Song Text and Song Structure:

With an Emphasis on Oral/Aural Tradition

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By
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The Thesis Advisor and Reader have rendered the following decision concerning the defense for

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______X____ Full approval to proceed with no proposal revisions.
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Abstract

This study highlights the different aspects of song texts and song structures while also establishing the impacts of an oral/aural tradition. Emphasis was placed on the relationship between linguistics and music, and how one may alter the teaching/learning process of new song materials for students (especially young adolescents). Song texts and song structures were also looked at in relation to culture, and how culture is affected by oral/aural tradition. Specifically, the outcomes of students learning song texts in their native language/tongue versus songs of a different culture was explored. The differences and commonalities of learning music in various styles were also analyzed, leading to a better understanding of the learning process. The research study posits that students learn best in a mix of ways, with the utilized teaching methodologies (oral/aural tradition as well as written notation) being highly influenced by the desired outcome of the learning.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The connection of music and linguistics is a profound one, spanning across time and throughout cultures. Both music and language are utilized in all parts of the world, but the ways in which these things are used differ greatly. Song texts add meaning to musical experiences, placing emphasis on the understanding and interpretation of the music. How each culture, (and each individual person) practices, performs, listens to, hears, and experiences music varies in a highly personalized approach. Additionally, the emphasis that certain cultures place on oral/aural traditions can be seen as very impactful to the musical experiences exhibited in a given community. The influence of each approach to song texts and song structures may lead to vastly diverse methods of learning music.

Throughout this study, the differences, and commonalities of learning music in various styles were explored and analyzed, leading to a better understanding of the learning process. The methodology of learning music through written notation as well as through aural/oral tradition were each considered and researched in order to gain understanding of the best practices in teaching music. How differing cultures utilize these characteristics in their music was also included as a large portion of the research. Furthermore, the ties between music and linguistics were explored, and how music is referred to as a “universal language.”

The focus throughout this study was how anthropology (the scientific study of humanity, concerned with human behavior, biology, culture, society, and linguistics) has shaped song texts and song structures among different cultures. More specifically, the research analyzed oral/aural traditions and how the practice may influence song texts and structures. A focus was taken on how culture is explicitly impacted by oral tradition and how children (especially students ages eight to ten) learn better in oral/aural settings versus musical notation. The intent was to analyze
and use songs from two differing cultures throughout the fieldwork experience to provide some
diversity and contrast in the data analysis. Scotland and the Dominican Republic were the two
cultures who’s folk and children's songs were applied to the research and examined for future
study.

**Background**

Scotland

These two cultures were used for research because of their diverse and rich societal
histories. Scotland is a well-known culture with a rich tradition of folk singing. This rich
tradition provided a wealth of songs for use in the fieldwork experience and analysis. These
songs were also ones that the research participants could understand (being that many of the
participants in the study spoke English).

Scotland derives from the Latin word *Scotia*, land of the Scots, a Celtic people from
Ireland who settled on the west coast of Great Britain about the 5th century A.D. A part of the
United Kingdom, Scotland is considered the most Northern of the four parts, occupying
approximately one-third of the island of Great Britain. The name Caledonia has often been
applied to Scotland, especially in poetry. It is derived from *Caledonii*, the Roman name of a tribe
in the northern part of what is now Scotland.¹ There are three languages in Scotland: English,
Scots, and Gaelic.

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¹ Brown, A.; Cameron, Ewen A.; Moulton, Matthew James; and Macleod, Iseabail C. "Scotland."
Scotland is world-renowned for its traditional music – typically referred to as folk music – and its origins can be traced back thousands of years. The bagpipes, the most recognizable symbol of Scottish culture, are a staple in the culture's music. The earliest mention of bagpipes in Scotland can be traced back to the 15th century. However, traditional music and instruments existed for many centuries before this. While the bagpipes have existed for over 600 years in Scotland, it is still considered a “relative newcomer on the Scottish music scene!” On the Isle of Skye, evidence of a stringed instrument called a lyre was found that dates as far back as 2300

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B.C.E. – making it the oldest surviving stringed instrument in all of Europe. \(^3\) Today, traditional instruments used in Scottish music include the fiddle, accordion, wooden flute, and the clarsach (a wooden harp with a curved top and side, considered one of Scotland’s oldest instruments).

A traditional local custom is a *ceilidh*, a social occasion that includes music and storytelling. While this custom was once common throughout the country, the ceilidh is now a mainly rural practice.\(^4\) However, it is still common to see similar practices in local gathering

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\(^4\) “Scottish Music and Festivals.”
halls/pubs, where music is a widely participatory and celebrated event. Another essential role of music in traditional Scottish culture is the individual known as the *bard*. Bards “relied on a strong oral tradition and acted primarily as the community’s musician, poet, and storyteller. However, they were also known to fulfill the role of local historian and, at times, even the lawyer.”\(^5\) This tradition is no longer widely used; instead, it is applied as a term of recognition for famous authors or poets. This is why Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, is commonly referred to as “The Bard.”

Robert Burns (1759–1796) is perhaps the foremost literary figure in Scottish history. He was a poet whose songs were written in the Scottish dialect of English, and he tended to arouse great passion amongst his audience, which gained him a legion of dedicated followers.\(^6\) He avidly collected traditional melodies and composed lyrics to them if these did not exist; if they did exist, he passionately fought to preserve them in their original Scots form rather than Anglicize them. Some of his most notable works include “Auld Lang Syne,” “Tam o’Shanter,” and “A Red, Red Rose.”

**Dominican Republic**

The second culture, the Dominican Republic, stems from several orally/aurally based cultures and provided some diversity to the research. Several people who participated in the research study also connected with the music used because it stems from their cultural heritage. Interviews were also conducted throughout this research process with Dominican individuals who provided first-hand knowledge of the culture and the music.

\(^5\) “Scottish Music and Festivals.”

\(^6\) Brown et al.
The Dominican Republic is a country of the West Indies that occupies the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola, the second largest island of the Greater Antilles chain in the Caribbean Sea. Haiti, an independent republic, occupies the western third of the island. The population of D.R. is over 10 million, and the official language is Spanish. Often grouped with the countries of Latin America, the Dominican has been referred to as a “microcosm” of the region.

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8 González and Wiarda.
Of all the former colonies in the New World, the Dominican Republic is the oldest. As
the first colony in the Americas, the roots of today’s Dominican culture lie in the earliest years of
the European conquest. Dominican culture is “creole,” traditionally defined as “born in the New
World.” It is a fusion of Old-World elements of Hispanic and African provenance tempered by
New-World circumstance and creativity. Music, especially when accompanied by dancing, is
vital at all social levels and regions of the country. The most typical forms are those with clear
African antecedents, especially in their rhythms. There are also folk songs and tunes deriving
from Spain and the Middle East. Popular genres include merengue, bolero, salsa, and folk songs
associated with African heritage. Therefore, many of the traditional folk songs in D.R. are
shared with other Latin American countries. The guitar is probably the most popular instrument,
followed by percussion, and in some rural areas, flutes and homemade marimbas are also
common.

The D.R. is perhaps most famous for its styles of merengue and bachata. Several
convincing origin stories to the merengue genre have circulated, and perhaps all incorporate
some fragment of truth. According to an interviewee from the culture, however, the most likely
story is that merengue was invented by enslaved people in the 1700s. The belief is that the
merengue is a direct result of a combination of two different dances: the African and the French
minuet. Enslaved people in the Dominican Republic would watch their masters dance these stoic,

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10 Davis.

