

Music Education and Didactic Materials



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THE GREGUERÍAS AS TEACHING MATERIAL FOR THE EXPRESSION OF WORDS, IMAGES, SOUNDS AND THE BODY

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Abstract. We present a didactic approach developed in the context of initial training for Early Childhood teachers in the subject Music Didactics. In this approach, starting from a relatively simple material like the greguerías, students were given the challenge of drawing up materials which contribute to the development of expression through different artistic languages (literary, plastic, musical and corporal) and using them as a means of learning contents from other fields of knowledge. Students also had to carry out a project of inquiry and reflection that allowed them to design suitable materials, evaluate their potential and programme activities for themselves. This proposal has provided an experience of creative processes from an inclusive standpoint, and thus contributed to the development of artistic thinking and a multidisciplinary vision.

Keywords. Musical Education, reflexive practices, teacher education

1. Introduction

The first years of a child's life are essential for learning in a natural way. Childhood is a period characterized by curiosity and discovery, where the charming fascination of words, movement and songs, among others, offers a reservoir holding a poetic micro universe (Pelegrín, 2006). Therefore, artistic and musical education at these ages constitutes a form of early stimulation for the expressive potentials of children (Malbrán, 1994).

According to the author, the musical experiences in the childhood stage acquire greater meaning if they arise from practise and artistic tasting.

Within this focus, the figure of the musical educator requires more than specific and expert education in the subject (Green, 1988, 2017; Regelski, 2009). Beyond cases of assessing music as an expert, and in accordance with these authors, we believe that the focus should be on handling strategies, resources and suitable didactic materials that awaken the interest and curiosity of children to learn. They should, therefore, make it possible to take on challenging roles that involve sharing with children of these ages moments and situations of discovery and wonder, exploration, testing and games related to sound and music.

Nevertheless, the sole use of resources and teaching materials does not imply better educational quality. It is no use having materials if th a teacher does not reflect on why and for what purpose they are being used. Questions like what are the advantages of the material? What would change if it were not used? Do materials meet the proposed learning objectives? What is the best way to set out the material? Is it adequately adapted to early childhood? These and other inquiries can help the teacher in that direction.

According to Arriaga y Riaño (2017), this requires an emphasis, even during initial teacher training, on activities that emphasize autonomy and promote an inquiring, reflexive and enterprising attitude in the future teacher that makes them receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Among the skills that a teacher should develop, the one that acts permanently is the reflexive skill, which is “learnt, methodical, systematic, implemented, planned and intentional” (Domingo and Gómez, 2014, p. 4) and is related assessment teachers themselves make of their educational action (Domingo and Gómez, 2014, p. 79). It implies a leap that goes beyond teaching-learning processes, and remains essential for future work and experience in the classroom. Along the same lines, some authors suggest a critical development of own practice as the main focus of initial teacher training. (Yanes and Area, 1998; Calvo and Barba, 2014).

This communication presents an experience carried out with future teachers based on reflective practice. We part from an initial proposal using the *greguerías* literary category for pre-school classroom and entailing university student practicums. The ultimate goal was thinking about own practice and the important educational criteria that the teacher should bear in mind when using the material. These criteria should be valuable tools for further design and elaborating new materials.

2. What are the *greguerías*?

The *greguerías* represents a new literary genre created by Ramón Gómez de la Serna in the first decades of the 20th century. They are short ingenious texts, somewhat like aphorisms, which are able to express in an original way philosophic, humorous, pragmatic, lyrical thoughts or any other nature as well. The author himself pointed out in his foreword of the 1910- 1960 edition of the *greguerías* the formula: humour + metaphor:

greguería (De la Serna, 1972). Figure 1 shows examples of greguerías created by the author. In particular, greguerías about children, letters, animals and numbers¹:

