

EERA: The Didactics Of Singing And Intellectual Disabilities: How To Teach Warm-Up Exercises.

Author(s):Lucía Casal de la Fuente (presenting)

Conference:ECER 2014, The Past, the Present and the Future of Educational Research

Network:27. Didactics - Learning and Teaching

Format:Paper

Session Information

27 SES 12 B, Teaching Strategies for Learning Enhancement

Paper Session

Time:2014-09-05

09:00-10:30

Room:B016 Anfiteatro

Chair:Jérôme Santini

Contribution

The Didactics Of Singing And Intellectual Disabilities: How To Teach Warm-Up Exercises.

Everybody is entitled to all the rights that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has set. The European Convention of Human Rights and the European Social Charter are considered the most emblematic instruments of formal support of this level of the Council of Europe. These rights are protected by the European Court of Human Rights and the European Committee of Social Rights. But vulnerable groups see many of these human rights broken with too much assiduity. That is why through laws, educational policies and day-a-day practices we must go on trying and helping these people to develop their quality of life, fighting for this cause to make their rights come true and respected. The work we present in this paper takes the reference of the II Action Plan for People with Down Syndrome in Spain for the period 2009-2013 (Down España, 2008), which promotes the right and the duty to participate in social life, the autonomy and the social competence.

The action of music on living beings has been demonstrated from the most faraway olden days (Bence & Méreaux, 1988), for being a means of communication and expression that becomes appropriate especially when working with people with learning disabilities (Boltrino, 2008). An especially sensitive group to music is people with intellectual disabilities (PwID).

The voice is a natural resource of the human being, through which we can communicate. It has been proved through magnetic resonances that, when we sing, the neuromotor rehabilitation and the reactivation of specific brain interconnections are facilitated. This is because these specific brain interconnections are basic in the production of neurotrophins, which are indicators of brain plasticity (De Fonzo, 2012), and which are very important for the minimization of the effects of the structural and functional injuries of the brain.

EERA: The Didactics Of Singing And Intellectual Disabilities: How To Teach Warm-Up Exercises.

Although the acquisition of the language in PwID is not different to the acquisition that present people without intellectual disabilities (Lenneberg, 1975; in Casal, in press), they differ in the rhythm of development, which is slower in PwID, but the followed stages are the same. Therefore, more than an alteration, following Carroll (1986; in González-Pérez, 2003), the language disorders constitute a delay. PwID normally present difficulties when using their voices. The glossopharyngeal motor disorders and the muscular mouth discoordination generate little fluent verbal expression, without rhythm and with an unsuitable tonality (González-Pérez, 2003). The plans of work to help them in language disorders are normally centered on articulation, vocalization, and expression? of the spoken word. The voice impostation and the most primitive work of the voice, its warming, are usually pushed into the background. Warm-up exercises are significant for the development of PwID because they are the basis of voice work, for example, when doing speech therapy or singing. When singing, apart from working purely musical facets, we indirectly impact on the diction, vocabulary, self control, self-esteem and socialization (Llamas, 2012).

So, how can we train PwID in warm-up exercises? Which would be a good way to do it? Can the activities, included in the designed workshop, be followed by the participants? To what extent?

The objectives of this study are to know if the participants can follow the proposed warm-up exercises, which changes are necessary to do in them and consequently, to find out which would be a good way to teach warm-up exercises to PwID, and to present some instructions to do it.

So in this paper some considerations and guidelines based on a practical experience realized in the line of the didactics of warm-up exercises, included in a vocal technique workshop with PwID, are presented.

