

# **Teaching Strategies for Multicultural Education in Japanese Music Education - Incorporating the Use of an Empirical Study in an Elementary School -**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to clarify teaching strategies using empirical studies for multicultural education in Japanese elementary music education.

Previous studies have found that such teaching strategies can be implemented by accepting the ideas of foreigners living in the same communities as students and learning music culture from them. Based on this standpoint, lessons were created in order to deepen students' understandings of Thai musical culture for the fourth grade students as the Thai people lived in the students' community. Specifically, lessons were provided based on the results of a survey on the community mentioned above and, additionally, these were taught with assistance by Thai exchange students. Teaching materials were as follows: 1) "MonSonPa" being a play song; 2) "Elephant Song" being widely sung; and 3) "LoyKratong" being associated with application of instrument and dance as festival songs.

The results found that these strategies had an effect on students' interest in learning. The students attempted in-class knowledge-based communication with foreigners and approaching the interactions from the foreigner's perspective as they had an opportunity to think about if they wish to speak with those who live in the community. These efforts will form the foundation of the realization of a multicultural society.

**Keyword:** Multicultural Education, Music Education, Teaching Strategies

## **1. Introduction**

In Japan, the foreign population and the proportion of foreigners in the total population are both increasing. These increases can be attributed to the government's acceptance of foreign workers after 1990 as a countermeasure to a reduced workforce due to the declining birthrate and the growing proportion of elderly people.

Under these circumstances—a domestic race accompanied by an increasingly racially diverse population—the necessity for multicultural education arose. In this study, multicultural education indicates the educational theory and practice aiming at the coexistence of various races and cultural groups.

Previous multicultural education research in Japan and those of foreign countries have focused on the educational system. There is room for examination and research into the areas below:

- 1) In each subject, clarify strategies for promoting students' decision-making abilities and actions to realize a multicultural society.
- 2) Theorize the Japanese multicultural education with reference to Japanese social backgrounds.

This study considers the problem from the perspective of practical research in multicultural instruction in music education, specifically the experience of working as a full-time teacher for two years in a Thai–Japanese Association elementary school. Some students had discriminatory attitudes toward Thai people, and I strongly felt the necessity of multicultural education. However, just treating the music of Thailand as a teaching material did not reach the students well enough acquire the ability to participate effectively in a pluralistic society. Therefore, It is need students not only to deeply understand ing different cultures, as well as but also to acquire the decision-making abilities and take actions to coexist with the Thai people insufficient.

Moreover, multicultural education for elementary school students is important because infants and small children have prejudice toward some races. Therefore, examining multicultural education in elementary school music education is essential.

In this study, research questions have been set as follows:

- 1) What strategies do teachers use to help students acquire the ability to participate effectively in a pluralistic society?
- 2) How do elementary schoolteachers teach multicultural music classes in a practical way?

## **2. Literature Review**

How are the problems above examined in music education in Japan? The focus has been on understanding varieties of music worldwide based on the findings of ethnomusicology. For example, Shimazaki and Kato (2013) presented a study model for understanding different cultures.

Previous studies in the music education of Japan include the study by Isoda (2010), who examined the theory of multicultural music education in the United States, leading to the following suggestions:

- 1) Include the minority perspective in lesson content.

- 2) Reduce discrimination with others in cooperation with another subject and interpersonal relationships in the community.

Banks (2008), a pioneer of multicultural education in U.S., also mentioned considering minority opinion and the importance of teaching in cooperation with a person from the minority community. He also insisted that curriculum and teaching materials comprise perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups not only of the majority but also of minority.

Sparks (1989) suggested the following in the context of an anti-bias curriculum for young children:

- 1) Recreate the curriculum in relation to the everyday life of the children and their families; in other words, begin the learning from a familiar culture.
- 2) Understand cultures based on exploring not just differences but also similarities.
- 3) Learn experientially.

#### **【Extracted teaching strategies from previous studies】**

Teaching strategies in the aforementioned works can be consolidated into the following four points:

- 1) Compare with the student's own culture.
- 2) Adopt a familiar culture.
- 3) Execute using experiential activities.
- 4) Relate to the student's community.

However, the question remains regarding practical strategies used by teachers to implement these four points. Next, we examine actual practices.

### **3. Methods and Practices**

#### **3.1 Methods**

##### **【Teaching strategies in this study】**

Findings by the aforementioned previous studies are as follows. Teaching materials are selected on the basis of familiarity, for example, play songs, nursery rhymes, and festival songs. These selections are learned through the analysis of similarities and differences in viewpoints through comparison with the students' culture and experiences of singing, dancing, and moving. Besides, the study examined results of a questionnaire and a hearing survey administered to the minority in the same community. Culture is taught with such materials, similarly to an international student.

##### **【Methods of analysis】**

Students' speech and behavior on worksheets and recordings were analyzed to clarify teaching strategies' effects through examination of student attitudes before and after multicultural lessons using the Steps for Coding and Theorization (SCAT) method—a qualitative data analysis method developed by Otani (2008)—which can be

used for small-scale data.

### **3.2 Practice**

Because previous teaching strategies did not work well with students, Thai music was again the focus of this study, along with Thai people as a coexistence partner.

