

ENHANCING THE AURAL SKILLS OF JUNIOR CHURCH CHOIR STUDENTS IN YANGON, MYANMAR THROUGH SIGHT-SINGING LESSONS UTILIZING THE KODÁLY METHOD

การพัฒนาทักษะการขับร้องของนักเรียนในคณะนักร้องประสานเสียงรุ่นเยาว์
ในโบสถ์กรุงย่างกุ้ง ประเทศเมียนมา โดยการประยุกต์ใช้แบบฝึกหัดร้องโน้ต
ฉับพลันตามแนวโคดาไล

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Sight-singing is widely recognized for enhancing musical literacy and vocal skills among choir singers. However, structured sight-singing instruction is rarely included in choir programs in Myanmar. This study aimed to develop and evaluate an introductory, pre-notational sight-singing resource for junior choir students, based on the Kodály method and supported by modern music education practices. Specifically, the study focused on designing the lessons, exploring how students engaged with the instruction, and assessing their perceptions of its relevant and effectiveness.

Methods: Fifteen church choir students aged 9-10 years from Yangon participated in a 12-week intervention. Although all had basic music theory knowledge and two years of choir experience, none had prior exposure to formal music reading. Weekly one-hour lessons incorporated movable-do solfege, hand signs, rhythm syllables, movement, and Karen folk songs to engage students through aural, visual, and kinesthetic learning. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study assessed musical skills through pre-/post-tests, formative assessments, weekly observations, and a final interview.

Key Findings: Results showed improvement in pitch accuracy, rhythmic fluency, sight-singing ability, and confidence. Students found the lessons enjoyable, practical, and beneficial for choir participation. Additionally, students highlighted the lessons' utility in developing social and creative thinking skills.

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Implications of the Study: A dip in performance during weeks with fewer movement activities underscored the value of kinesthetic engagement for middle childhood students.

Conclusions and Future Study: The findings suggest that the developed sight-singing lessons is an effective and culturally relevant tool for young choristers in Myanmar and can be adapted in other contexts using local folk music tradition.

คำสำคัญ: การร้องโน้ตฉบับพลัน; การขับร้อง; คณะนักร้องประสานเสียงในโบสถ์; การสอนตามแนวโคตตาย; องค์ประกอบทางดนตรี

บทคัดย่อ

ภูมิหลังและวัตถุประสงค์: เป็นที่ยอมรับกันโดยทั่วไปว่าทักษะการร้องโน้ตฉบับพลันมีความสำคัญอย่างยิ่งต่อการพัฒนาทักษะทางดนตรีและการขับร้องของนักร้องวงประสานเสียงในทุกระดับ แต่ในประเทศเมียนมามีการใช้แนวปฏิบัติดังกล่าวในวงจำกัด งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งพัฒนาบทเรียนการร้องโน้ตฉบับพลันเบื้องต้นตามแนวโคตตายที่ผนวกวิธีการทางดนตรีศึกษาสมัยใหม่ สำหรับนักเรียนในคณะนักร้องประสานเสียงรุ่นเยาว์ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะ กล่าวคือ เพื่อออกแบบพัฒนา และศึกษากระบวนการเรียนรู้ของบทเรียน รวมทั้งทัศนคติของนักเรียนต่อบทเรียนที่ได้พัฒนาขึ้น

วิธีการศึกษา: ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยจำนวน 15 คน มีอายุระหว่าง 9-10 ปี ทั้งหมดเป็นนักเรียนในคณะนักร้องประสานเสียงรุ่นเยาว์ในโบสถ์กรุงย่างกุ้ง ที่มีพื้นฐานความรู้ทฤษฎีดนตรีและเข้าร่วมวงมาแล้ว 2 ปี แต่ยังไม่เคยมีประสบการณ์การอ่านโน้ตดนตรี ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยได้เข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการใช้บทเรียนเป็นเวลา 12 สัปดาห์ สัปดาห์ละ 1 ชั่วโมง บทเรียนในแต่ละสัปดาห์ประกอบด้วย การอ่านสัญลักษณ์โน้ตในระบบซอลฟาที่ใช้โน้ตเคลื่อนที่ การใช้สัญญาณมือแทนระดับเสียง สัญลักษณ์จังหวะ การกำหนดเสียงต่าง ๆ แทนจังหวะ กิจกรรมการเคลื่อนไหว และการขับร้องบทเพลงพื้นบ้านกะเหรี่ยง ทั้งหมดนี้เพื่อกระตุ้นความสนใจของนักเรียนผ่านกิจกรรมการฟัง การมองเห็น และการเคลื่อนไหวร่างกาย การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน มีการเก็บข้อมูลคะแนนการปฏิบัติทั้งก่อน ระหว่าง และหลังการใช้บทเรียน รวมทั้งการสังเกตพฤติกรรมการเรียนรู้รายสัปดาห์ และการสัมภาษณ์ในสัปดาห์สุดท้ายของการเรียน