Method

The research timetable has been organized in 2012. In February, the research team contacted Down Compostela Foundation (DC) and presented the purpose of research. In March, the routine sessions of three groups of adults with different levels in oral production have been observed. In April, the intermediate group, attending to that level, has been selected for the participation in the workshop. It has been observed so that the design of the workshop could be done according to their characteristics. In May, the five sessions have been designed by the researchers and accepted by the personnel of DC. In June the workshop has been implemented, and in July the results have been analyzed and presented as a feedback to DC. The sampling method has been conditioned by the users of DC because they were suitable for the study. The sample belonged to the group of adults II of DC. It was composed by 13 participants: 6 women and 7 men in early adulthood. Every of them have been attending DC to develop their skills to improve their quality of life for several years. In 2012 they attended DC in the morning, since they had already finished their academic activity and their pre-professional training. PwID like making sounds with the tongue, the lips and the cheeks? (Llamas, 2012). Warm-up exercises are precisely based on them. An easy interval to intone is the minor 3rd (sol-mi), so we decided to take this in mind for the programming. Amongst the six activities of intonation, recommended by this author, to do with PwID, we have only taken three to program the sessions, due to the short length of the workshop. These have been tuning: sounds/syllables/words by imitation with the teacher; a note, and the vowels employing different notes. The warm-up exercises have been validated to check up to what extent they could be done by the sample. It was used a keyboard for playing the musical sequence the sample had to repeat. After that, the sample was invited to sing it. The methodology has been interpretative. The data collection techniques have been the observation and analysis of the sessions, attending to the activities that have not been done and its justification; the activities that must be changed and its justification; the on-the-fly programming modifications and its justification; the participants and personnel's attitude, verbal and nonverbal communication; and the interviews with professionals of DC.

Expected Outcomes

Apart of having accomplished the aims, we can affirm the users learnt to warm the voice (something verbalized by the personnel of DC), and we noticed the increasingly participation as well. We must underline the superb support, collaboration and involvement of the personnel of DC. About the workshop and the results, we can stand out the following considerations and implications. To teach warm-up exercises to adults with intellectual disabilities, it is important: to give always alternatives of pronounce to tune or sing the melodies; to play in a piano (or another instrument) the melodies several times, so that they can internalize what they have to emit afterwards; and to use gestures to associate the phonemes they should emit with the intonation. It is substantial that the leader of the session reproduces with the voice the warm-up exercises, so that this sound, belonging to the human voice, is as similar as possible to what they have to imitate. For each warm-up exercise it is necessary to check that each participant is doing it, and that he or she is doing it correctly. It is of great help the support of another professional that assist the participants in how to place, explaining individually the activity, if necessary, etc. With these indications, a more complete workshop could be designed, that makes possible the acquisition of those skills, capacities or attitudes, linked to the work of the singing voice. These exercises can be a great help for PwID to participate in the society in their independence life. As Europeans, we have the duty to look after these actions and to invest in research with these groups, so that our society is more and more inclusive and better prepared to attend more effectively the groups that require it the most.

References

- Bence, L. e Méreaux, M. (1988). Guía muy práctica de musicoterapia. Cómo utilizar uno mismo las propiedades terapéuticas de la música. México: Gedisa Editorial.
- Boltrino, P. (2008). Música y Educación Especial: Nos unen las diferencias. En M.P. Jacquier y A. Pereira (Ed.) *Objetividad - Subjetividad y Música*. Actas de la VII Reunión de SACCoM, 461-464.
- Casal de la Fuente, L. (in press). As possibilidades da voz cantada na mellora da linguaxe de persoas con discapacidade intelectual para unha integración máis eficaz. Congreso Internacional *¿Nosoutros: arte, comunicación e integración social?*, 3-6 decembro. Santiago de Compostela: Facultade de Ciencias da Comunicación.
- Council of Europe website. <http://hub.coe.int/> - Retrieved December 2013.
- Council of Europe (1961). European Social Charter. <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=035&CL=ENG> ? Retrieved December 2013.
- Council of Europe (1950). European Convention of Human Rights. <http://human-rights-convention.org/> - Retrieved December 2013.
- De Fonzo, M. (2012). *Canta che ti passa*. Roma: Sovera Edizioni.
- European Court of Human Rights website. <http://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=home> ? Retrieved December 2013.
- European Committee of Social Rights website. http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/ecsre/ecsredefault_en.asp - Retrieved December 2013.
- Down España (2008). *II Plan de Acción para las personas con Síndrome de Down en España 2009-2013*. http://www.sindromedown.net/adjuntos/cPublicaciones/56L_iiplande.pdf - Retrieved February 2012.
- González-Pérez, J. (2003). *Discapacidad intelectual: concepto, evaluación e intervención psicopedagógica*. Madrid: CCS.
- Llamas Rodríguez, J.C. (2012). *El canto y la melodía en alumnos con discapacidad intelectual ligera*. *Artseduca*, nº 3, 10-17.
- United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf - Retrieved December 2013.

EERA: The Didactics Of Singing And Intellectual Disabilities: How To Teach Warm-Up Exercises.

Author Information

Lucía Casal de la Fuente (presenting)

University of Santiago de Compostela

Didactics and Scholar Organization

Santiago de Compostela