Participants were fourth grade elementary students in the Setagaya Elementary School attached to Tokyo Gakugei University. The study was conducted for two hours on September 18 and 22, 2014.

Lessons were created to deepen students' understanding of Thai culture and develop their skill at participating in effective civic action with Thai people living in the community. Specifically, lessons were provided on the basis of the results of a survey with the community mentioned above, and additionally these lessons were taught with the assistance of Thai exchange students. Teaching materials were as follows:

1) "MonSonPa"

In Thailand, "MonSonPa" is a traditional game with a playground rhyme. At a glance, it resembles the traditional Japanese game "hankati-otoshi" (drop the handkerchief). However, the game differs because Thai players sing a rhyme while they are running.

2) "Elephant Song"

"Elephant Song," composed in a pentatonic scale, is a very popular song in Thailand and also a characteristic of Thai folk music.

3) "LoyKratong"

"LoyKratong" is a November festival of gratitude for water in Thailand. At the festival, Thai people sing and dance in rounds with the song "LoyKratong."

These tunes were chosen for the following three points:

- 1) Many questionnaires gathered from the Thai people in the community around the elementary school contained the response that they wanted to teach Japanese students these tunes.
- 2) This type of music is likely to be familiar to students.
- 3) These tunes can be studied through various activities.

Data for the analysis was collected as follows:

1) Worksheet in each class

At the end of each multicultural lesson, students were to write on the worksheet what they understood, felt, and wanted to ask about each tune studied.

2) Letter for the guest teacher

At home, students wrote letters to the guest teacher.

3) Questionnaire survey after lessons

Students wrote an answer to this question: What would you want to talk about if you met Thai people in the neighborhood after the music lessons?

### **【Lesson 1】**

The objective of this lesson is “Become familiar with this child’s song from Thailand.”

The lesson followed these steps:

1) Sharing impressions or knowledge of the Thai people, country, and culture .

Talk with classmates about your knowledge and image of foreigners who live or work in your community and in Japan and of the Thai people and Thailand. Thereafter, look at the map of Thai food shops around the school. Through these strategies, students recognized that Thai people live and work in their surroundings.

2) Introduction of Thailand by guest teacher

Listen to the guest teacher, a Thai exchange student, give a self-introduction and a description of characteristics and features of Thailand.

3) Play and sing “MonSonPa”

Discuss similar and different features of how the handkerchief drop game is played in Japan and Thailand. Enjoy singing and playing the game “MonSonPa.”

4) Sing “Elephant Song”

Understand that the elephant is an important animal for the Thai people. Sing “Elephant Song” while clapping hands to the music.

5) Reflect on the lessons

Sing each song and review points of study.

### **【Lesson 2】**

The objective of this lesson is “Become familiar with the festival music of Thailand.”

The lesson followed these steps:

Sing “MonSonPa” and “Elephant Song.”

1) Understand the connection between the music and the Thai people.

Listen to the teacher speak about the survey results from the Thai people living in the community and understand the connection between the music and the Thai people.

2) Know about the “LoyKratong” festival.

Know the outline of the festival of “LoyKratong” and the “LoyKratong” dance and song from the guest teacher’s speech.

3) Listen to the tones of Thai musical instruments.

Acquire new knowledge about types of musical instruments from Thailand. Appreciate the timbre of the instruments’ sounds from a film about great Thai musicians of traditional instruments.

4) Dance enjoying the timbre of Thai traditional instruments.

Enjoy traditional dance in a ring to the music of “LoyKratong” with the guest teacher while listening to the timbre of Thai traditional instruments.

5) Reflect on the lesson.

Review points of study. Listen to the guest teacher's speech. Additionally, propose that each student writes a letter to the guest teacher as homework.

#### **4. Results**

As a result of the lessons and analysis, students admitted the following transformations:

1) Deepened understanding of Thai music and culture

Example from reflection on the worksheet for "Elephant Song": "The elephant shall be important for the person in Thailand"

2) Growing motivation to have a relationship with Thai neighbors using knowledge and skills gained through experiences in the lessons

Example from reflection on the worksheet: I want to dance "LoyKratong" and play and sing "MonSonPa" together."

3) Beginning to develop an attitude of thinking and acting from their Thai neighbors' perspective.

Example of student descriptions: "How is living in Japan?" This is a description in the questionnaire survey after the lessons.

According to the results, the teaching strategies of (1) comparing with students' culture, (2) adopting a familiar culture, and (3) executing experiential activity, thereby encouraging transformation of students' views and deepening their understanding of Thailand provided students a certain growing interest and awareness for learning about a different culture and gaining a feeling of familiarity with the guest Thai teacher, Thai neighbors, and Thailand. On the other hand, the teaching strategy (4), relating with the students' community, could arouse interest and awareness. In addition, students could possibly contact their neighborhood having different cultures using the knowledge and experience from these lessons and gain the ability to perceive things from a minority perspective. This makes the best use of learning about Thai culture from the community with set strategies for practical tasks, like asking the question: What would you want to talk about if you met Thai people in the neighborhood after the lessons?

#### **5. Conclusion**

Results revealed that these strategies impacted students' interest in learning. The students attempted in-class, knowledge-based communication with foreigners and approached interactions from foreigners' perspectives as they had an opportunity to consider wishing to speak with those who live in their community. These efforts will help form the foundation of a multicultural society.

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