ผลการศึกษาที่สำคัญ: ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นความก้าวหน้าของนักเรียนในการร้องโน้ตในระดับเสียงที่ถูกต้อง การร้องและปรบจังหวะ รวมทั้งการร้องโน้ตฉบับพลัน โดยนักเรียนมีความมั่นใจในการปฏิบัติมากขึ้น ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยระบุในการให้สัมภาษณ์ถึงความสนุกสนานในการเรียน การปฏิบัติตามบทเรียนได้ง่าย และประโยชน์ของบทเรียนต่อการฝึกขับร้องในวงประสานเสียง นอกจากนี้ นักเรียนยังระบุถึงประโยชน์ของบทเรียนในการพัฒนาทักษะทางสังคมและทักษะการคิดสร้างสรรค์อีกด้วย

นัยสำคัญของการศึกษา: ผลคะแนนการปฏิบัติของนักเรียนที่ลดลงในช่วงสัปดาห์ที่ไม่เน้นกิจกรรมการเคลื่อนไหว สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงความสำคัญของการใช้กิจกรรมดังกล่าวในการเรียนรู้ของนักเรียนในช่วงวัยเด็กตอนกลาง

สรุปผลและแนวทางการศึกษาในอนาคต: การศึกษานี้สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงประสิทธิภาพและความเชื่อมโยงทางวัฒนธรรมของบทเรียนที่ได้พัฒนาขึ้นสำหรับนักเรียนวงประสานเสียงรุ่นเยาว์ในประเทศเมียนมา บทเรียนนี้อาจนำไปปรับใช้ในบริบททางสังคมอื่น ๆ ทั้งนี้ ควรพิจารณาเลือกใช้บทเพลงพื้นบ้านที่นักเรียนมีความคุ้นเคยเป็นหลัก

1. Introduction

In Christian society, singing plays a vital role in church worship services, as music acts as a powerful medium for conveying the message of prayer effectively. Church choir singing thus play a crucial role in the church service. As outlined by Walter Carroll in 1927, the role of church choir includes assisting those seeking a connection with God in united worship through prayer and song, and providing an opportunity for silent worship through listening and meditation (Carroll, 1927, as cited in Boonyasanggawong, 2000). In Myanmar, the first children's choir and Christian Cantata were established at Nanthar Gone Karen Baptist Church in Yangon, leading other churches to adopt similar practices. However, the choir singing approach in Myanmar was not systematic, with choir leaders primarily using rote learning. Students often relied on a voice leader for imitation and needed to listen to the melody multiple times, depending on the pianist to play the music. Additionally, young singers looked to their peers for accurate singing. Through these methods, students sing without expressing the musical nuances and encountered difficulties in reading music, understanding rhythm and timing, and lack a musical aesthetic of the songs.

Sight-singing, musical skill wherein individuals sing and read music without prior knowledge of the song would be beneficial in several ways for choir singers. It involves interpreting the symbols in musical notation and matching them with vocal pitches. Choir teachers often describe it as singing a section or phrase of a previously unseen or unheard piece without accompaniment. This process aids students in recognizing and imitating the patterns of musical notation (Brewer, 2019).

Sight-singing provides numerous advantages for choir singers. With consistent practice, students can enhance their aural skills (such as pitch accuracy) and listening ability (inner hearing) while gaining a deeper understanding of melodic and rhythmic patterns, intervals, phrasing, changes in tonalities, musical direction, and intonation. Beyond merely reading notes, sight-singing fosters an understanding of the entire structure of a musical piece, making it valuable for ear training. It encompasses not only the ability to read music but also proficiency in musical nuances (McClung, 2008; Mollison-Red, 2016).

