundoku" method can be used by a student in further professional pedagogical activity. Note that this method is actively used in teaching children, for example, a foreign language. But it can also be used in a music lesson, for the expressive performance of songs by children by roles or by song musical phrases. Recitation to music can also be used in a school music lesson, both collective and solo. She can go to any music that will sound in the background of a poetic text. Therefore, the inclusion of such techniques into our technology, which, before staging an opera fragment, are mastered consistently - traditional technical speech exercises of vocalists, "Gundoku", melodeclamation, will have a positive effect on the singers' performing qualities and the accumulation of experience of pedagogical skills of future music teachers. According to the highlighted feature of Chinese and Peking opera, namely, the system of movements, motor exercises were also introduced into the technology. In addition to the traditionally used methods of forming stage movement among actors, our technology used the gestures of the famous actor and director of the Beijing Opera - Mei Lanfang [14]. The study of 53 gestures of this actor and director of the Peking Opera from the standpoint of their expediency for staging opera performances and their fragments by students, as well as for using them in pedagogical activities, made it possible to choose 11 gestures. These gestures had a "dual" purpose. On the one hand, each such gesture meant some action in the opera, for example, handicrafts performed by the female character of the opera or some feeling, for example, embarrassment, or the depiction of a certain object, for example, an "open fan". On the other hand, each of the selected 11 gestures had an analogy in the manual technique of chorus conducting, which is necessary to direct the singing. For example, Mei Lanfang's gesture "closed fan" in choral conducting has an analogue and means "to sing more quietly" or "to collect the sound, not to shout", and the gesture "hold the sleeve" - in the technique of conducting a chorus is adequate to the gesture "to tighten intonation, increase intonation" in the case of her understatement by singing in the choir. In Chinese universities, in the preparation of a music teacher, choral conducting is studied in collective forms, in contrast to conservatories, where this subject is mastered by a student in individual work with a teacher. Therefore, additional training in conducting techniques when using Mei Lanfang's gestures at the Pedagogical University in the process of specialization contributes to the consolidation and development of manual training of future music teachers in managing singing (choral singing) at a school music lesson. The same gestures can be used by students when organizing active communication with students at school, to enhance the emotional impact on children. And although in the Chinese national tradition the use of gestures when communicating is not as popular as among other peoples, nevertheless, their inclusion in the process of pedagogical activity for discussing music with children has a positive effect, first of all, on the formation of their listening culture. Gestures used in conversations about music as a means of non-verbal communication between teacher and students add emotional intensity to the conversation and make it persuasive. Thus, the main provisions of ethnocultural training include oriental and Chinese traditions of poetic performance, motor analogues of gestures developed by Mei Lanfang, which are necessary for both performing and pedagogical training of students. Based on these provisions, a technology was developed for staging one fragment of an opera performance, which made it possible to create the following structure of a lesson in "Performing Arts": speech technique, reading "Gundoku" with hand movements (with gestures from Mei Lanfang),

melodeclamation to music (accompaniment) of the fragment of the opera that the students and the teacher are going to stage, also using Mei Lanfang's gestures, a rehearsal of the opera fragment, including the found speech intonations and movements. It should be noted that not only Chinese operas, but also operas by foreign composers were staged on the subject of "Performing Arts". In this case, students had to perform poetic lines of arias, duets in the original language of the opera. For example, during the staged fragment "The Marriage of Figaro" by Mozart, the students recited the words of the duet of Susanna and the Countess in Italian. Graceful hand movements designed by Mei Lanfang were also used in this opera, for example, the closed fan gesture was used to support Suzanne's garments during their duet with the countess. The technology was included in the process of passing the "Performing Arts" subject by students throughout the seventh semester. At the end of the semester, a concert demonstration of fragments of Chinese opera performances was presented: "The Plain", composer Jin Xiang (trio Da Xing, Zing Zi and Jia Mu); Mulan Psalms, composer Guanxia, (first act, Mulan trio, mother and father); opera performance "The Wedding of Figaro", composer Mozart, (duet of Suzanne and the Countess "The Breeze is Blowing")

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

For the initial and control diagnostics, the following criteria for measuring the formation of stage skills were identified: expressively and pronounce the texts of poetic works in singing (works were used that were 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, 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, caesura, etc. were assessed. The third criterion was used 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) are shown in the table.

**Table 1.**

The results of the ascertaining and control stages are shown in the table.

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

This table does not show individual results for each criterion, but we note that the largest and the smallest dynamics of the formation of stage skills for each criterion at the end of the experiment. The greatest dynamics was observed 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 both 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 partners on stage. There are dynamics in speech development, namely, in the texts of Chinese and foreign operas (Italian), students made faithful caesuras, clearly pronounced some sounds in the Italian opera that is not in Chinese (for example, the sound "r") ... Fewer dynamics was observed according to the first criterion, but the ability to use expressive articulation while singing was already formed among students in individual vocal lessons in the first - sixth

semesters of study. The results of the initial diagnostics were higher than according to other criteria, therefore, the dynamics of the development of this skill was not so significant.

#### 4. Key Findings

The introduction of ethnocultural technology based on taking into account 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: 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 a piece of music, include in the stage experience a variety of expressive movements in interaction with the characters of opera performances, pronounce a poetic text clearly and clearly. The elimination of deficiencies in the formation of stage skills among students made it possible to increase the level of not only the performing but also the 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. What did the students participating in the experiment take advantage of when they went out in the eighth semester for teaching practice in secondary schools in the city of Changchun?

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#### Contribution of coauthors:

Zhang. T - development of criteria for diagnosing the development of stage skills of students at the Pedagogical University, carrying out the procedure for diagnosing students at Changchun Humanities and Sciences College.

N.G. Tagiltseva - development of conceptual foundations of ethnocultural technology, highlighting the main national features of the development of Chinese opera, correlating stage skills with the pedagogical skills of future music teachers at school.

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