11 González and Wiarda.

formal ballroom dances at varying events. Then they would get together and mimic the dances of their masters. As these dances were seen to be stiff and arguably boring by the enslaved people, adjustments were made to make the dance more their own by quickening the tempo and altering the dancing to match the newly created rhythms.\textsuperscript{13}

Bachata came about much later in the culture. It originated in the 1960s throughout the countryside of the D.R. The music was first developed with a heavy guitar emphasis and heartfelt love stories as its basis. However, the style ended up primarily growing within bars and brothels. This led to bachata being “held back for decades.”\textsuperscript{14} During this time, the Dominican Republic was led by a dictator named Trujillo. Trujillo fully embraced the genre of merengue but abhorred bachata. Not only did he find the style of music and dance offensive, claiming it was a lower art form, but he also went a step further and banned both the music and dance altogether. Throughout his reign, bachata was only enjoyed in the brothels. Naturally, this did not aid in the credibility of the style and kept it from evolving alongside the other dance styles born in the Dominican during the time.\textsuperscript{15} Even after Trujillo's reign ended, society still frowned upon bachata. Although the bachata dance is a development of the music, in recent years, the music has grown more slowly than the dance.\textsuperscript{16} Bachata dance continues to grow and thrive worldwide and has finally reached a place where it is widely accepted.

Hispanic-Dominican music illustrates that emigrant groups often retain aspects of culture in the living tradition that continues evolving or dying out in the region of origin.\textsuperscript{17} Two works

\textsuperscript{13} Miguel Abreu, interview by Hannah Petrick.

\textsuperscript{14} Miguel Abreu, interview by Hannah Petrick.

\textsuperscript{15} Miguel Abreu, interview by Hannah Petrick.

\textsuperscript{16} Miguel Abreu, interview by Hannah Petrick.

\textsuperscript{17} Two works
by folklorist Edna Garrido Boggs illustrate this point: *Versiones Dominicana de Romances Españoles* (1946), on the Spanish ballad in the Dominican Republic; as well as *Folklore Infantil de Santo Domingo* (1955, reprinted in 1980), on children’s songs and games, with transcriptions by Ruth Crawford Seeger, whose recordings are in the Archive of Folk Culture of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.  

**Statement of the Problem**

It is not clear how oral/aural tradition is impacted by different cultures and whether or not there is a best practice for teaching new music to adolescents and students concerning the language of the music being learned. This study aims to identify how culture relates to learning new song materials and how song text and structure is impacted through different teaching processes. The impact of oral/aural tradition is explored as a basis for teaching methods utilized in a classroom.

**Statement of the Purpose**

This study highlights the different aspects of song texts and song structures while also establishing the impacts of an oral/aural tradition. The research obtained in this study emphasizes how linguistics and music interrelate and shows how oral tradition influences song text. While much research has been done on the topic of oral/aural tradition in each culture, there is a clear gap on the subject of song texts and how oral/aural traditions may impact them. This study hopes to fill this gap and add depth to the subject.

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17 Davis.
18 Davis.
Significance of the Study

In addition to bridging the gaps in existing literature, this study also has the potential to showcase clear benefits for students with particular learning styles. The advantages of the different methodologies for teaching songs and song texts to pupils cannot be overlooked. Distinguishing whether learning orally/aurally or through written musical notation is more beneficial could be advantageous to present and future music educators as they work to share music and culture with their students.

Limitations of the Study

While there were no direct risks involved in this study, as with any other research, there were limits. For this research study, the limitations were apparent in the constraints of research subjects and the lack of ability to travel to the origins of the cultures being studied. For fieldwork research, only one school and one populous group could be observed so that a progression of the material and research being studied was made. This led to a very small sampling of participants and minimized diversity. Additionally, while first-hand interviews of those within the Dominican culture could be conducted, travel to the D.R. and first-hand experience of the culture was not possible. This was a substantial limitation as immersion, and first-hand observations of the culture were stifled, and only second-hand experiences could be collected. The same challenge was presented in choosing the Scottish culture to study; travel was not possible to the country of origin. Therefore, the research was limited to text and second-hand knowledge. This is a severe drawback of the research study. However, it was also evident that the purpose of the study was
more about song structure and text as a whole, and the value of teaching methodologies for song text and structure, than of the cultures themselves.

Assumptions

For this research study, there were several working assumptions. Firstly, children ages eight to ten years old could adequately represent the differences between learning orally/aurally versus through written notation. This also led to the assumption that the research subjects adequately represented the age group, being such a small sampling of people for the study. Therefore, the assumption was that the people chosen for interviews and the songs selected were accurate representations of each culture. Lastly, work had to be done to find the similarities and connections between the varying cultures. As the D.R. and Scotland appear to be vastly different, it was also essential to seek out how these differences impacted the research. By doing this, the hope was that a comparison could be made to connect the research and make for a relevant study.

Research Questions

This study sought to build a theory in answer to the following research questions:

1) How does anthropology inform our understanding of song texts and song structures in different cultures?

Anthropology deals with human behavior and culture, which directly impacts music and ethnomusicology. The study of linguistics is also heavy in anthropology which leads to how linguistics and song texts may affect music in a given culture. Anthropology, the study of humanity, culture, etc., develops and informs our knowledge of music by basing song structures and text in the studied culture.
2) Which is a better teaching practice for younger individuals up through adolescence, an oral/aural or musical notation methodology?

While written notation certainly makes analysis more accessible, many cultures hold onto the practice of oral/aural tradition for learning music, even neglecting notation. The significance of this methodology of teaching songs appears to thus come into question, creating interest in whether there are massive benefits to learning continually through oral/aural tradition that make it advisable to use as a sole methodological practice or if the learning benefits are dependent on the learner. This thinking process also suggests whether there are perhaps more freedoms in music learned orally/aurally or whether the same methods apply without the paper.

3) What are the outcomes of students learning song texts in their native language/tongue versus songs of a different culture?

What the challenges are of learning song texts in a different language may be, as well as what key benefits arise from the practice. Employing materials and songs from differing cultures in this research and fieldwork naturally lent itself to questioning the impact and outcomes. These variables were clear and offer another avenue for study down the road.
Definition of Terms

**Anthropology.** “The science of human beings, especially the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.”

**Cantometrics.** “The statistical analysis of singing styles correlated with anthropological data.”

**Ethnography.** “Descriptive study of a particular human society or the process of making such a study.”

**Linguistics.** “The study of human speech including the units, nature, structure, and modification of language.”

**Metaphysics.** “The science that studied ‘being as such’ or ‘the first causes of things or ‘things that do not change.’”

**Methodology.** “A body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline: a particular procedure or set of procedures.” OR “The analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field.”

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Oral/Aural Tradition. “A community's cultural and historical traditions passed down by word of mouth or example from one generation to another without written instruction.”25


Second Articulation. “The succession of separate, meaningless items, phonemes.”26

Semiology. “Also called semiotics, the study of signs and sign-using behavior.”27

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are many ways in which the text/linguistics of a song impacts the overall feel and structure of the music. Text can distinguish emotions, morality, and spirituality, as well as define cultural barriers. The text of a song speaks into the very heart of a culture and a people. Music is a gateway into the society it comes from and can tell those who listen a story. Music is often described as a “universal language,” but no language is universal. Much of the research on song text and song structure available is limited to specific cultures or groups. There is much in the way of existing literature on the study of linguistics, however, and the ways in which it impacts or connects to music. What seems to be lacking in research and literature is information on the importance of song text and song structure as it relates to learning methods and teaching. Therefore, this chapter discusses a definition of music, how feelings are present in music, and the existing literature available on song texts and song structure.


Defining Music

Before digging into and analyzing song texts and their impact on music, it is first vital and relevant to determine what music is. Music is notes, chords, and symbols written out on a sheet of paper. It is songs being sung, instruments being played, and melodies and harmonies intertwining. However, some societies also consider music to be the call of a bird, the pitter-patter of rain on a roof, and the sounds of everyday mundane activities. Music can be a collective activity, contributing to the communal consciousness of an ethnic group, or music can be a singular activity, divulged to no one else. Music is science, math, literature, reading, and history. However, music is also a comfort, a release, and an escape. Music is not just a song; it can be so much more.