Many students in Myanmar did not view sight-singing as important compared to playing instruments like the piano, violin, and guitars. Choir leaders and teachers often found they lacked the time to prioritize sight-singing instruction, as their focus was on helping students quickly learn songs (S. John, unpublished observations). In 1988, Rose Daniels pointed out that “the development of competency in sight-reading is a subject that is frequently neglected in the field of choral music” (Daniels, 1988, as cited in Demorest, 2001, p. 22). Similarly, Philip Costanza and Thomas Russell (1992) noted that “teaching sight-singing instructions remain one of the weakest components of choral music education” (Costanza & Russell, 1992, as cited in McClung, 2001). Furthermore, Don Collins and Tommy Scott; and Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (1995) emphasized that “the ability to sing music on sight is recognized as a fundamental goal of music education and a key to developing an independent music learner” (Collins & Scott; and Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, as cited in McClung, 2001).

Based on the needs of the learner sight-singing, there were no fixed methods and teaching approaches to the music teachers, as teaching mediums could vary in different ways depending on the teacher’s priorities or music experiences. Though there are diverse sight-singing methods accessible to educators, past research shows that educators commonly use the following systems, each with its own approach to pitch representation. The nine main methods include: 1) naming interval (e.g., perfect fourth, major third), 2) using non-inflected names (e.g., C for both C and C-sharp), 3) using inflected letter names (e.g., C, C-sharp), 4) scale-degree numbers (e.g., 1 represents the tonic in both major and minor), 5) fixed-do (where “do” equals C, “di” equals C sharp), 6) scale-degree numbers (e.g., 1 represents the tonic in major, and 6 represents the tonic in minor), 7) movable-do (where “do” is the tonic in major and “la” is the tonic in minor), 8) movable-do (where “do” is the tonic in both major, and minor), and 9) using a neutral syllable (Gordon, 1997; Pembroke & Riggins, 1990; McClung, 2001). Among all, movable-do illustrates a promising approach in practicing pitch-reading in The United States (McClung, 2001, Demorest & May, 1995).

Movable-do strategy is significant in the Kodály music teaching method for young children (Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie, Woods & York, 2001). The Kodály method created

by Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), a Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist, and music educator, was developed in Hungary during the twentieth century (Campbell & Kassner, 1995; Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie, Woods, & York, 2001). The philosophy of Kodály's music education was rooted in the belief that "music belongs to everyone". He saw music as the heart and soul of the curriculum, an essential core and a fundamental part of formal education. Kodály is renowned for developing a teaching method that uses Hungarian folk music as its foundation (Choksy, 1999). Kodály emphasized the importance of musical notation, leading him to develop innovative methods for teaching children to read music (Daniel, 1981; Kodály, 1941). Central to Kodály's approach to teaching music is singing focusing on students' voices to promote accurate tone production and good intonation. This is achieved through sight-singing practice, which helps develop students' inner hearing (Ottman, 2001). Kodály's method employs tools such as relative solmization, the movable-do system (where 'do' represents the tonic in major keys and 'la' in minor keys), hand signs, and rhythm syllables. Nite et al. (2015) found that music teachers in their study appreciated Kodály pedagogy for its ability to improve their musicianship and teaching skills. Similarly, Hill (2009) conducted a case study in a church setting where adult learned sight-singing using the Kodály approach, yielding positive results. In 1979, music educators Walter Barbe and Raymond Swassing suggested that an effective music learning process involves engaging three sensory channels: visual, auditory, and tactile/ kinesthetic (Barbe & Swassing, 1979, as cited in Campbell & Kassner, 1995). Educators are additionally encouraged to possess musical and conducting skills, to support an experiential learning process for students (Landis & Carder, 1990). These studies encourage us to apply the Kodály music teaching method in our choir class. We aim to develop for junior church choir students in Myanmar a basic level of sight-singing lessons to enhance their aural skills and singing.

2. Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to 1) develop introductory sight-singing lessons at the pre-notational level, grounded in the Kodály method and tailored to enhance the singing abilities of junior church choir students in Myanmar, 2) examine the students' learning process during the 12-week intervention to understand how they engaged with and

responded to the instructional approach, and 3) assess the students' perceptions of the developed lessons in terms of engagement, usefulness, and applicability to their musical development.

3. Scope of study

This study focused on the development and implementation of sight-singing lessons based on the Kodály method, incorporating modern music education strategies to support visual, aural, and kinesthetic learning. Core components of the Kodály approach used in the study included movable-do solfege syllables, rhythm syllables, rhythmic movement, rhythm sequencing and notation, melodic sequencing based on the pentatonic scale, and the use of hand signs.

The primary goal was to help children in middle childhood develop an understanding of fundamental musical concepts, specifically pitch, melody, rhythm, and dynamics. Advanced musical elements such as timbre, harmony, texture, and musical form were intentionally excluded from the scope of this intervention.

