

POS-238

An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Pitch Matching Assessment: A Case Study in Shenzhen Futian High School, China

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Abstract

The 2011 Chinese music curriculum standards issued by Ministry of Education has clearly suggested teachers to pay more attention on the in-class music practice. Research from China illustrates that singing is the most common practical activity that can be functioned as an intervention to improve students' other musical skills. Also, the quality and impression of singing depends on how well they can sing in tune. To this end, in 2016, 295 students within six classes participated in an individual singing interventional assessment across two weeks of music lessons. The interventional process was as followed: (1) Students found the international musical standard note pitch (A) with a tuning fork and listen. (2) The teacher used the piano to produce two notes in which the students recognize the standard note pitch. (3) The students matched the pitch in their voice. This assessment eventually was rated by six levels: one can sing independently as A, need teachers' reminders on concentration as B, need teachers' vocal demonstration as C, need teachers to sing the whole scale as demonstration as D, and need to use multiple strategies to suggest as E, still not finished repairing as F. At the end, 96 students reached A level. Except for six students who were remaining F level, all the other 193 people could sing that standard pitch independently after the singing intervention.

The author conducted the same assessment again in 2017 and 2018. There were 6 students got F level in 2017 and there were 13 students got F in 2018. As verified by the teaching service, the enrollment of 2018 for was 10 points lower than in 2017, so the increase in the number of students to be repaired is likely to be related to a decline in the overall quality of students. Even so, the assessment results show that pitch matching can be improved by intervention.

This interventional assessment was designed regarding the principle of small steps mentioned by Skinner in *The Theory of Program Teaching*, which can make students achieve their goals through layering the instruction which is difficult to achieve.

The results of this study can be used as a reference for music classroom teaching in basic education in China. Also, it reveals that even though there are different learning conditions between China and the West, but the cognitive law is the same.