Around the world, in different cultures and to each individual person, music is something unique. In Bruno Nettl’s text, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions*, he challenged readers to ask, “is music the universal language of mankind?” Yes, music is universal in that it means something to every culture, and each culture has music. However, music within each society looks and sounds vastly different. What is considered “good” music in one culture may not even be considered music in another.

In his text, Nettl discussed that all societies and ethnicities have rules and components of their music that are like others. For example, all cultures have singing and some degree of instrumental music in their practices. Another example is that music across cultures makes some use of internal repetition and has rhythmic structures based on the distinction between note lengths and dynamics. Finally, there are grammar and syntax rules that apply to music and serve


29 Nettl.
as a language. Nettl went on in the text to discuss again that music cannot be a universal language in any case. Cultures worldwide have practiced music for different purposes, have different expectations for music and its process, have different mindsets of what is considered good music, etc. So, while there may be commonalities amongst music structures, and “although music is universal, its meaning is not.”

In the text *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, Jeff Titon defined music as something not found in the natural world. Instead, he considered music as something that people make. He went on to explain that people “make” music in one of two ways, by physically producing the sounds they call music (singing, playing instruments) or by forming ideas and activities of what music is. In thinking of music in this way, as an individual or cultural entity, understood mainly by those who belong to the culture, it can be seen how music is not a universal language. After this establishment, other considerations may also be made as to the morality of music.

**Morality and Music**

While each culture may have rules and structures to form what makes their music, there are those societies in which specific rules for music do not apply or the symbols to express music are different. As each of these societies holds a distinct view of what music is, the question then becomes how can one be considered correct or morally right while another is wrong? Just

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31 Titon, 5.

32 Titon, 5.
because a piece of music is foreign, not understood, or even not pleasing to another person's ears does not make it inherently immoral. The meaning of music has everything to do with the interpretation of the listener and not with the actual music. More often, the meaning of a song is lost in translation or even completely changed, making the text of the piece a more defining characteristic of its morality than the music.

The sounds that make up the music of any culture do not hold a view or meaning of right and wrong. However, as with anything, when approached correctly, music can be used for the purpose of morality. If music were simply moral, then there would be no composition or construction needed. However, rhythm and melody must be created. A quarter note and a C5 are not inherently moral but combined and constructed in such a way the finished product is then a candidate for a moral purpose. When humans take music and add text and meaning behind it, the music has the capacity for morality, but it was not necessarily there to start with. Humans give meaning to or take meaning from music in different ways that may not have been there at the beginning. We give morality to music, just as we define what music is. Examples of this can be seen throughout history and across cultures; music has been used for both sacred and secular purposes.

A great instance of this is the song “What Child is This.” This familiar and famous Christmas carol was written to the tune of another familiar song, “Greensleeves.” While “What Child is This” is a Christian song focusing on the birth of Christ, “Greensleeves” would have been considered a secular pop song of the time, depicting a romantic heartbreak and including salacious text. The very name “Greensleeves” is believed to have been slang for someone engaging in promiscuous behavior! Humans establish their own meaning and morality to music based on what that person may take away from the listening. As Titon said, although we may not
be able to find a single idea of what music is and what music holds meaning, we can all agree that music does hold human meaning. Therefore, it is humans that have created meaning, purpose, and morality for music, with the texts being the utilized tool.

**Song Text**

The interweaving of music with words is a practice going back to the early days. As the voice was the first instrument, it seems only natural that words would be considered a part of the music as well. However, it is interesting to note that words are in fact, not music. While music can certainly express emotions, feelings, and symbols, language can also play a key role. As previously stated, it is a language that can add morality to music. In an article by John Blacking, he discussed the “problem of song text” as it is associated with musical discourse. He stated, “The exposition of music with words has always raised methodological and philosophical problems, just as the marriage of words and music has been a recurrent issue in musical composition.” This statement brought to light other concerns about music and words, especially regarding symbols in music.

Just as with any ethno-centered research, the ability of the researcher to provide clear, non-biased descriptions of the music and symbols of another culture is a challenge. This challenge led to a realm of study that now includes subjectivity in the model of investigation. “The philosophical problem presented by musical discourse is that discourse about music, like any nonverbal communication, really belongs to metaphysics because it is, strictly speaking, an

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33 Titon, 7.


unknowable truth. Without verbal language, we cannot transmit a truth.”36 In this sense, analyzing musical symbols became a critical task in the anthropology of music. These symbols, which vary between cultures and yet speak to the music of the people, must be interpreted by those wishing to understand the musical language of the land, yet not taken out of context and interpreted as isolated units. The symbols in music speak to an interpretation of the music for performers and address how a song may be approached. The realization of musical semiology is thus necessary to understand musical text and performance.

Language and linguistic understanding often lead to more expressive performances. However, there have also been many performances where the words simply got in the way of any form of expression. For example, if a performer did not correctly pronounce or enunciate the words, if they did not express the emotions associated with the words, or if they simply did not express any understanding at all. Humans rely on words for much; however, a performer may also play music with as much feeling or more without them.

While music and language appear, by many accounts, to be vastly different, there are specific shared attributes between the two studies. Particularly with the aspect of language known as second articulation, which is the “succession of separate, meaningless items, phonemes.”37 This facet of language is mirrored in music by the apparent succession of separate elements (notes) that seem to stand alone by a discontinuous variation. It is these separate items (notes) that appear to have no connection or meaning that, when put together, create a whole part (song). Varying from second articulation, the idea of singular units (such as letters or notes) that

36 Blacking, 2.
can come together to form a thought (sentence or musical phrase) is another parallel that linguistics and music make with one another.

Linguists have even found (especially in translations) that words get in the way or have no meaning at all.38 These instances often occurred when “linguistic changes in song texts in connection with the processes of composition...words are often slightly modified as well as shortened.”39 This inevitably leads to the words being meaningless, nonsense words. In some instances, if a song is translated and a syllable needs to be extended onto more than one note, it alters the enunciation of that syllable that would be necessary for the specific dialect. Other considerations include the reality of tonal languages. These types of languages dictate what the music of that culture will sound like and have caused problems when other cultures have attempted to share or change the songs (altering their meanings).

Another previous challenge scholars encountered in studying song texts is the idea of “song words.” These words do not necessarily have meaning within the language but are nonetheless used in song texts. Even today, there are a plethora of examples in which meaningless syllables and song words are used within a children's piece of music or a pop song. Merriam quotes Firth as an example: “Their value is essentially symbolic and lies in the correct recital and conjunction of them, not in their individual significance to the people who sing them.”40

38 Merriam.

39 Merriam, 188-189.

40 Merriam, 189.
This leads to another critical component of song analysis, specifically in other languages, in knowing how and when words are changed, omitted, and blended in music. This is described by Alan P. Merriam in his book, *The Anthropology of Music*. “Music also influences language in that musical requirements to demand alterations in the patterns of normal speech. This language behavior in a song is a special kind of verbalization which sometimes requires special knowledge of the language in which it is couched.”

Analysis of song texts is a way for people to not only get a deeper understanding of differing cultures but for them to connect to the music as well. Understanding the text and origins of a piece of music undoubtedly aids the performer in their performance. However, it also ensures that the culture is respected and well-represented, with all customs and expectations observed. Merriam states, “texts are language behavior rather than music sound, but they are an integral part of the music.” Texts may not be music, but they indeed are interconnected in the massive web of what makes up music and sound.

When analyzing song texts, an additional consideration is the idea of “authentic” versus “non-authentic” texts. Specifically, these situations or concerns typically occur within learning contexts. In the academic community, there is a considerable argument on the authenticity of texts. According to an article on the issue, it has been determined that authentic texts “offer an ‘accurate and reliable representation’ of a language and have a significant sociocultural purpose.” Alternatively, non-authentic texts, “such as a reading or dialogue developed for a textbook, have been considered contrived resources that lack a significant sociocultural purpose and have artificial content.”

