

WCLTA2012

Children's creative work – a comparative approach to teaching visual art and music

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Abstract

The purpose of this work is to present some innovative methods and possibilities for preparing and motivating students in the process of visual and musical creative work. Within children's musical and visual creative work, expressive creativity is primarily developed by means of unrestricted and spontaneous expression through visual art and music, where the products are not assessed according to their aesthetic value but according to their educational and functional purpose, evaluated in the course of the process of creation. The comparative approach to teaching music and visual art means using a musical work as a means of motivation leading to visual art creativity, and using a visual work of art as an incentive in children's creative work.

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Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ferhan Odabaşı

Keywords: work of art, motivation, comparative approach, children's musical creative work, children's visual art creative work.

1. Introduction

The process of children's creativity is conditioned by innate abilities, creative predisposition, stimuli given by the family and environment, motivation, and certain features of the teaching process. A teacher can have a direct influence on motivation by choosing the right teaching methods, prompts, types of work, goals, and tasks. The need to have variety and unconventionality are basic characteristics of creative thinking but at the same time they are components of children's creativity. This is why the means of motivation used in teaching visual art or music should be varied and unusual. Remaining within methodology, terminology and subject content is usual and expected when a lesson is in process. However, such an approach restricts motivation, which is essential in the development of creative thinking. The potential of motivating students to think and create in a creative way are extended by combining contents, expanding the meaning of terms, transferring from one field to another, and adjusting methodology procedures. A creative approach to teaching visual art and music means that a work of art is used to motivate children's creativity: a piece of music is used in creating visual art, and visual art is used for the creation of music.

A comparative approach to the teaching process provides a foundation for the further development of all types of ability and intelligence (spatial-visual, lingual, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, musical and physical-kinetic).

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Thanks to these types of intelligence, it is possible to compensate for lesser domains with better-developed intelligence types. Artistic subjects are not only especially suitable for simultaneous development of these, but also for enhancing the emotional and motivating spheres of a personality, due to wide, multi-layered levels of meaning.

2. A comparative approach and a creative process

By means of a lesson structure for visual art and music lessons where works of art are used to motivate the creation of works of art in another medium, abilities, values, motivation, emotions, and goals are set into motion. These personality parts interact, setting in motion a system in any part, using music or visual art, to activate other parts of personality as well. A creative process activated in this way can result in a visual or musical work of art, which is not a goal in itself, but is part of a continuous process. The correlation between visual and music elements requires the activation of a higher level of musical and intellectual abilities. It is necessary to indulge and motivate students continuously to recognize individual elements within the chosen work of art, and the work of art itself is used as means of motivation. Setting a musical work as a visual task, or vice versa, the following features of creative thinking are set in motion:

- ability **to define** and **redefine** - definition of the structure of the “model” work of art and redefining it through expressive means of another art;
- **analysis** of the model work, **synthesis** of the experience prior to translation, repeated analysis while selecting elements of another art;
- **visualization** of the audio experience;
- **metaphorical** features, reflected in the process of translating the experience gained using one sense into the domain of another sense by using symbolic notions;
- **flexibility** to accept such an unusual task;
- **fluency, transposition, and transformation** seen as processes activated when the problem of listening to a painting or painting music is set .

Visual expression while under the impression of music is the simplest form of children’s musical creative work. Children present their musical experience using visual art, and the elements of both arts are connected spontaneously. Children listen to music actively, without superfluous information about the work, the composer, or detailed analysis associated with certain visual notions, and thus direct music experience. The musical work of art and the influence it has on children’s visual work created on the basis of experiencing music is just the first level of motivation in children’s creative work. The value the topic has as motivation is in reverse proportion to the age of students. Following the age of children, the value of the topic as motivation should be skillfully transferred to the value of the form, using the nature of relations between the form and content of a work of art. This is why we should start with vocal forms when choosing a composition, and in the case of instrumental music, programmed compositions should dominate, with descriptive elements to help children depict a musical work of art.

The tasks of a comparative approach to teaching artistic subjects should consider the choice of musical works used for motivating visual expression on the basis of a previous analysis of musical elements. It is necessary to choose compositions of a various character so that individual components could be more easily differentiated. Within such approach it is impossible to anticipate the results with great accuracy. For example, the rhythm of a musical work is clearly defined in comparison to melody, but its share in the overall experience of the composition is inseparable from the influence of melody, dynamics, harmony and shapes. If rhythm is used as motivation for developing the rhythm of shapes of a visual work, it is possible for the rhythm to be emphasized not only in shape, but also in colour or direction. Likewise, the experience of a composition cannot be transferred exclusively to rhythm in disposition of shapes but to all visual elements. Also, the tone pitch can be experienced as a quantity of light value, or as its chromatic value, then as a satiated colour but also as directions of lines or textures. However, experience of the tone pitch can be expressed through all these elements simultaneously. The tone colour can be translated to texture or to chromatic value of the colour but to a type of shapes in a visual composition. All components of a musical work can be individually analyzed but it is impossible to anticipate accurately the level of

their influence on the overall experience of the work. Setting a visual task using a musical work has to be precise enough so that children could have a reliable matrix for translation from the field of one art to the field of another one. At the same time, the task should be flexibly set due to the fact that we cannot predict the children's experience and expression. Musical elements define arrangement and choice of lines, the speed of strokes, rhythm, structure within the visual work being created. The rhythm, change of pace or dynamic shading define the character of composition, the character directs musical experience and it is further expressed through visual elements. Connecting musical elements with visual elements is illustrated by the following examples:

Paganini Violin Concerto No.1 (1 of 5): This composition is characteristic because of its harmonious structure and reconciled expressive elements: a joyous melody, dancing rhythm, richness of sound colours produced by various instruments, alternating performance of the soloist and the orchestra. Each musical element sustains the development of the others in the same directions. The lyrical melody does not come as a surprise although the beginning announces dramatic conflict by its dynamics, pauses and unexpected appearance of percussion instruments. This music, although by its form not intended for younger school children, develops children's experience which can be presented in their visual work by light colours, swift strokes of a wide tactile range. Visual elements of paintings created in this way would support and sustain each other, a line supports the colour, a shape repeats the direction. We can expect compositions with a clearly emphasized first and second level which complement each other. The interaction of visual elements attach themselves in a cheerful and dynamic continuity, but nevertheless still expected.