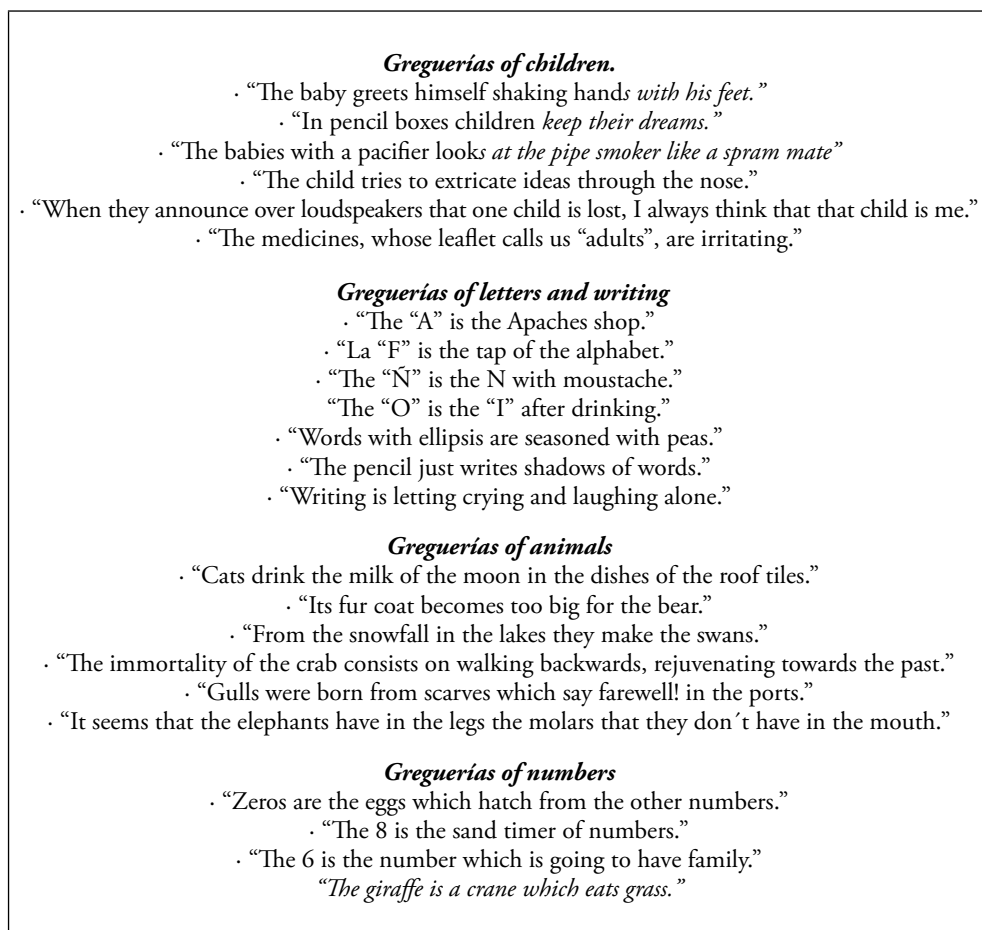


Figure 1. Example of Greguerías (Selection of Gómez de la Serna, 1972).

Gómez de la Serna sometimes accompanied his greguerías with drawings. The ABC² has recently exhibited a hundred of the drawings with which the avant-garde writer accompanied his well-known maxims:

¹ Extracted from the blog “Words in the works” available in: <http://palabraseneltintero.blogspot.com/2008/03/baul-marzo.html>

² News published in the newspaper “El País”: https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/04/16/album/1523878621_460782.html#foto_gal_5



“There is a gentleman that hides like a crime his umbrella behind the back...
He is ashamed of carrying an umbrella, he has an almost acrobatic hypocrisy to disguise the
flushing gadget.”

Figure 2. Drawing and text about a greguería (Gómez de la Serna, newspaper “El País” 2018).

3. Context and justification of the experience

The didactic approach was developed with students in the Degree in Early Childhood Education (EI) in the subject of Music Didactics at the University of Cantabria, taught during the first quarter of the first year. This means that those involved in this experience were starting out as Education students, which is why they had neither a wealth of knowledge nor the experience of being immersed in schools during teaching practicums. Moreover, they had disparate musical training, so their musical knowledge was limited.

In view of this, we considered it extremely important to train students from a musical perspective. However, considering that they were student teachers, one of our main challenges consisted in providing them with tools for developing musical abilities and providing this kind of knowledge to their futures students, in addition to using music and artistic disciplines as a means toward learning other fields of knowledge.

Among the tools offered to students teachers, didactic materials play a very significant role. Beyond providing suitable materials, the subject concentrated on recognition of qualities, potentialities and weaknesses of materials as well as the elaboration of own materials. Therefore, one of the strategies emanated from using a very simple material, such as the greguerías, and playing a game to create a whole series of materials to reflect on the goals and the manner they could be used.

4. Aims

The main aim consisted of giving to the future teachers the possibility to make their own artistic didactic materials and activities from these materials, both based on a deep reflection and knowledge of how children learn, according to their evolutionary features in the pre-school stage.

The specific aims were:

- To contribute to the artistic development, encouraging expression by means of different kinds of languages (literary, plastic, musical and corporal) and creativity.
- To develop the critical thinking regarding the use of materials already available.

5. Methodology

From a critical–reflective qualitative paradigm, the models revised by Domingo and Serés (2014) and Calvo, Barba and Navarro (2015) opt to learn from educational practice. Thus, the proposal arises as an artistic and overall project where students could, through a chosen form of workshop, explore ways, experience methods, learn languages and take part in a creative act with great educational potential. Similarly, the collaborative work (Trujillo and Ariza, 2006; Cobas and Ortega, 2014) helped to produce traineeships where research, reflection, artistic creation and activity design were enriched by contributions and interplay among students.

