Free-Access Videos as a Music Education Research Source: The Case of Kindergarten's Year-End Celebrations

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Abstract

Free and openly accessible videos have as yet not been treated per se as raw data for music-education research purposes. Bearing in mind (1) the potential of audiovisual records for the study of musical school culture in all its aspects, (2) the advantages of sharing that type of audiovisual data between researchers and from a variety of disciplines, and (3) the wealth of data available in open-space video websites such as Youtube.com that includes, *inter alia*, music classes in formal and informal settings, promotional clips for music-education initiatives or marketing music classes, and schools' celebrations – we embarked on this pilot study aiming to examine the value of online user-generated videos as raw data for music education research, specifically early childhood musical behaviours and instructional models in music teaching.

The data was gathered from YouTube videos found under the terms "kindergarten year-end celebration," probably uploaded by the kindergarten pupils' parents or teachers. For this pilot study a relatively small number of videos (sixteen), among many dozens found, were selected for (1) richness of content; (2) representing a variety of Spanish-speaking countries: Spain, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela; (3) year of uploading: 2006 through 2010; and (4) event setting: outdoors vs. indoors. Findings show that (a) the most frequent instructional models are practical, academic and communicative traditional (Jorquera Jaramillo, 2010); (b) adult interests and types of musical behaviours lie at the core of all performances; (c) children play gender-marked adult roles not corresponding to their age; and (d) shows' traits can be defined as *glocal*.

Background

Video-sharing websites enable the free-access viewing of user-generated content. One of the most popular of these sites, YouTube.com, was established in 2005. Its potential has been discovered by educators in general and music educators in particular, emphasizing not only the possibilities inherent in gaining access to a wide variety of music repertoire and performances, but also to

upgrade their classes' performances, editing these and uploading to the site, thus making this material available to a much wider audience (Rudolf & Frankel, 2010). Nevertheless, free and openly accessible videos have as yet not been treated per se as raw data for music-education research purposes.

Visual records—whether paintings or photographs—have been used as raw data in the sociological study of childhood and education. Two notable examples: Ariès (1960/62) in his seminal work on the evolution of the construction of childhood and family life from medieval times to the modern era, whose data was contemporary paintings and diaries; and Chappell, Chappell, & Margolis's study (2011) whose data—historical photographs depicting rituals in American schools throughout the 20th century—helped them to understand socio-cultural constructions of values and beliefs in those institutions.

While that study's photographs provide some insight into school culture, they offer only limited information on its musical aspects: photographs may show us the type of instruments used, the places where music was performed, and the placement and costuming of the performers. These coupled with written material (e.g. scores, books, concert programs) and audio recordings may help us understand the school musical culture, but much information is still lacking. The development and accessibility of audio and video technology represented a dramatic stride forward.

Audiovisual recording in natural settings has been used as a research tool in a variety of music education qualitative studies (e.g. Cohen, 1980; Gluschankof, 2005; Young, 2003 on preschool children's music making Jorquera Jaramillo, 2008a, 2008b & 2010, on the music teacher's professional knowledge and on instructional models; and Beegle, 2010; and Burnard, 1999 on children's musical creativity). In that type of study, the researcher records the footage to be studied. Sharing audiovisual data among researchers, thus enabling a variety of analysis and interpretations from different points of views and even from a range of disciplines, was suggested by Goldman-Segall (1998) and Pea (2006). Both developed software for sharing not only the data but also the ongoing analysis and interpretation. This type of data-sharing demands a strict code of ethics, making clear to all research subjects that the data may be observed and studied by researchers others than those who arranged and supervised the video recording and were known to the participants.

Bearing in mind (1) the potential of audiovisual records for the study of musical school culture in all its aspects, (2) the advantages of sharing that type of audiovisual data between researchers and from a variety of disciplines, and (3) the wealth of data available in open-space video websites such as Youtube.com that includes, inter alia, music classes in formal and informal settings, promotional clips for music-education initiatives or marketing music classes, and schools' celebrations – we embarked on this pilot study.

Aims

This pilot study aims to examine the value of online user-generated videos as raw data for music education research, specifically early childhood musical behaviours and instructional models in music teaching.

Method

The material for the present ongoing research consists of data gathered from YouTube videos found under the terms "kindergarten year-end celebration," probably uploaded by the kindergarten pupils' parents or teachers. Thus, the data embodies not only the actual performance but also the video photographer's and uploader's choices. The search has been conducted in Spanish—both researchers' first language—enabling access to data from numerous and varied countries. Since the videos have been uploaded to an open-space website, they are considered to be in the public domain, thus covered by the principles of "fair use" and not requiring ethics approval by the participants.

For this pilot study a relatively small number of videos (sixteen), among many dozens found, were selected for (1) richness of content; (2) representing a variety of Spanish-speaking countries: Spain, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela; (3) year of uploading: 2006 through 2010; and (4) event setting: outdoors vs. indoors.