The intervention was conducted over a 12-week period, with one-hour singing lessons held weekly. The sight-singing lessons were designed and implemented with church choir students, aged 9-10, at Nanthar Gone Karen Baptist Church in Yangon.

To evaluate the practicality of the lessons for classroom use, both student performance and perceptions were analyzed. A mixed methods research design was employed: quantitative data were gathered through performance assessment scores, while qualitative data were collected to explore the students' learning process and perceptions of the lessons.

4. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design to develop, implement, and evaluate sight-singing lessons for junior church choir students, combining quantitative assessment of musical progress with qualitative exploration of their learning experiences and perceptions. The research process involved four main components:

4.1 Development of the lessons: The sight-singing lessons aimed to help pre-notational students develop music literacy through a pentatonic repertoire, using selected children's songs, Western folk songs, and Karen art songs. Lessons focused on musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamic; melodic sequences, and rhythmic patterns. The movable-do system and hand signs were used, introducing solfege syllables la, sol, mi, re, and do, within pitch range of C4 to A4, using intervals up to a perfect sixth.

For rhythm, "ta" and "ti-ti" were used to represent quarter and eighth notes in 2/4 and 4/4 meters, respectively. Rests and two-beat silences were included. Dynamic concepts introduced included p, f, mp, mf, and articulation terms such as staccato, legato, and slur. Learning was reinforced through singing, listening, games, movements (e.g., walking, clapping), and reading/writing exercises. Lesson followed Kodály's developmental approach, progressing through preparation, making conscious, and practice/performance phases. Student performance was assessed on musical foundation and sight-singing ability. All materials and assessments were reviewed by three music scholars, ensuring content validity and assessment reliability, supported by consistent rubric-based evaluations and parallel test forms.

4.2 Participants: Fifteen junior choir students (aged 9-10) from Nanthar Gone Karen Baptist Church in Yangon participated. All had two years of choir and music theory experience but no prior sight-singing knowledge. They were selected through convenience sampling. The 12-week program included four assessments and informal interviews. Ethical approval was granted by Mahidol University's Ethical Review Board. Both students assent and guardian consent were obtained.

4.3 Class activities: Classes were held weekly for 45 minutes over 12 weeks, supplemented by 15 minutes of worksheets and interest-based activities. Lessons ran alongside regular one-hour choir classes. After an ice-breaking sessions in Week 1, students completed a pre-intervention assessment. Each session included warm-up, instruction, evaluation, and discussion. Performance assessments occurred in Week 5, 8, and 12, along with ongoing behavioral observations.

On assessment days, students individually completed sight-singing tasks at a music stand. Each performed two pieces, identifying pitch, rhythm, dynamic, and tempo, clapping rhythms, and singing. Multiple attempts were allowed within a 3-minute limit, and the highest score was recorded. In the final week, students participated in informal interviews about their experience with the lessons.

4.4 Data collection and analysis: All sessions and assessment were video recorded. Three trained evaluators independently rated student performances using a 5-point scale across four dimensions: pitch, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics. Each criterion was scored out of 10, and mean scores were calculated for analysis. Evaluators used a standardized worksheet to rate sight-reading and sight-singing abilities. Student behaviors during class and assessment sessions were observed and noted. Student perceptions were gathered through informal interviews during the final week. These were video recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to identify patterns of improvement, engagement, and both positive and negative feedback on the lessons.

5. Outputs and benefit

The new sight-singing lesson was designed using a Kodály-inspired method, making it suitable for both beginner students and teachers in Myanmar's choir programs. The quality of the materials and the teaching and learning processes were evaluated by two music scholars with doctoral degree in music. All key criteria for student assessment were addressed, ensuring validity, reliability, and usability in the teaching and learning process. To promote effective student learning outcomes, the lesson incorporated a variety of hands-on music activities tailored for young learners. Teachers from different nations may adopted this newly developed lesson to enhance middle childhood students' musical skills, including pitch, rhythms, melodies, and dynamics. The lessons are beneficial if teachers develop their exercises based on their nation's folk music.

6. Results

This section presents the findings of the study, which are organized into two main areas: the outcomes of the 3-phase sight-singing lessons as reflected in student performance, and students' perceptions of the lessons.

6.1 The 3-phase lessons and students' performance: By attending this program, students engaged in a variety of aural, visual and kinesthetic activities throughout the 12-week period. Adapted from the Kodály method, students were taught in a logical sequence to become familiar with pitches and rhythm concepts before learning the symbols of notes. Throughout the 3-phase program, students practiced rhythm syllables, rhythmic movements, rhythm pattern, movable-do solfege, melodic contour, and dynamic expression. Students were taught these musical concepts through listening, singing, reading, and movement. The pentatonic scale was used in this program as a stepping stone for scale degree. When students became familiar with the rhythm and movable-do solfege, they learned how to notate them using a simplified method of notation. QR code that link to the 12-week lesson can be found in Figure 1.