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41 Merriam, 188.
42 Merriam, 187.
The texts *not* created for L2 (second language) instruction, or “authentic texts,” are considered to represent the target language accurately and reliably and have received tremendous enthusiasm from those in L2 pedagogy. On the opposite end of this spectrum, texts that are being produced with language learning in mind, “non-authentic texts,” are greeted with negative feelings. These are the texts often found in textbooks and have created quite a controversy in the academic field as they are considered to offer an inaccurate and unreliable representation of a language. In these instances, the texts are not always created by native language speakers and can be poorly executed to create ease of learning for second language learners. This can also be seen in songbooks or methodologies in which the music texts have been translated into another language by someone other than a native to assist the learner in ease of singing. This is simply another instance in which the translation is not always accurate, and the culture may not be accurately represented or respected.

Diversly, when studying the impact of song texts throughout differing societies, the reality of aural/oral traditions must also be considered. Almost every society has some form of aural/oral tradition that they utilize and perform, even in Western culture. Additionally, there are many societies whose singular transmission of music is done so aurally/orally. In these cultures, it is of the utmost importance that researchers and those doing fieldwork work closely with the linguists and the people to accurately represent and document the music/texts. Much care must be taken in these instances as those in the field of ethnomusicology research expand their reach, sharing the world's music.

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44 Simonsen.


**Song Structure**

When considering song structure, there are similarly many aspects to be considered. The most apparent feature of song structure may be the technical makeup of a song described in musical vocabulary. In these instances, researchers looked at and analyzed the form of a piece of music, the instrumentation, the melodic lines and harmonies, the rhythms, as well as the tempo and dynamics. In this type of analysis, it has been most helpful to have the music written out. If a written notation may be analyzed, there is less of a chance for there to be a misinterpretation of a recording or live performance. Of course, that is not always possible, as already discussed with many non-western cultures. Therefore, it is still possible, and even in some cases preferred, to converse with and experience first-hand the music of a culture. This includes observations as well as participation in music-making. Many researchers argue that this is the best way to learn from another culture, through participation and immersion. While the technical descriptions and musical vocabulary may be left up to the listener's interpretation, in these cases, experiencing and conversing with the natives will give much more of an understanding of the music and the people.

In this way, song structure may be approached by employing the human characteristics of music. As previously stated, *people* make music. Whether by physical creation or idea formation and interpretation, people are the ones that makeup what music is. Therefore, it almost goes without saying that music is considered a social entity. In his article titled “Song Structure and Social Structure,” Alan Lomax referred to music as a form of human behavior. He separated from the idea of studying music in musical terms and instead looked at it in context.45 He stated, “as a form of human behavior, music should be seen as highly patterned, regular, and redundant in each society, yielding

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stable structures.”\textsuperscript{46} He went on to discuss how these stable structures form the bedrock for patterns of interpersonal relationships which are critical in a social organization within societies. In a sense, songs identify, represent, and reinforce society's core structures and makeup. It is interesting to note that according to a lecture provided by Dr. Jeffery T. Meyer, “a fetus can memorize specific melodies while in the womb, [and] a child memorizes all rules of music orally by age five.”\textsuperscript{47} This goes to further suggest how important oral/aural tradition is in establishing song structure, as well as the importance of social organization in societies even as young as infancy.

In the article by Alan Lomax, he further discussed whether there is a connection between musical patterns and socio-psychological traits and whether that meant music can somehow express human emotion. In this theory, when a distinctive and consistent musical style or trait was to appear throughout several cultures, one could assume that the existence of a distinctive set of emotional needs or drives was satisfied or evoked by the music. This meant that the cultures that presented similarities were each satisfied by the exact emotional needs. In the case of this type of study, one could locate differing sets of musical phenomena cross-culturally, all based on the idea of human behavior and emotion.

Lomax brought to the attention of readers the exciting study of cantometrics; meaning the study of song measurements that may include aspects of social characteristics such as size and makeup of the group, location and role of the leader, and other features of a song performance which would be necessary to a “normal listener.”\textsuperscript{48} Cantometrics also includes and looks at

\textsuperscript{46} Lomax, 450.
\textsuperscript{47} Jeffery T. Meyer, Introduction to Ethnomusicology, Module 1, (Class Lecture, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, August 2020).
\textsuperscript{48} Lomax, 427.
certain aspects of formal musical analysis but is not heavily reliant on it for assessment and study. In the article, readers were encouraged to dive into and look at how song structure is built on more than the formal music analysis so often sought by music researchers. Instead, research focused on the anthropology of people and their human musical makeup versus the technical matters of music, which can be very inaccessible to the average, everyday listener. Readers were shown how the social structure of a culture and music group informs the music. The song structure is made up of music terminology, but it is also made up of social characteristics that guide the listeners.

Summary

In thinking about the impact song texts and song structures have on society, there are many aspects to consider. The idea that so many different facets of life can be touched by and influenced by music is astounding. As someone who has spent much of their life immersed in music and making it a career, I know the personal implications I have felt from music. Song texts influence much more than the words and syllables that are sung; they impact and represent the lives of people living and long gone. It is essential to learn about the text of a piece of music for many reasons, but perhaps first and foremost, as a way of honoring and representing another culture.

Knowledge of the language can only lead to knowledge of a culture. Music has a way of opening doors like that. Furthermore, while music may not be a universal language, it does tend to knock down social barriers, creating a sense of universal harmony. Song texts give meaning, morality, spirituality, and cultural pride to music. Song texts are distinctly human and add to the anthropology of music.
The study of song structure is similarly crucial as it shows other human qualities not previously studied in music analysis. It gives a new light to music that reaches everyday people. It can speak in a way everyone understands if we let it. While there are still many unknowns surrounding the music of the world's different people and how it can all interconnect, humanity can only learn by taking one small step at a time. Even a tiny step is significant in the understanding, knowledge, and study of music in and around culture. After all, music is human made; through humans, we can learn more about music and, through music, more of human nature.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The methodology of this research study was to utilize a mixed-method approach that addressed the implications of learning orally/aurally versus through musical notation for younger individuals, eight to ten years old. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the musical learning process and methodologies that can be employed for future use in teaching new musical materials of known and unknown languages. The applicability of ethnographic research strategies and an interpretivist approach for this study are discussed in-depth in this chapter. The research design, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns/limitations, are also primary components of this chapter.

Design

A qualitative study is appropriate when the research aims to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person’s experience in each situation.\(^4\) As outlined by Creswell, a quantitative approach is appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand relationships between variables.\(^5\) As this study aims to examine the effects and perceptions of students learning music in an oral/aural versus written setting, a mixed method approach was the most appropriate choice. A mixed method combines quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon under analysis. Thus, a mixed research method usually results in profound research due to its “methodological pluralism or eclecticism.”\(^6\)

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this study, multiple methods of retrieving and analyzing data were used rather than ascribing to only one way. Interviews were conducted with persons from the Dominican Republic in order to obtain as much first-hand knowledge of the culture as possible. Students were given assessments and asked to predict which method for learning new song material would be the best, lessons were conducted, and the information was confirmed. In addition, a heavy amount of research was done through observations and with the researcher as an interpreter.

Research Philosophy: Interpretivism

This study was approached with an interpretivist research philosophy. Interpretivism involves integrating human interest into a study, as it relies heavily on the researcher (s) interpreting elements of a study. Interpretivists contend that only through the subjective interpretation of and intervention in reality, can that reality be fully understood. Interpretivists consider reality to be a “social construction,” which is “what people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed or created and reinforced and supported as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings.”