The data have been analyzed by the researchers, both of them well-versed in audiovisual ethnography while coming from different fields of expertise: musical behaviours of young children in formal and informal settings, and instructional models in music teaching and teacher training. The method of analysis is content analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Loizos, 2000), looking for common parameters, categories, and patterns across the videos and within them.

Findings – multiple layers

Repeated viewing of the source material reveals multiple layers of content and interpretations. The first layer (see Table 1) primarily concerns concrete data, some of it provided by the uploader (title, upload date, school name, children's ages) and other information deduced by the researchers. The latter includes the schools' funding, and in some cases the schools' countries, these inferred from the school's denomination: *educación infantil* in Spain, *jardín de infantes* in Argentina, *preescolar* in Venezuela and Mexico, all referring to pre-elementary, formal educational settings for ages 3–6.

Clip	Hyperlink	Title	Upload date	Country	School funding	Children's age
1	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlM5uSS6FeU&feature=related	Sala de 5, Festival Eccleston 2006	29 Oct. 2006	Argentina	Private	5
2	http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=VqR9xL5A6FE	Festival fin de curso, Escuela infantil "Sol y luna"	24 June 2007	Spain	Private*	Not stated
3	http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=DJvA8Ek2cDk	Fiesta de fin de año, Jardin de	12 Dec. 2007	Probably South America	Private	Not stated

		infantes "Vicky 2007"				
4	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a90sZbLY4M&feature=related	Nico fiesta final, "Jardín Jacarandá"	13 Dec. 2007	Argentina	Private	Not stated
5	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJbPRfHMdN8&feature=related	Fiesta de fin de año, "Jardin de la aldea" 15/12/2007	14 May 2008	Argentina	Private	Not stated
6	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylxrhBWYsuA	Fin de curso 2007 - 3 años	17 June 2008	Spain	State funded	3
7	http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=UhZOxZzDhd4&feature=related	Fiesta fin de curso 2008, Infantil	21 June 2008	Spain	State funded	5
8	http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=iGUGJ460_tA&feature=related	Fiesta fin de curso infantil "Colegio Macarena," Sevilla	26 June 2008	Spain	State funded	5
9	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85x0GL1cY5U	Carlos Eduardo Ledo, Acto fin de curso preescolar "La Tahona I"	9 July 2008	Venezuela	Private	Not stated
10	http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=sLeBYCw8Z-Q&feature=related	Fin de curso '08 infantil, cinco años	25 July 2008	Spain	State funded	5
11	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_ZhXM8UBdY&feature=related	Fin de curso 2009 - E.I. 5 años	24 June 2009	Spain	State funded	5
12	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqhnqE7r7uM	Festival Germán, Fin de Curso, " Kipi preescolar 1" (V1)	25 June 2009	Mexico	Private	Not stated
13	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoH_Li9-vN8&feature=related	"Jardin Rosario," fiesta de fin de curso	17 Nov. 2009	Argentina	Private	Not stated
14	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlph8UgLkrE&feature=related	Fiesta del "jardin Santa Ana," año 2010, salita de 5	5 May 2010	Argentina	Private	5
15	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eowdlA-QesY	Fin de cursos preescolar "Carlitos"	26 June 2010	Probably Mexico	Private	Not stated

| 16 | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-k7sAoKp4g | Fin de cursos kinder preescolar "Eva Sámano", Mexicali 2008 | 16 Sept. 2010 | Mexico | Private | Not stated |

Table 1: Sources

* Private with public support.

The second layer leads us onstage and backstage. Shows were set either indoors (clips 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14) or outdoors (clips 6, 7, 8, 10, 11). Stages were set within a theatre or public auditorium (clips 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14), school hall (clip 16), playground (clips 2, 15), or roofed sports hall (clip 3). Usually there is an adult who stands on stage (clips 1, 5) or in front of it (clips 6, 7, 8, 10, 11) acting as stage manager and prompter, i.e. helping the children to recall gestures, movements, lyrics, or melodies. In some instances it seems that an adult is in the wings, visible to the children (clips 1, 14). In other cases the adult participates with the children, either leading the action or joining in the performance (clips 2, 3, 9, 13). In all the cases only recorded music is used; sometimes children sing along.

A closer look reveals that children's clothing can be classified into two different sorts: neutral or character-based. The first type features a single-colour t-shirt (clips 6, 9, 16), their own clothes (clip 4), school uniform (clips 2, 15), or leotard (clip 5). The second type is used in the representation of specific settings such as the reproduction of film scenes, e.g. "Grease", with children dressed as U.S. high-schoolers of the 1950's (clip 7), or "Lilo & Stitch", Disney's film set in Hawaii, with the girls

costumed as Hawaiian maidens and the boys as pirates (clip 14). Other settings are related to folk traditions of a local region such as Seville in Andalusía, Spain (clip 8) and Mexico (clip 12), or foreign ones (U.S.A. country-Western, i.e. cowboys and cowgirls in clip 1).

