

The influence of two song-teaching strategies on vocal performance in 6 to 7 year-old children and its relationship with their use of voice registers

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Abstract

Research on the influence of teaching songs with melody and words or with the melody sung with a neutral syllable, adding the words later, on children's vocal performances has not been addressed in depth (Jacobi-Karna, 1996). Furthermore, research on vocal development has shown that singing is also affected by children's ability to access their full voice (Rutkowski, 2015; Welch, 2006). However, even when the full register is accessed, singing accuracy may be compromised due to a vocal-motor deficit.

This study aims to determine (a) if children sing better depending on the teaching strategy, (b) if the inaccurate first pitches for both songs fall into the registers of the children's Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM) classification, and (c) if there is a relationship between the tonal dimension scores for both songs and SVDM classification.

Children aged 6 to 7 (N=49) attending a private school in an urban area participated in a two-phase study. Phase one occurred over a period of eight weeks in regular music sessions presenting a song A with melody and words and a song B with a neutral syllable, adding the words after five sessions. Phase two consisted of individual singing of both songs with the teacher providing an auditory cue.

Inter-judge reliabilities on rating scales were high (song A: ICC(3, k) = .928; song B ICC(3, k) = .885). Results showed no significant differences between the mean of ratings on both songs ($t_{(48)} = -.563$; $p = .288$). A closer comparison revealed different singing achievements: better on song A (22.4%), better on song B (24.5%) and no relevant differences (53.1%). 89.8% of the inaccurate first pitches fell into the range measured by SVDM, with 30.4% of the children classified as singers. There was a positive correlation between the tonal dimension scores and SVDM classification (song A: $\rho_{(49)} = .558$, $p < .001$; song B: $\rho_{(49)} = .385$, $p < .05$).

The song-teaching strategy is relevant when considering individual differences, suggesting that vocal performance can be improved depending on it. Results suggest that children can be more accurate if they sing in their usable voice register. Tonal achievement on song B is less related to SVDM classification.

Keywords

Children's vocal performance, performance rating scales, Singing Voice Development Measure, song-teaching strategies, vocal-motor deficit

Background

In music education, numerous studies have focused on children's ability to sing in tune, investigating the influence of a wide variety of factors (for a