6. Description of the stages and activities carried out

Hereunder, we describe the work done during the proposal:

6.1. Learning about greguerías

We began by proposing that students investigate the word greguería and the author Gómez de la Serna. Subsequently, we performed a group brainstorm with the information obtained and a reading of many greguerías written by the aforementioned author. Three of these were chosen to be voiced, with participation by the whole group who did research on sounds, added ideas and played with speech.

6.2. Recreating Gómez de la Serna

We made up work groups to select five greguerías by Gómez de la Serna, and they considered how and for what purpose they could be used at the EI stage. Each group chose one of them by consensus to present to the rest of the class. Among all the proposals, the one which stood out was that one on the greguería: *The “O” is the “I” after drinking*, because it suggested that the topic of the five vowels could be an original and effective tool for fostering advances in the development of reading and writing among EI children.

From here each group geared to the creation of five greguerías, one for each vowel, recreating Gómez de la Serna; meanwhile, the students did research to get some basic concepts about phonological development and reading and writing skills in children, and thus they better established the most suitable course to do activities. The greguerías made were the following:

The A is a cornet from which doesn't fall the contents no matter how hard you shake.
The E is an M which has already learned to walk.
The I is all the profile letters.
The O is when the alphabet yawns.
The U is an o so, so, so high that didn't fit in when they wrote it.

The A keep the vane of the castle's tower.
The E is the trident head that you lost on the way.
The I is the weights of three kilos from which my arms flee.
The O is the vicious circle from which your navel is made.
The U where you skate has only one exit.

The A is two chopsticks who kiss each other.
The E is a dumped table of three legs.
The I is point that wanted to reach the moon by stretching.
The O is a snake that bites the tail.
The U is a rope where children skip.

The capital A is the house where I take shelter.
The E is a bridge that stood up.
The I with its haughtiness make me falling in love.
The O is hoop of my collection.
The U as a sea cradled me.
And with all of them I dream and dream.

The A is who escape the monster.
The E is who looks for help for the rest.
The I is the one that feels the pains for its partners.
The O is the most positive of the group, it always has something to tell us in the best moments.
The U is a ghost of the night.

The A is the most amazed and curious
The E is absent-minded.
The I is the sir of the letters.
The O is the surprised full moon.
The U is sensitive and small.

Figure 3. Greguerías made by the students.

6.3. We explore other artistic languages

We added sound to the greguerías, which implied a prior vocal, corporal and instrumental sound exploration of various sound objects, in order to find sounds that could enrich the

greguerías (by evoking meaning, contexts, emotional atmosphere, among other things), while being recited by any member of the group. The students tried different manners of combining sound materials (for example, music created by themselves and pre-existing music to add effects), to obtain a sound version of the greguería with expressive and aesthetical meaning, making musical compositions void of melody or other conventional organizing elements.

From the results, they created graphic scores to put on the sound narrative. It promoted plastically recreating the vowels outside the box, as attractive material for children, drawing and painting letters, transforming them into characters, animals, objects and landscapes. Another activity was a dramatized stage performance oriented towards body expression and/or movement and dance.

6.4. We design activities and games

After a reflection on the traineeship in the context of EI and the activities done, some activities were carried out in lessons. The following goals could be attained in these lessons:

- To contribute to the development of different kinds of language: literary, plastic, musical and body.
- To recognise the vowel sounds phonetically-acoustically and graphically.
- To contribute to developing creativity.

7. Assessment

Evaluating creative proposals like those presented here means fleeing from standard parameters of exams and standardised tests that have nothing to do with art teaching (Eisner, 2004). However, as we have also experienced in previous research:

Assuming changes in the ways of assessing implies authentic reflection and requires rethinking what we understand to be real artistic learning, being aware that this change will involve integrating the students themselves into the assessment process, not only as evaluated elements, but as subjects that evaluate as well (Riaño, Berbel and Murillo, 2017, p. 14).

In our opinion, listening to and including the opinions of the protagonists, both students and university professors, generated a joint reflection on what it means to be a teacher, on the collaborative practices and on the creative processes. Used as assessment tools were, on the one hand, portfolios to incorporate ideas, materials, documentation, resources, references, etc... and, on the other hand, the discussion forums at three precise moments (at the end of stages 4.2.2, 4.2.3 y 4.2.4.), that allowed dialogue, exchange and observation.

8. Conclusions

In accordance with the overall study aims, the greguerías were a beginning didactic material that, in addition to their considerable literary value, triggered new proposals based

on personal and collaborative thinking throughout the participatory experience of student practicums.

Specifically, the proposals incorporated elements of textual, plastic, musical and expression language and body movement that indicated the students had experienced personally creative processes from an inclusive standpoint. Thus, suggesting that practicums like these contribute to the development of creative and artistic thinking as well as a multidisciplinary vision of the childhood education.

Furthermore, the results included new didactic materials created by students designed on the basis of the following criteria: adaptability (children in the early childhood stage), aesthetics (materials that prove to be engaging), ease of use for children in order to encourage education from a globalizing vision in accordance with the established curriculum for this stage.

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