This method's knowledge and research are informed through shared human experiences and understanding. The researcher can be a participant as well as an observer, developing understanding with participants. The approach admits that there may be many interpretations of reality but maintain that these interpretations


53 LeCompte and Schensul, 80-81.
are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing. In this study, it is possible
that many interpretations of whether learning a song in oral tradition or through written notation
were “successful,” and whether or not the song text was fully “understood” by the subjects is up
to the researcher.

Furthermore, “interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially
constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared
meanings, and instruments.” According to this approach, there is an interactive, cooperative,
participatory relationship between the researcher and the subjects. This study relies heavily on
the social construct of a classroom and the relationship between teacher and student while also
placing a great deal of emphasis on the language and shared understanding in that classroom.
Additionally, interpretivist research has relative constraints in the knowledge generated within
the time, culture, and context that it is found. It is much more constrained to the single event or
study of research done due to the nature of its subjectivity. For this study, it was apparent that an
interpretivist research philosophy should be followed.

Research Strategy: Ethnographic

Due to the nature of this study and the involvement of student participants, an
ethnographic research strategy seemed the best fit. Ethnographic research involves observing and
capturing the experiences and perceptions of participants in their natural environment. A
classroom would seem to be a natural environment for the majority of all children aged eight to
ten years old living in the U.S. This study naturally lends itself to the ethnographic approach

among the subjects' peers and friends, engaging in everyday cultural experiences and responding to the research as individuals and a collective cultural group.

Questions and Hypotheses

This study sought to build a theory in answer to the following research questions:

1) How does anthropology inform our understanding of song texts and song structures in different cultures?

As anthropology is the study of human societies and cultures and their development, it is a reasonable hypothesis that anthropology has informed our knowledge of song texts and song structures in their own development, leading to more sophisticated music.

2) Which is a better teaching practice for younger individuals up through adolescence, an oral/aural or musical notation methodology?

Approaching this question, a reasonable hypothesis was that learning orally/aurally would be an easier methodology for students eight to ten years old as they have spent most of their lives up to that point being auditory learners, still just learning to read and write.

3) What are the outcomes of students learning song texts in their native language/tongue versus songs of a different culture?

Students will have a much easier time learning songs in their native language as they can understand and relate to what they are singing.
Study Participants

Study participants were drawn from a population of students at Peterborough Elementary School in rural New Hampshire, United States. Participants in any of the six classrooms could be in third or fourth grade. The age range of participants was eight to ten years old. All participants had to be fluent in the English language, but English did not have to be their native language. The target population of study participants were each involved in music classes and attended for the entire eight weeks of the study.

To participate in the study, students and their parents/legal guardians were contacted through the elementary school. The researcher had all third and fourth-grade children take home a parental consent letter detailing the study and all concerning information. This form was asked to be filled out in case participation was granted. In addition, a child assent letter was also sent home to be filled out for a student to be allowed to participate in the study.

The rationale for choosing this group of participants weighed heavily on several of the following factors. Firstly, children were still in the developmental stages of growing at eight to ten years old, which made learning new materials and languages easier. There is also a natural development from learning nonsense songs/syllables to learning songs in different languages that can occur, which has passed by adulthood. Furthermore, in utilizing this group of participants, observations could be made about the classroom culture, and connections were made to other cultural groups. This group of study participants also allows for an analysis of different methodologies of learning song texts and structures to be studied in a controlled way.
Setting

As previously stated, the study took place in rural southern New Hampshire, at a local elementary school. The school was in Peterborough, New Hampshire and encompassed pre-kindergarten through fourth grade students. The population of the school is around two hundred and fifty students, and it has been identified as a Title I school. The average class size is approximately fifteen students. The field study occurred during the school day, at the music class time, and was located in the designated music room.

Instrumentation

For this research project, the intent was to utilize multiple methods of data retrieval for examination. Detailed and accurate notes were taken of all the methods employed for teaching songs as well as with whom the songs were being taught. A journal of field notes, observations, and lesson plans was kept for accurate reference. The main observations that were reflected on were encompassed in the observation questionnaire, found in Appendix A. Several of the questions found in the observation questionnaire were addressed throughout each session with the students, depending on the content and songs studied. While it would have been beneficial to have each question answered/observed in all the sessions, the limited timeframe of the lessons led to choosing only a selection of the questions and thus compiling answers to all of them throughout the eight-week fieldwork study. Participants were also video recorded throughout the learning process so that the researcher could review content and see how the students progressed in learning through the different methods.

In addition to personal observations and notes, the student participants were also given a pre- and post-assessment/survey to answer. Participants filled out the pre-assessment survey at
the start of the study, making predictions about how they would learn new songs and song texts of a different language(s) and answering questions about previous knowledge (See Appendix B). The post-assessment survey participants filled out at the end of the study, evaluating how they felt the process went, which method of learning new songs they felt went the best, debriefing, etc. (See Appendix C).

**Procedures**

As previously stated, the field research aimed to explore the implications of learning orally/aurally versus through musical notation for younger individuals, eight to ten years old. Students were presented with songs from differing cultures during their pre-allotted music time in the school day. Observations were then made on how the students progressed with the varying learning methods. Observations were notated by the researcher for later review. The trends, pacing, struggles, etc., of each group of students, were also noted in every one of the observation sessions.

**Data Analysis Methods**

As this research was approached as a mixed methods study, data analysis was also approached in a variety of ways. Content, as well as discourse analysis methods, were utilized to fully appreciate the outcomes of the research. Content analysis, which is an unobtrusive research method, was used to analyze much of the data obtained through observations made of the participants. As the participants of the study were learning songs aurally/orally and through written notation, many observations were made as to how they progressed. The differences present between the two teaching methodologies, and which approach seemed to offer better
outcomes for study participants were also analyzed as an important part of the research. Lastly, participants’ thoughts on the learning process and the songs utilized were looked at and analyzed to find whether there were connections between the students’ engagement and the students’ success. Looking at the research through the lens of content analysis allowed for a fuller picture of the benefits to come from the study and also a clearer view of what may come of the research in the future.

**Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to provide an outline of the research methodology used to answer the research questions. A discussion of the study participants, procedures, data collection, analysis methods, and limitations outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in the study. A mixed-method ethnographic methodology was used to develop a theory on the implications of learning aurally/orally versus through musical notation for younger individuals. The methods employed for this research allowed connections to be drawn between the musical cultures studied, as well as the learning processes engaged. The goal of Chapter 4 then, is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter 3 was followed.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from all the processes and procedures described in the previous chapter that I engaged in in the field to generate and collect data central to my study. The purpose of the study was to assess the implications of learning orally/aurally versus through musical notation, as well as to consider how anthropology may shape the learning of different song texts and song structures for younger individuals. The study explored a mixed method of data collection. The quantitative approach has been applied particularly in the presentation of findings for the assessments and the participants. On the other hand, much of the research was looked at through a qualitative approach, such as the observations of students’ learning progress and how the anthropology of the classroom shaped the findings. The pre-and post-assessments were used to collect data and were distributed to the participants at the start and end of the study. This first section describes the general characteristics of the participants such as gender and age. The songs utilized throughout the field study will then be shared, leading into the bulk of the research findings on anthropology and learning methodologies in the context of an elementary music classroom.

General Information About the Participants

The pool of participants in the research study included 41 children, in six different classes, ranging from third to fourth grade. The genders of those participants are indicated in the table below.
Table 1: Study Participants Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>3rd Grade Amount</th>
<th>3rd Grade Percentage</th>
<th>4th Grade Amount</th>
<th>4th Grade Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that the majority of the participants were female (61%) while the minority were male (39%). It also indicates that more fourth graders participated than third graders.

Additionally, while it is known that the participants were in either third or fourth grade at the time of the research, the age of the participants was also deemed relevant to the study. Thus, participant’s age at the start of the field study is documented in the chart below.

Table 2: Age of Study Participants
The pie chart indicates that most of the participants were nine years old at the start of the field work (56%) with the rest being either eight (34%) or ten (10%) years old.