R. Schumann "Kinderszenen op.15" – (Scenes from childhood), Gluckes genug (Happiness): The composition is very simple. The theme is melodic, easily remembered, recognizable, and present from the beginning to the end. The melody shifts from one voice to another by means of imitation, and it is repeated in the same voice but in another tonality. The rhythm is emphasized by articulation and a fast pace. Simplicity of form, melody and rhythm almost inspire the listener to apply a drawing approach, using playful lines which differ in lightness, thickness and direction, short broken strokes, shapes similar and standing independently, without overlapping.

Just as a musical work can induce visual expression, a visual work can inspire students to compose a melody. A comparative approach means that there is analogy in choosing and applying visual works as motivation for children's creation of music. Visual expression under the impression of a composition represents a preparatory form of work in the process of creating the most complex form of children's creation of music – composing. On the basis of visual elements students have perceived and remembered, rhythm, form and melodic flow of music are produced. Visual compositions of close values of light quantity, warm general tones, without huge oscillations in the length of strokes, inspire students to compose a cheerful melody of small ambit, with uniform rhythm, short note values, at a moderate pace, in a 2/4 beat. Paintings with minor changes in the direction of strokes, close chromatic values, with a single colorist or light quantity accent indulge students to compose a simple melody in a three-quarter beat, with repetition of the same rhythmic motive and melodic climax at the end. The following examples show how students indulged to create music on the basis of a visual work (Figure 1):



Figure 1. The Shepherds (Jean-Antoine Watteau, oil on canvas) and Banks of the Marne (Paul Cezanne,

oil on canvas)

The painting *The Sheperds*, Jean-Antoine Watteau, has pastel colouring of close values of light quantity and transparent texture. The changes in colours and light quantity in one part of the composition is more dynamic, and in another part the same relations are repeated but with reduced contrast. The mentioned features would inspire students to create a melody with a balanced but cheerful rhythm and continuous melodic flow. Visual elements bring associations with melodic variations of bright tones. Features of post-impressionists painting are suitable for introduction of the above proposed comparative method. A painting of a significant painter from this period, Paul Cézanne, is a landscape, *Banks of the Marne*. This painting has satiated colouring, chromatic gradation instead of the gradation of light quantity, strokes with minor shifts of hot-cold relations, and it would motivate students to make a musical improvisation with certain features: balance in melodic sequence repetitions in one-third interval, rhythmic uniformity, unbroken flow, without colour contrasts.

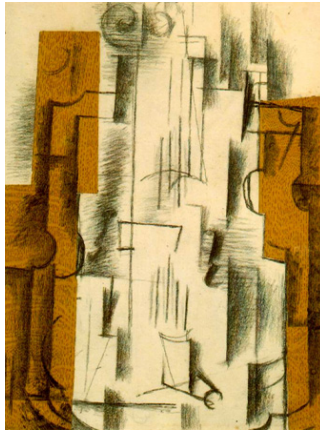


Figure 2. Georges Braque, Still life with a violin, collage

Making motifs unrecognizable in cubism collages has a positive effect on students' creativity because it frees them from narrative and directs them to expressive elements of form. Musical characteristics of a work which would be motivated by a painting by Georges Braque, *Still life with a violin* (Figure 2), are clearly defined: noticeable three-part element, small changes in the tone plan in the third part in comparison to the first. The simplicity of form is realised by one topic which remains present until the end of the composition.

The influence of this approach on children's creative development is great. Emotional and aesthetic impressions caused by a work of art move creative expression, externalization of an experience through an act of creation. Developing the ability to communicate with oneself and the world, and getting feed-back, are some of the goals of visual and musical creative work.

3. Conclusion

Each artistic work can be used as inspiration for the creation of a new work of art within the same art. Well-known composers often found their inspiration in the works of their contemporaries and predecessors, and valuable works of numerous visual artists were made under strong influence from paintings or sculptures of other artists. But influences and inspirations did not stay within the framework of one art form only. Aesthetic experience has often been expressed by means of another medium, not the one which provoked it. The relation between inspiration and realization of a work of art in the creative process is universal at all levels of creative work. A child listening to or

looking at a work of art feels nice, the work of art moves his/her emotions, and the emotional experience stirs further and develops his/her artistic/aesthetic experience. On the basis of that experience the following are developed: fantasy, the ability to explore independently and compare/analyze works of art, and creative expression using visual art and music. Translation of one artistic work into the language of another sets into motion cognitive and emotional processes and their interaction within a personality. A work created in this way is a means of evaluating the learning process for a teacher, and for children it is a motive for further work and development of their creativity. The universal value of artistic expression provides the possibility to communicate without using non-artistic content. Varieties of artistic creativity can be used in teaching visual art and music, for the development of emotional intelligence, creativity and invention, unrestricted expression and creativity, enabling their wider application in teaching practice.

The harmonious development of a student's personality is not based on the simple extension of all levels of different types of intelligence. The density and quality of relations between different types of intelligence and the individual sensibility of a child are more important than levels of ability, or the intuitive and later conscious ability of a child to use them in solving different problems. Achieving aesthetic goals using such a comparative approach to teaching visual art and music is in second place their to huge integrating effects on personality.

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