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6. THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON OPEN-EAREDNESS

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Abstract: *Open-earedness theory has repeatedly been confirmed on several populations including American, English, Dutch, German and Finnish people. Nonetheless the influence of cultural diversity on openness towards unfamiliar music has received little attention from researchers and this may create the possibility of adding essential modifications of Albert LeBlanc's theory. Considering the contemporary context, people's migration towards economic developed countries becomes a phenomenon with great implications related to the progress of social and cultural characteristics of any national context. Researching the open-earedness of people which have been exposed not only to their native culture but also to the adopted one (due to financial necessities) may reveal a series of useful aspects for the intercultural field (by disclosing new ways to promote the tolerance towards cultural diversity) and also for the educational field (by describing new strategies of learning in a context of adaptation to an unfamiliar musical space). The present article analyses a series of previous experiments that monitored the way different social categories integrated in cultural communities different from their own assimilate or not the elements of the adopted country into their musical identity. The present analysis has educational implications related to the ways students may develop the preference for unfamiliar music.*
Key words: open earedness, cultural diversity, musical identity, bimusicalism

1. Introduction

Although being repeatedly confirmed (LeBlanc, 1980; LeBlanc et al, 1992, 1996; Kopiez & Lehmann, 2008; Hargreaves, Comber & Colley, 1995) on various populations (American, English, Dutch, German, Finnish), the open-earedness theory researchers haven't yet extensively considered the cultural differences between subjects in generalizing their results. The present international context favors the migration of people from undeveloped countries and this social phenomenon may have great implications related to the construction of different cultural spaces.

Researching the musical preferences of people who have been exposed not only to their native culture, but also to the newly-adopted one could reveal data that may be relevant to the field of intercultural studies (by finding new ways to create tolerance to diversity, for example) and education (by identifying better strategies to adapt and improve students' learning process in unfamiliar spaces).

2. The Case of Turkish Student Minority from Germany

Due to the struggle to find a better paid job, an important number of Turkish families have moved to Germany since 1995. Therefore, the percentage of foreign students has increased up to more than 40% in some German schools, with the Turkish student population becoming the most representative in this space (Sakai, 2011). In some industrial German regions (for example in

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Ludwigshafen where the chemical industry is highly developed) a third of students is of Turkish origin.

The simultaneous interaction between Eastern and Western cultural elements brings the necessity of solving certain differences regarding the perception of the environment, considering the fact that, in many cases Eastern and Western perspectives are sometimes of opposite nature and this may be in the detriment of coherent learning. For example, Morrison and his collaborators (2008, 2013) have shown that Turkish adults revealed inferior performance differentiating tone melodies in comparison to the case of differentiating melodies written in oriental musical systems. Therefore, the double enculturation could have a significant impact on Turkish students' academic adaptation.

In addition to this, Patrick Wong (Wong et al., 2009) talks about the existence of "bimusicalism" that joins the bilingualism and proves that the cognitive and emotional sensitivity and adaptation may extend beyond the language space. German teachers are considering the extent to which academic integration of Turkish workers' children really follows the national education standards, as they are culturally exposed to three types of influence (Sakai, 2011):

- local influences through the German repertoire they learn at school;
- transnational influences through the Turkish musical preferences and traditions of their family;
- global influences through the international melodies broadcasted at the radio, TV and internet.

Consequently, this questions arises: which type of influences will form the cultural identity of these immigrant children? Will they keep their Turkish traditions, will they adopt the German ones, or will they a cultural hybrid with specific features? Researching these students' musical preferences may offer some indications regarding this aspect.

Winfried Sakai from Hamburg University developed a new way to assess musical preferences through a computerized software. His research group included 267 German primary school students, of whom 173 were of Turkish origin (and whose parents migrated to Germany). Each student had about 35 minutes to appreciate a list of musical fragments divided in three categories: Turkish music (transnational influence), German music (local influence) and Anglo-American music (global influence). Each category was illustrated in four variants: instrumental music, traditional music, rhythmic music and children repertoire. The students had been instructed to make their own musical playlist out of these songs, by using the following computer commands: DELETE, STOP, FADE OUT, GO ON (listen to the melody for another 30 seconds), DOUBLE (listen to the whole melody once again). These commands allowed the researcher to measure students' musical preferences by analyzing their listening time and listening disposition for each type of music. Demographic information and data regarding musical experience and family's musical

preferences were also gathered through a questionnaire which was completed by students and their parents.

The results have shown that the Turkish origin predicted the preference for Turkish and German music. Therefore, German students of Turkish origin tended to prefer both Turkish (transnational influence) and German (local influence) music, although the two culture have very different musical systems. A third of these students prefer Turkish music exclusively, while the other two thirds German and Turkish music equally.

