New Music Technologies:
Platforms for Language Growth Through Content

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Abstract. This educational showcase highlights some of the musical applications and devices that run them for adding music-related content and instructional activities to the foreign language (FL) classroom. Actual instructional uses for these mobile information and communications technology (ICT) devices such as the iPod, iPad, and iPhone, and music apps are introduced, and guidelines for what to consider in making program decisions for adopting such technology are given. Features of a classroom environment that supports language growth, creative self-expression, and increased intercultural competence are special considerations.

Keywords: content-based instruction, music apps, music technology, content and language integration, CLIL.

1. Introduction

Music is a form of universal expression and communication that offers an emotionally satisfying, intellectually stimulating, and culturally uplifting vehicle for learning language. Music is individual and global, while ranging from seriously philosophical to outrageously fun. No doubt, it is also an important part of the lives of foreign language students. Yet, those who take a foreign language at university, especially a required course, may be disappointed to find the same tired approach to language teaching that has exhausted them with myriads of grammar rules and vocabulary words to memorize, and with content divorced from their own daily realities. However, when the essential elements of that foreign culture, i.e., the way people think, what they do, what they eat, and what they listen to – their music – are made available to the learners as objects to explore, they can become enthusiastic about learning the language through life and physical interaction with the other culture.

The advent of content-based language units and courses into foreign language curricula is a welcomed development. Music is a special form of human communication

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that has now become even more ubiquitous, a more accessible form of self-expression and social identity, and a more interactive mode of intercultural communication, thanks to innovations in technology. As a content area for learning a foreign language, music is an art form, a personal avocation, and a common cultural element. It affords teachers the opportunity for interdisciplinary thematic approaches that are historical, anthropological, literary in viewpoint, and that apply the principles of musicology and musicianship to the language learning experience, while also being intrinsically motivating. The myriad of forms of musical expression open up possibilities for exploration of music's interrelationship to language with its traditions of narrative, poetic, and theatrical genres, and for delving into a deeper examination of intercultural values. It is not necessary to be a musician or music teacher to take advantage of music's attraction and its power to elicit emotional and intellectual engagement. The emergence of new mobile communication devices and interactive media technologies have expanded the classroom's boundaries beyond the walls of the school building, permeating into students' lives well beyond the classroom, where music occupies a large space.

2. Methodology

By showcasing several of the major music knowledge, performance, and composition apps that are available for mobile ICT devices such as the iPod, iPad, and iPhone, the presenter demonstrated how adding music-related content to the FL classroom can be accomplished through instructional activities and project-based tasks. The music apps and related websites that were introduced are mainly available for free. They comprise six different categories: 1) media integration tools, such as VoiceThread, SoundCloud, and Animoto 2) music composition and creation apps, studio.M, Garageband, iRig Midi Adaptor, 3) recording apps, such as Hokusai, and Overdub, 4) instrument apps, e.g. Zampona, 4) musical content apps, such as World Music, and 5) audio sources, such as NPR Music and PRX apps. Basic guidelines for making program decisions when adopting such technology were shared. The characteristics of an instructional environment, which supports music content and creation for language growth, include acceptance of diversity, allowances for creative self-expression, and increased awareness of intercultural competence. In addition, provisions for successful integration of music content and skills into the language curriculum development were addressed.

3. Instructional focus

The rapid emergence of new mobile communication devices and interactive media technologies has expanded the classroom's boundaries beyond the walls of the school building, permeating into students' lives well beyond the classroom. Addressing instruction that supports language growth, and creative self-expression is a special consideration. A major focus is on ascertaining the factors conducive to developing intercultural

competence via music-related content through the use of computer tools, and computer mediated communication technology, as well as the voice, body and instruments.

Developing cognitive skills and fostering academic growth are important facets of the content-based foreign language course in music. While learning strategy instruction is primarily focused on language, it is also the responsibility of all teachers of any students and especially at the college level to teach learners to use their minds. Language teachers in content-based courses can teach EFL students to think critically, to reason logically, to employ fluency, creativity and flexibility in their mental processes, to establish habits of mind that help them infer the main ideas, draw conclusions, and summarize effectively.

