Multilingualism and musical practices: Singing in “other” languages

Conference or Workshop Item

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Question 2: How effective were these in facilitating intercultural awareness?

Follow-up survey 6 months later: N=45 (85% female, aged 47 to 97)

Most (67%) said they enjoyed singing the song "very much", but only 39% would "definitely" like to learn another song in the same language.

Verbal music
People can sing very convincingly in languages that they do not speak

- Verbal music is multimodal: WORDS + MUSIC
- This also means that it can be multilingual

The majority remembered that the song was from a Spanish-speaking or Latin-American country. However only 14 (less than 1/3) could name the precise country.

Conclusion: Mediation had a largely positive effect on intercultural awareness. However some degree of reticence, misconceptions and ethnocentric assumptions were still apparent in a few participants.

Question 1: What forms of musilingual mediation were used?

Mediation strategies used:
- Explaining the cultural context (e.g. has lyrics in Spanish but not from Spain)
- Producing a written score (most Latin American music is orally transmitted)
- Writing an English translation of the lyrics (main consideration: had to be singable)
- Rehearsing pronunciation and rhythm patterns through spoken repetition in tempo
- Some of the Spanish verses sung as solos by a native speaker

What singers liked:
- Accompaniment by a different guitar instrument (e.g. steel, oud)
- Learning lyrics rather than song

What singers disliked:
- Difficult learning the words

Some examples of mediation strategies:
- Partial translation of the lyrics
- Musical transcription
- Language choice in choral and solo parts
- Song teaching strategies

Conclusion: Mediation had a largely positive effect on intercultural awareness. However some degree of reticence, misconceptions and ethnocentric assumptions were still apparent in a few participants.

New research directions
1. Multicompetence in musicians (especially in plurilingual contexts)
2. Musical translanguaging
3. Communities of practice in multilingual / multimusical contexts
4. Music in relation to intercultural competence and intercultural citizenship

References:
Available as a separate handout.

Contact:
mari.fernandez-toro@open.ac.uk