

SPA-143

A Participant Observation in “Language Activities”: From the Perspective of “Against Interpretation”

*Yuki Ishikawa
Sakae Junior High School, Japan*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the use of language in music education. According to the report by the Central Council for Education of Japan in 2008, language forms the foundation of intellectual activities, communication sensitivity and emotion. Previous study in Japan demonstrated: the images and emotions that students want to express are clear by sharing their images and emotions by language (Mizoguchi, 2016). According to the concept suggested by Sontag (1996), the Greek philosophy eventually created the separation of ‘form’ and ‘content’ in art, and therefore, ‘form’ is art itself and ‘content’ is interpretation of art by language. That move makes ‘content’ essential and ‘form’ accessory. However, if excessive stress on ‘content’ that should exist as essence provokes the arrogance of interpretation, the art itself would be silence. What is needed is a vocabulary for ‘form’ of music itself rather than a vocabulary for ‘content’ such as the images and emotions.

The research question of this paper, therefore, is: what kind of vocabulary do students need to describe music? In order to clarify how students use languages, a participant observation as a method was employed in at Junior High School, Japan. The students tried to create music that didn’t stick to functionality of harmony or coordination. The students made the group of six and created one graphic score by superimposing their graphics. The author analyzed ‘language activities’ based on the two groups by dividing the comments between group into ‘form’ and ‘content.’

The results from this study demonstrated that they all paid their attentions to musical ‘form’ such as structure although each student differently felt and thought of music. In particular, the students in the first group were engaged in ‘language activities’ closely related to musical ‘form’ without being biased towards musical ‘content.’ However, in the second group, the students were more ‘content’ oriented since they tended to imitate sounds from physical objects such as an airplane and the running sounds. From these results, two considerations can be presented. First, by means of focusing on musical ‘form’ such as timbre and dynamics, ‘language activities’ can be utilized to focus on not the images or emotions but music itself. Second, music teachers should precisely clarify the purpose and the method for ‘language activities.’

Keywords: Form; Content; Language Activities