**Pre-Assessment**

As previously shared, a pre-assessment was given to all students at the start of the research process to glean information regarding what knowledge students previously had on oral/aural tradition, learning songs of an unfamiliar language, etc. The questions are provided below and, in the Appendix, (See Appendix B).

**Fieldwork Participant Questions: Pre-Assessment**

1. Do you know what aural tradition is?
2. Have you ever learned a song by looking at sheet music?
3. Which do you think will be harder to learn a song by echoing or looking at the music? Why?
4. Do you speak a language other than English?
5. Have you ever learned a song in a different language?
6. Do you think learning a song in a different language will be easier or harder? Why?

The quantitative responses gathered from those pre-assessment surveys are presented in Table 3.
Table 3: Pre-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>26% (Echoing)</td>
<td>74% (Sheet Music)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>20% (Easier)</td>
<td>80% (Harder)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is apparent from the chart, zero percent of students in third or fourth grade could identify and/or dictate what oral/aural tradition is. However, only 34% of students could recall learning a song by looking at the sheet music, indicating that many students have utilized oral/aural tradition but simply did not know how to define the term. Moreover, almost thirty percent of participants (26%) thought it would be harder to learn a song through echoing a leader, while the majority (74%) agreed that it would be harder to learn a song by looking at the sheet music.

The table also indicates the low diversity present in the participant pool as only 7% of students claimed that they could speak another language, none of which of these were ELL (English Language Learners). Nevertheless, a higher percentage rate (29%) had asserted that they had learned a song in a language other than English, while the majority (71%) had not. Lastly, a high number of participants indicated that they predicted learning a new song in a language other than English would be harder (80%) than learning a song in English (20%).
Songs

The songs selected for this field study were carefully chosen based on popularity, skill level, musical concepts, and variety. While twelve songs were originally selected, only four Scottish and four Spanish songs were ultimately utilized in the research study. The songs that were chosen, and which grade levels they were used with, are laid out in the table below.

Table 4: Songs Selected for Field Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
<th>Echoing</th>
<th>Sheet Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiken Drum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baloo Baleerie</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auld Lang Syne</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Lomond</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Citron</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quien es esa Gente</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamos a la mar</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Floron</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that the participants in third grade learned three Scottish and three Spanish songs, while the fourth-grade participants learned two Scottish and three Spanish songs. It is also apparent from the table that there was some crossover of songs between the grades, but that not all the songs utilized were the same across the grade levels. Furthermore, the table indicates what type of methodology was used for students to learn the songs during the research study and will be discussed further on in this section.
Starting with the Scottish songs, “Aiken Drum” is a popular Scottish folk song and nursery rhyme (See figure above). This rhyme seems little more, at least at first glance, than an entertaining way of teaching the wee bairn (small child) about clothing and the names of parts of
the body. It was first found in print in 1820 by James Hogg in Jacobite Reliques. Hogg printed the rhyme in his collection of songs and poems associated with the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1715 when James Stuart, the Old Pretender, tried to seize the crown. Specifically, “Aiken Drum” is attributed to a Jacobite song about the rather inconclusive battle that was Sheriffmuir.55

For the field work study, third grade participants in all the classes learned the song, “Aiken Drum,” orally/aurally. The students worked on keeping the beat with body percussion while singing the first four verses. It took three class periods for students to learn these verses, and to help with memorization, they also came up with hand motions. Participants utilized hand motions on the verse and tapped the beat on the chorus, building up to keeping the beat on drums.

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while singing. After students felt confident in those four verses, they were then given the opportunity to create their own.

A Scottish lullaby, “Baloo Baleerie,” is a song based around the Scots word for lullaby, “baloo,” but is chiefly believed to be made up of alliterative nonsense words. The song is thought to date back to the 11th or 12th century, because of the combination of Pagan (the malevolent fairies) and Christian (the angels) beliefs in the lyrics. When exploring this song, third grade participants in the study all learned the song by looking at the sheet music. A discussion took place on the origins of the piece and the meaning, or lack of meaning, of the words. Students also analyzed the rhythms of the song from the sheet music and delved into the form of the piece.

**Auld Lang Syne**

Robert Burns, 1788

Scottish folk tune

1. Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And days of auld lang syne? For auld lang syne, my dear, For auld lang syne, we’ll take a cup o’ kindness yet For auld lang syne. Refrain

And there’s a hand my trusty friend! And give me a hand o’ thine! And we’ll take a right good-will draught, for auld lang syne. Refrain

Figure 6: *Auld Lang Syne Sheet Music*
“Auld Lang Syne,” is a very famous Scottish folk tune. The words of the piece are attributed to the national poet of Scotland, Robert Burns. However, the composer is not known. In English-speaking countries, the first verse and chorus are now closely associated with the New Year festival and often sung as a way to ring in the new year. The lyrics of “Auld Lang Syne” are in the Scots language. The title, translated literally into standard English, is “Old Long Since.” The words can be interpreted as since long ago or for old times’ sake. The lyrics are about old friends having a drink and recalling adventures they had long ago. There is in fact no specific reference to the new year.

Burns first wrote down “Auld Lang Syne” in 1788, but the poem did not appear in print until shortly after his death in 1796. It was first published in volume five of James Johnson’s Scots Musical Museum. Burns, a major contributor to the compilation, claimed that the words of “Auld Lang Syne” were taken “from an old man’s singing.” However, the song has been associated with Burns ever since. As published by Johnson, the lyrics were set to a different tune from the one that later became familiar.56

This song was taught to both the third and fourth grade students and was performed at a concert for an audience. The students were first introduced to the piece by viewing examples of differing versions of the song performed by other groups. Then, the participants were taught orally/aurally using a piano and the teacher/field researcher’s voice.

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Figure 7: Loch Lomond Sheet Music

“The Bonnie Banks o’ Loch Lomond”, or “Loch Lomond” for short, is another Scottish folk song (Roud No. 9598, Roud Folk Song Index). The song prominently features Loch Lomond, the largest Scottish loch, located between the council areas of West Dunbartonshire, Stirling and Argyll and Bute. A loch is a body of water similar to a lake, often referencing a “bay or arm of the sea especially when nearly landlocked.” In Scots, “bonnie” means “attractive,” “beloved,” or “dear.”

The fourth-grade study participants approached learning this song through sheet music. They learned the verse and refrain separately, only combining them after several exposures to the piece. Students also analyzed the rhythms in the song and the lyrics. After the fourth graders felt competent in their knowledge of the song, they were then asked to sing the piece without the sheet music to see how their memorization was coming. Then participants were taught an ostinato that they had to keep going while the piece was being sung. For this the class was split in half (half speaking/performing body percussion to the ostinato, half singing the verse and refrain). After several successful attempts at the split, the groups would switch parts and repeat.

Spanish Songs

Al Citrón

Informant/Performer:
Group of girls
Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico, 1966

Source:
Henrietta Yurchenco
Latin American Children Game Songs
Folkways FC 7851, 1969

Stones or sticks \( \frac{1}{2} = 120 \)

Transcribed by Peggy Struck

* triki in liner notes
** trón in liner notes

Figure 8: Al Citron Sheet Music
For the Spanish selections, “Al Citron” was taught to and sung by all the field study participants in third and fourth grade. The learning methodology was split for this piece, however, with half the third and fourth graders learning orally/aurally and half learning with sheet music. The students were also taught the common game that often accompanies this song in the Latin American culture.