Clearly there is strong overlap with these goals and learning strategy instruction. Yet there should be definite plans for teaching these skills through directed instruction, modeling, think-aloud activities (verbalizing one's own thinking process), and cognitive organizational techniques, such as mind mapping, semantic threads, brainstorming, graphic organizers, recognition of discourse markers and patterns of logical discourse. Recognizing and validating cross-cultural differences in situated cognition (Oxford, 1990, p. x), the notion that the development of knowledge is defined, framed and influenced by the cultural context of the learners and the nature of the learning and its meaning within that culture, is vitally important. Moreover, helping students learn about and appreciate how other people of the world think through understanding their music, its values and forms of expression is an admirable and achievable undertaking for a content-focused, strategy-based, intercultural course in world music.

Promoting a global perspective and building intercultural competency is particularly feasible in a content-based course in world music. The intercultural dimensions almost inherent in such a course provide avenues for teaching students about diversity and can open doors to cross-cultural understanding. The nature of the content affords students to look for similarities or universalizabilities among humans through their musical cultures and then to develop an appreciation for diversity by looking at the reasons for the differences. Such instructional activities can take the form of world music discovery tours via the Internet, Prezi poster presentations, songwriting and musical compositions in the Orff style, and other music-based projects. The essence of the goals for promoting an intercultural perspective should include: 1) Developing respect in our students for the cultures and values of other ethnic groups as well as an increased understanding of their own; 2) Helping students appreciate human similarities as well as differences; 3) Providing opportunities for students to experience people's different ethnicities and an exposure to the diversity of world cultures in positive and supportive ways; 4) Demonstrating active efforts to understand and redress issues of intolerance, inequality, prejudice, and social inequities; 5) Nurturing in students the ability to contemplate environmental and social problems, assess different perspectives on moral issues, and to seek compassionate and just solutions (Meyers, 1993, p. 103).

4. Discussion and conclusions

Some actual instructional uses for these mobile ICT devices were illustrated with guidelines for what to consider in making program decisions for adopting such emerging and still rapidly evolving technology. In addition, provisions for successful curriculum development and making instructional accommodations for the accompanying new technological competencies in the face of such rapid development of globally available mobile learning technology tools were addressed; in particular a framework for assisting ICT resource managers, training specialists and educational administrators in making commitments to and in implementing new mobile media was included.

Content-based instruction, especially with a cross-disciplinary field such as ethnomusicology, affords the opportunity to simultaneously teach for content mastery, to support language acquisition, to enhance application of language learning strategies, to foster cognitive growth, and to build a global perspective while increasing competency in intercultural communication. Enthusiasm and commitment are vital and determining forces in learning; therefore, it behooves us all to teach something we truly enjoy and to reap the rewards of attempting the challenge of significant learning in our classrooms.

Teaching resources

World music textbooks

Broughton. S. (2000). *World Music: 100 Essential CDs – The Rough Guide.* Penguin Books. Useful reference on influence and trends of ethnic music on world music of today; includes discography. Related CD collections are available separately.

Lieberman, J. L. (1998). *Planet Musician: The World Music Sourcebook for Musicians*. New York: Hal Leonard. Includes CD featuring practice material and technical exercises.

Reck, D. (1997). *Music of the Whole Earth.* Da Capo Press.

Walther, T. (1981). *Make Mine Music!* Little, Brown & Company. Description of the families of musical instruments and plans for making a variety of simple ones.

Wilson, C. (Ed.) (1996). *The Kingfisher Young People's Book of Music*. New York: Kingfisher Publications. Short articles and abundant visual images; written for children; covers all types of music; more appropriate for reference than textbook.

YouTube offers a wide assortment of vocal and instrumental music from various countries.

Audio Recordings

Smithsonian Folkways World Music Collection – CD anthology of 28 sample provides an excellent resource for class or independent student listening. Find them at your favorite music store or go to http://www.folkways.si.edu

The Rough Guide Series (World Music Network) – CD collections on specific geographic areas, highlights traditional and current world music stars http://www.worldmusic.net

Internet and iPad Resources

Indiana University Music Resources for Ethnomusicology http://www.music.indiana.edu/music_resources/ethnic.html

iPhone or iPad apps: World Music, GarageBand, studio.M, Componendo, various instruments

Worldwide Music Podcasts – access to playable samples of all kinds of music (or purchase) http://www.mondomix.com, http://www.pbsfm.org.au/world

References

Meyers, M. (1993). *Teaching to diversity: Teaching and learning in the multi-ethnic classroom.* Toronto: Irwin Publishing.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.