Sakai interprets students' preference for oriental culture as an indicator children use to construct their self-image. He suggested that a real Western integration of Turkish origin students has specific features and will successfully be provided through teachers' familiarization with the oriental system, or by hiring teachers of Turkish origin. He claims: "it is not enough to sing some children's songs or folk songs to build bridges between cultures in the classroom (…) teachers should pay attention to transnational pop cultures to adapt music instruction—not to stay there but, perhaps, to start there on the pathway to further music challenges" (Sakai, 2011, p. 191). Sakai's study has revealed that music lessons are an important part of cultural integration and that students' cultural background should highly be considered in their academic development.

3. The African-American and Latino Student Population from USA

The USA cultural space is very divers by definition, due to the fact that the existence of the federation itself depended on following a series of cohabitation rules accepted by people of different nationalities who migrated there from different European countries. The 21st century brought new challenges related to the tolerance towards cultural diversity. The demographic data of USA is continuously changing due to the migration Latino and Eastern-Asian people and this adds up to the challenges of the social integration of African-American population. It has been anticipated (McCrary, 2000) that around 2020 the non-European population (which is now a minority) will extent to 64% of the total USA population.

Jan McCrary from Ohio State University has investigated the ways third, fifth and seventh grade students' musical preferences for African-American and Latino music impact their disposition to interact with African-American and Latino peers. The research included a group of multiple ethnic identities and followed two directions:

1. the measurement of musical preferences by listening and rating on a 7-level Likert scale the preference for three melodies: *Street Life* performed by Randy Crawford (an African-American rhythm and blues singer), *Pun Pun Catalu* performed by Celia Cruz (a Cuban salsa singer) and *Johnny Sands* performed by Sally Rogers (a European-American folk singer).
2. the measurement of students' interactions in small groups task solving activities. When there were four children in a group, the group included one child who held classroom minority status. When the small group consisted of five children, the group included one or two children who held classroom

minority status. Quantitative and qualitative observations related to these interactions have been made by the researcher while students were solving the given task of identifying the singer's age and date of song recording.

The results have once again confirmed the open-earedeness theory, but this time in a multicultural context. Therefore, the third grade students liked all three melodies better than the fifth and the seventh graders did, thus indicating a higher tolerance towards unfamiliar music at a lower age. The researcher also discovered a cultural effect in all investigated age groups: African-American students have revealed higher preference for the African-American song and for the salsa performer. Similarly, the Latino students preferred the salsa song the most, then the African-American song and lastly the European-American folk song. The European-American students (the majority population) the European folk song better than the African-American and Latino ones. Therefore, the cultural background of students acts as an identity symbol not only for the minority population, but also for the majority.

The observed behaviors of students during group task solving confirmed students' attitude towards unfamiliar music. The third graders described the songs different from their culture to be funny. Boys especially have made ironic comments regarding the vocal style and pronunciation of the African-American and Latino performers. The fifth graders African-American students have been asked by their colleagues for the performers' names and they have shown reluctance in telling the information due to fear of being ridiculed.

The majority/minority status may have a significant effect the openness towards unfamiliar music and the declared preference for it. The minority groups liked their music of origin when asked anonymously but had the tendency to hide their preference when discussing openly about it. The reason may be the fact that the majority of students ridiculed the unfamiliar musical expression. Within each grade-level of participants, classroom minority girls were reluctant to participate in the small-group discussions or to offer their opinions about the music. However, the classroom minority boys were invited to participate in group discussions more often than were classroom minority girls. So a gender effect is also present here.

One explanation for these effects may have something to do with the lyrics of the songs. Two American researchers (Abril & Flowers, 2007) have investigated the musical preference of 60 sixth graders for three versions of the same song: the instrumental version, the English version and the Spanish version. The participants were native in English only, but also bilinguals who spoke English and Spanish. The results have shown that the English speakers (the majority group) preferred the instrumental version better, while the Latino students liked the Spanish version of the song. When asked about the reasons why they liked that version more, the Latino students said that the music's message is stronger in Spanish and that the song simply "sounds better in Spanish" (Abril & Flowers, 2007, p. 212). Other reasons for their preferences indicated that they listen to the same music style at home or that they like the way the lyrics are similar to the way thy speak at home. Consequently, the lyrics

of a song could act as an important correlation factor between the musical preference and the cultural identity.

3. Conclusions

When researching the open-earedness theory, the cultural factor may play a significant role in modifying the results. Is it fair to say that the age affects the tolerance for unfamiliar music in the same way for all the musical styles? Could the preference for unheard music from the same musical background a child was born into be the exception from this rule? Most of the studies performed on music preference investigated the scores subjects gave on academic and international music. What kind of results would we get if we take into consideration different musical systems, different languages a song is performed in, or different stylistic features specific to a certain culture? Future research may provide a most needed completion of the open-earedness theory, as the cultural background of the subjects may determine surprising new findings.

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