For the game, children sit in a circle on the ground and each child has a stone (or small stick). During the song students pass the stone to the right on each downbeat and pick up a new stone on the second beat (in-between beats). The stones move around the circle in this manner until the penultimate measure. On this measure, instead of releasing the stone, the children tap the stones to the right, left, and back to the right to pass on the word “tran.” The game continues with a repetition of the song in this way. Any participant that breaks the rhythm of passing the stones may be eliminated until only one child is left.58

![Song Sheet Music](https://kodaly.hnu.edu/song.cfm?id=589)

Figure 9: Quién es esa Gente Sheet Music

“Quién es esa Gente,” is another Latin American folk song that talks about how people are being too loud for you to sleep. It is a great piece for teaching or reviewing solfège/melody. Third grade study participants learned this song orally/aurally. First, the children learned the words, separate from the music through echoing and repetition. They also learned about and discussed the translation of the piece and its meaning. Next, a melody was added and taught through oral/aural methods. Hand motions were added to help the children with memorization and understanding. After a lot of repetition, the leader then stepped aside and the students were encouraged to sing the song on their own, with and without piano accompaniment. Lastly, a game was added to the song. The game included one student pretending to sleep while the other students sang and “played” around the room. At the end of the song the students would freeze and the one student pretending to sleep would wake up. Upon “waking,” if the student saw any of the other students move, he/she would call that student’s name and they would be out. The game would continue until only one child was left.

Figure 10: Vamos a la Mar Sheet Music
“Vamos a la mar” is considered a Guatemalan folk song but is also sung by children in the Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries. The song talks about going to the sea and eating fish. The words “tum, tum,” in the song are nonsense and were utilized as an ostinato on body percussion and instruments by participants. Both students in third and fourth grade learned this song. Third graders learned the song through sheet music while the fourth graders learned through oral/aural tradition. As with all the Spanish songs, students started by learning the words first, separate from the music. Next the students performed the ostinato on “tum, tum” while the teacher/leader sang the song. After listening to the song several times and doing the ostinato, study participants then learned the melody of the piece and sang along with the teacher until they were comfortable on their own.

**El florón**

![Sheet Music](bethsnotes.com)

Figure 11: *El Floron Sheet Music*

“El florón” can translate as “fleuron” which is a little ornamental flower in a book or part of an architectural element. It can also have the botanical meaning of “floret,” which is like a little flower that’s one of a cluster that makes up a larger flower. It can also refer to a special
Fourth grade study participants were taught this song using sheet music methods. They learned the words and then the music was added in afterward. There are several versions of a game to go along with this song, each including a form of passing a flower (or small object) and then guessing who has it.

Findings

Throughout the field study many notes and observations were made. To guide the observations, certain questions were put together to encourage a thorough examination and analysis of the research findings. A copy of those guiding observation questions can be found in Appendix A. In this section of the text, a look at the research findings from those annotations will be notated including recollection of the song selections, engagement, challenges, and successes, as well as how using a song from an ethnic culture impacted the learning.

For many of the song selections, it took three to four class periods to learn the song. This was consistent across both oral/aural and written teaching methodologies. The first lesson would be an introduction to the piece with only part of each song being taught. The next lesson(s) comprised a more in-depth look at either the lyrics or form of the music and included all the folk songs being learned. After three class periods, students were familiar enough with the pieces to be able to sing through them in their entirety. However, if a song was being learned through written notation means, an extra class period in most cases was required for students to have the song memorized and be able to sing it without aid. For the purpose of learning a new song, sheet music helped students to more quickly be able to sing along. Although, retention in these cases

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was not as good as if a student had been taught orally/aurally and taken more time up front with repetition for memorization purposes.

When a folk song was taught through notation means, a firmer grasp of the structure of the piece was noted. Students had an easier time moving from one section of music into the next without prompting or delays in their singing when they had a visual cue of the structure. It created a smoother flow to the music and less hesitation on the part of students by having this tool. On the other hand, more participants exhibited those behaviors of hesitation or needing prompting when a song was learned orally/aurally and included greater length (multiple sections). Thus, after using visual cues and having analysis discussions with students about the structure of a song, they were much more apt to grasp and remember the structure of the piece.

Students were very engaged throughout the learning process of the study. This was especially true of learning songs from a culture other than the participants own, it appeared to spark an interest and engagement that was “out of the ordinary.” The difference in language occupied students as it was new and exciting for them. The participants were also more engaged when learning a song orally/aurally as it required more of their attention to remember and to follow along with the leader/teacher. Additional activities that were included in the learning process, (such as a game, keeping the beat, using instruments and hand motions) also heightened students’ engagement and captured more of their attention. Giving them something to do with their hands and bodies that was in addition to singing helped to enhance student recall and participation/commitment.

During the study it was challenging for students to learn a piece of music in a language other than their native tongue, as they did not know the rules of the language and how it may operate differently from their own. It was difficult for students to memorize these songs when
they did not understand the meaning of words or if a song did not have a direct translation/meaning. In these cases, some students operated more as if they were memorizing sounds and nonsense versus a meaningful passage. Even though these challenges were present, the children were very driven and responsive to learning these pieces. The challenges almost worked as a motivator for students to question and dig in more on their own learning.

A notable accomplishment throughout the research study was the rapport and community of the students in the classroom. The anthropology of the classroom truly bolstered the successes present in the study and the “buy-in” from students. As students were excited and engaged, the culture of the room caused others to become excited and engaged. Students could discuss the songs, ask questions and exploring the music. It was noticeable when a student was not “buying-in” to a piece and the lesson, that that could also become contagious in the room due to the community rapport. However, often it was the other way around.

**Post-Assessment**

At the end of the study, all student participants were given a post-assessment to complete to assess the growth of learning, provide an opportunity for self-reflection and self-assessment, and as a way to debrief the study. The questions utilized in the post-assessment are provided here and, in the Appendix, (See Appendix C).

**Fieldwork Participant Questions: Post-Assessment**

1. Which song did you enjoy learning the most? Why?

2. Did you feel it was easier to learn a song when echoing a leader or looking at the sheet music? Why?
3. What challenges did you have when learning a song through sheet music?
4. What challenges did you have when learning a song through echoing/aural tradition?
5. Did you find it hard to learn a song in a different language?
6. Did you enjoy learning a song in a different language? Why or why not?
7. How did you remember the words of a song in a different language? Could you recall what the words mean?
8. What surprised you?

The quantitative responses gathered from these assessments are displayed in the table below.

Table 5: Post-Assessment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>47% (Echoing)</td>
<td>53% (Sheet Music)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<td>Question 5</td>
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<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the questions in the post-assessment were qualitative and could not be represented in a chart. Instead, those questions required a personal opinion from the students and are thus not included in the above table and are marked out with a dash. The table shows that more participants found it easier to learn a song by looking at the sheet music (53%) than by echoing (47%). In actuality, this was probably more a reflection of students’ personal preference than
what was truly an easier learning method. This can be seen in the way some students appreciated having the music as a fall back, while others preferred to step out and challenge themselves by not looking at the paper to test their retention. The table also indicates that while the majority of research participants (62%) did not find it hard to learn a song in a language other than their native tongue, almost all the participants enjoyed learning a song that was not native to them (90%), while only a small number did not (10%). Last of all, although many students enjoyed learning a song in another language, after a period it was apparent that recollection of the translation/meaning of the lyrics was difficult. Only 53% of students agreed they could remember what a song in another native language meant versus the 47% of students who said they could not.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

Summary of Study

This research study was conducted over a period of eight weeks and included 41 children aged eight to ten. The children/participants were spread throughout six different third and fourth grade classes and came to music on a rotating basis. As was previously stated, the study included eight total songs, with four being Scottish and four being Spanish. All students participated in a pre-assessment at the beginning of the research study and a post-assessment at the close. Observations were made as to the community cultures and the anthropology of each different class. Notes were also taken of how the students adapted to learning songs from differing cultures and in languages that were not their native tongue. The challenges present, as well as the successes of each teaching method were recorded as the study went along, showcasing the knowledge gained about learning through oral/aural tradition and written notation. How the participants responded to learning each of the song texts and song structures (both in their native language and from an ethnic culture) were observed and noted in the findings.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

As indicated previously, a lot of the prior research available on song text and song structure is limited to certain cultures or people groups. Instead, the bulk of existing research is on linguistics and how it may impact or connect to music. The lack of research and literature available on song text and song structure as it relates to learning methods and teaching is much more notable. This lack of available literature thus guided much of the field research throughout this study. As previously shown, language has an acute impact on music, leading to greater cultural understandings and adding to the anthropology of the music. Similarly, the study of song
structure has shown the importance of human qualities in music analysis. The research highlights the importance of song text and song structure in the development and interpretation of music as it relates to human culture. Music is distinctly human and therefore should be analyzed through the lens of humanity.