Common to all types of costuming in the performances is that they are gender-marked (Arenas Fernández, 1996). Gender distinction is symbolically indicated by means of colours (e.g., with boys wear brown hats and girls red ones in clip 1), or by means of gender roles that belong to a fantasy world (e.g., butterfly costumes for girls in clip 3). Other indications of gender distinction are inherent in school uniforms (trousers for boys and skirts for girls in clip 13). T-shirts were used in a unisex fashion (clips 2 and 16), as worn also in the adult world.

A third layer leads us to the musical repertoire and the stylistic features of the movements set to the music. The first, traditional and modern children's songs in Spanish (clips 6, 9,11, 15, 16) that are mostly performed in pop style; U.S.A. country-style (clip 1), instrumental music of the "New Age" genre (clip 3), Caribbean style (clip 4), Latin jazz (clip 5), film music ("Grease" in clip 7; "Lilo & Stitch" in clip 14), pop songs of the 1970s (clip 11), children's rhymes in Spanish and in English (clip 12), and instrumental and vocal renditions of modern children songs in a variety of "national/ethnic" styles (clip 13).

The identified categories of movements set to the music range from strict choreographies to free movements. Strict ones are adult-designed, re-creating scenes of particular films (clips 7, 14), and

dancing styles (clip 11, 13). Less strict ones are set gestures to the lyrics of the specific song (clips 6, 9), or moving with some freedom to the music but related somehow to its beat, structure, and style (clips 13, 14), while only one clip (2) features children moving freely. Seldom did children recite (clip 12) or sing along without set movements (clip 15).

Conclusions

As the content of the videos relates to *celebrations,* the intention of carrying out a *show* that aims at entertaining the audience should be classified as a communicative recreational instructional model (Jorquera Jaramillo, 2010). In such events, classroom activities interface with the social system to let the audience know what the children have learnt. Nevertheless, the practical-instructional model seems to predominate over the communicative-recreational model, as it may be observed that the children's performance is related to a practical activity, as the descriptions of the children's musical behaviours indicate. The children move and gesticulate to the music; they play toy instruments and sing. Furthermore, in most of the videos the adult-designed choreographies seem to reflect that the children's ideas and interests have not been taken into account, save perhaps the one based on a popular Disney film. So it may be inferred that the activities are centred on the teacher because she primarily leads the action and also serves as the model to be imitated. The knowledge taught and learnt is mainly a selection of a musical and dance repertoire, so

this aspect is part of both the applied and the academic instructional model (Jorquera Jaramillo, 2010).

Regarding the gender roles, the costumes suggested by the teacher for the representation of films, folk traditions and other symbolic matters essentially derive from the adult world. This promotes the children to play gender-marked adult roles not corresponding to their age.

Adult interests and types of musical behaviours lie at the core of all the video clips studied. This possibly reflects that early-childhood teachers' education in Spanish-speaking countries has little consideration of how children's spontaneous behaviours, as well as their ideas and interests, could be a source of educational richness and learning. Literature on spontaneous musical behaviours of young children reports the free use of objects and musical instruments in a variety of ways, few of them resembling adult models (e.g. Moorhead & Pond, , 1942/1978; Gluschankof, 2005b), reproducing—not always accurately—adult-composed songs, singing their own invented songs (e.g. Moorhead & Pond, 1941/1978; Bjørkvold, 1989/1992), and moving to music relating in some way to its beat, structure, and style (Gorali-Turel, 1997; (Gluschankof, 2008). This type of behaviour was respected in only several of the clips studied. We suggest here that moving to music, in a set style or freely, is both a behaviour common to adults in current times and also ensures an acceptable, recognizable, and valued performance.

There is no great difference among countries in the themes chosen and the appearance of the shows (clips 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, parts of 13, 14, 15, 16), so that it is possible to identify a trend towards *globalization*. At the same time, some of the shows' traits can be defined as *local* (clips 8, 12, parts of 13) in the sense that clear national styles are represented. This can be seen as an expression of *glocalization*.

Limitations

This pilot study shows the richness that open-access video may offer for a variety of analysis and interpretation in general, and for music education in particular. The videos show *ecological* settings, as they are recorded by the uploaders, and they reflect clearly the children's achieved learning. Nevertheless, because of the nature of the material, it may disappear – as the uploader may at any time retire it from the site. In such a case, research reliability is impacted. This could be mitigated by downloading the data to the researcher's own computer, but then this data has severely limited access as a common source for shared research. Fluidity is one of the characteristics of this media: how do we deal with it?

Even so, free-access videos may continue to serve as a rich and interesting source of material for research that could provide valuable insights into contemporary music education.

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