According to the findings from the field study, the implications of musical learning methodologies were highly influenced by the desired outcome of the learning. Human influence was a large presence in the analysis, as is common with research utilizing human study participants. The community and culture of each classroom greatly influenced (and in some cases altered) the progression of learning. How students interacted with one another and whether there was buy-in to the song being taught became a community experience as the teaching and learning of different songs occurred. Communal experiences set the tone for much of the research process, showcasing the importance and influence of anthropology. Additionally, it was evident from the findings that there were not substantially disproportionate benefits and challenges of learning orally/aurally versus learning through musical notation. Instead, the benefits and downsides to each methodology depended highly on the intent of the learning (i.e., memorization, conceptual, cultural, etc.). The participants’ engagement in learning songs from different cultures and of non-native languages was a very positive experience. It showcased the importance of exposure, intention, and engagement in music from ethnic cultures, and how even a tiny step is significant in the understanding, knowledge, and study of music in and around culture.

Limitations

Throughout the study many things became apparent, including several evident limitations in the field work research. A number of these limitations were foreseen before the research
started and remained true to the aforementioned drawbacks. Some of these limitations include the inability to travel to the origins of the countries being studied and the narrow populous group that could be observed. As previously mentioned, due to these limitations, it allowed for the research to take a deeper look at song structure, song text, and teaching methodologies versus a study focused on the chosen cultures.

During the research process, however, other constraints made themselves known. One such constraint was that of the short time span available for the research. While the timeframe for field work was certainly known about, the limitation became more glaring as other hindrances came about (such as acknowledged holidays, school events, and school cancelations). Additionally, the inconsistency of song usage and methodology usage between each of the classes and the grade levels in the use of songs made it tricky to draw comparisons and conclusions about best practices. The differentiation was good for the research purposes but also made it harder to analyze.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

In looking ahead to future research, it seems as though there are several suggestions to be made, especially considering the limitations of this research study. One such recommendation for future study is expanding the current research to include other ethnic cultures and locations. While it was helpful to compare and contrast two differing cultures, it would shed even more light on this type of research to compare multiple ones. Another suggestion for future study would be to pull from a more diverse participation pool. The results of the study may have been drastically different had there been multiple ethnicities present in the population of participants. Alternatively, if the researcher of the study had not been the one to teach the songs to
participants, but instead had only been an observer, the findings may have been very different. This is another recommendation for future research study to be performed. Last of all, an expansion of the current study would be ideal to really dig into comparisons, furthering songs and utilizing new songs, the impacts of instruments, and other such findings in this study.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on the research findings, teachers, and leaders in charge of musical education can be informed by this study about the role of different musical methodologies and teaching practices. The results of the study indicate that students learn best in a mixed method approach, depending on the desired result for learning (memorization, cultural exposure, instrument integration, etc.). It also indicates that written notation is especially helpful when a child/student is engaged in learning the musical structure of a piece, but not necessarily in cases of memorization. However, in instances where a longer musical selection is being studied, a written approach would be the best option. When considering the analysis of a musical piece from an ethnic culture, the results of the research suggest an oral/aural approach would be the best for students, so as not to get confused by the nuances of the language. Music educators could utilize these insights in the classroom by modeling the appropriate methodology based on the desired outcome of the learning. This could be leveraged to improve student achievement and understanding of musical song text and structure in a classroom setting.

**Summary**

The connection between music and linguistics, and music and culture, is profound. These elements seem simple enough on their own, and yet can create infinite possibilities combined as
one. These seemingly simplistic elements are seen throughout all the world and have spanned across time. Many definitions of music exist across cultures and each culture sees music in a different way. How each individual practices, performs, listens to, hears, and experiences music is uniquely theirs, and yet it is still something that can be considered a communal activity. Each individual student that participated in the research study had their own experience of the process and the music. However, each of those students also experienced learning as a part of their community, of their class. Anthropology played a big role in informing the research of the field study, as it often has in gaining us knowledge of our world.

Throughout the study, a better understanding of the learning process was gained as learning music in various styles was explored and analyzed. The methods of oral/aural tradition and written notation were each considered for best practices in teaching methodology, with much knowledge being acquired and even still more questions yet to be answered. One idea that cannot be denied is that of the importance of learning about other cultures, their music, and their traditions. Music may not be universal, but it is still an entity to be studied universally. As previously stated, although we may not be able to find a single idea of what music is and what music holds meaning, we can all agree that music does hold human meaning.\footnote{Titon, 7.}
Appendix A

Fieldwork Observation Questions

1. What is the timeframe for students learning a new song through oral/aural tradition?
2. What is the timeframe for students learning a new song through written notation?
3. What is the retention of song texts for students learning a song by oral/aural tradition?
4. Do students struggle to recall song texts when learning through oral/aural tradition?
5. When learning a song through written notation, are students reliant on the musical notation instead of memorizing the song text?
6. What kind of engagement do students exhibit when learning a song through oral/aural tradition?
7. What kind of engagement do students exhibit when learning a song through written notation?
8. What challenges arose for students upon learning a song through oral/aural tradition?
9. What challenges arose for students upon learning a song through written notation?
10. What kind of successes did students experience when learning a song through oral/aural tradition?
11. What kind of successes did students experience when learning a song through written notation?
12. What challenges arose for students upon learning a song through the oral/aural tradition of a language other than their native language?
13. What challenges arose for students upon learning a song through the written notation of a language other than their native language?
14. When learning a song from an ethnic culture, with the song text being in the culture’s own language, do students exhibit a different level of engagement or understanding?
15. Do students have an easier or a more difficult time recalling song texts in their native tongue versus that of a differing culture?

16. Do students treat a song text in an unknown language similar to how they learn nonsense syllables/words and phrases used in early childhood or is there more understanding of the meaning of the words? How can an observer tell?

17. When learning a song through oral/aural tradition, how quickly do students grasp and remember the structure of the piece of music?

18. When learning a song through written notation, how quickly do students grasp and remember the structure of the piece of music?

19. Does informing students of the form of a piece of music help in the recall of words/phrases?

20. Does adding movements or instruments to a piece of music impact the student’s engagement, recollection, and/or fondness of the piece?
Appendix B

Fieldwork Participant Questions: Pre-Assessment

7. Do you know what aural tradition is?

8. Have you ever learned a song by looking at sheet music?

9. Which do you think will be harder to learn a song by echoing or looking at the music?
   Why?

10. Do you speak a language other than English?

11. Have you ever learned a song in a different language?

12. Do you think learning a song in a different language will be easier or harder? Why?
Appendix C

Fieldwork Participant Questions: Post-Assessment

9. Which song did you enjoy learning the most? Why?

10. Did you feel it was easier to learn a song when echoing a leader or looking at the sheet music? Why?

11. What challenges did you have when learning a song through sheet music?

12. What challenges did you have when learning a song through echoing/aural tradition?

13. Did you find it hard to learn a song in a different language?

14. Did you enjoy learning a song in a different language? Why or why not?

15. How did you remember the words of a song in a different language? Could you recall what the words mean?

16. What surprised you?
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Creation Date: 6-2-2022
End Date: 
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Hannah Petrick
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor: 

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### Study History

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