Students' performance assessments were conducted before the intervention, at the beginning and the end of the second phase, and after the intervention. All the assessments include four elements of music, including rhythm (clapping and singing), pitch, dynamic, and tempo. Students had to identify the key signature in music, the pitch syllables, melodic patterns, the pitch intervals, the time signature, the group of rhythm patterns, and the performance directions and breathing marks in music.



Figure 1 QR code for scanning to open the 12-week sight-singing lessons
(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)

The features of the 3-phase lessons and students' performance are represented as follows.

6.1.1 Preparation phase: This phase took four weeks of study (Week 1-4). In the first week, ice-breaking activities helped students build connections with each other and the teacher and build a sense of common purpose. When individuals were comfortable in the classroom environment, the pre-assessment took place. After the pre-assessment process, students engaged in the pre-notational sight-singing lessons.

1) Pre-Assessment: Results of the pre-assessment showed that all students obtained zero point on each test element, showing an inability to read music before participating in the sight-singing program.

2) Teaching and learning in Week 1-4: In the first week, participants in this study were trained by playing games, singing songs, familiarizing themselves with hand gestures and the oral tradition of rhythmic syllables in short chants to understand the musical elements and music terminology covering the content domains.

In weeks two to four, students practiced do-pentatonic scales by listening to tunes and distinguishing if new pitches were high or low, singing short chants and folk songs, playing musical games utilizing body movement to show pitch levels and melodic contour, and reading symbols. To develop a vocal range for singing, the lessons progress from three-pitches (la-so-mi) songs to tetratonic-pitches (so-mi-re-do) songs, and then pentatonic-pitches (la-so-mi-re-do) songs. Hand-sign singing was engaged in this phase, and students practiced hand gestures to show and sing the correct pitch. In line with the Kodály method, this study employed a ‘sound-to-symbol learning’ approach. Students practiced reading pitch syllables, and tone ladders, exploring their relationships without key signatures using flashcards.

Rhythms were introduced through rhythm syllables and patterns, which students practiced using short chants, musical games and by creating patterns individually or in groups. Our observations showed that students accurately echoed pitch syllables and recognized both solfege and notational symbols for limited keys such as C and G major. They were also able to identify pitch movements involving steps, skip, and repeated notes within simple patterns. Rhythmic patterns like “ta”, “ti-ti” and rests were effectively learned. At this stage, students could describe aural labels and decode familiar musical patterns

they had previously learned using tonal syllables. When guided by the researcher to perform in a group with musical expressions such as loud and soft, along with conducting cues and facial expressions, students successfully demonstrated dynamic. By the end of the first phase, all students were comfortable with the material, communicated ideas easily, and demonstrated efficient learning.

6.1.2 Consciousness and reinforcement phase: This phase spanned four weeks (Weeks 5-8). Students practiced sight-singing by recalling, reasoning, and applying concepts from the previous stage. They learned to read music using letter names and convert them into solfege syllables to improve and expand pitch accuracy.

1) Teaching and learning in Week 5: Students were introduced to a visual representation of the musical scale. Since they were already familiar with pitch names, the solfege names were linked to the corresponding note names to aid their reading on the staff. During week 5, students practiced reading musical notation in the treble (G) clef in the key of C, with a 4/4 time signature, later incorporating the 2/4 time signature. Having studied pitch names and tonal systems in earlier weeks, many students had foundational knowledge of basic music theory. They were able to identify pitch names and rhythm patterns along with their values in the repertoires. For instance, when examining the key signature, students could explain how it related to the music, whether notes were written on lines or spaces, and whether the melody started on the tonic or another pitch.



Figure 2 Pre-assessment pieces
(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)



Figure 3 Week 5 assessment pieces

(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)



Figure 4 Week 8 assessment pieces

(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)



Figure 5 Week 12 assessment pieces

(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)

2) Week 5 Assessment: At the end of Week 5, students had taken individual sight-singing assessments for the teacher and students' awareness of their learning progress. Results (See in Table 1) showed that a majority of students achieved fair music reading and singing pitch notational system, singing pitch syllables with good intonation, clapping rhythm, singing rhythm, naming rhythm patterns, presenting the melodic contour, and identifying the distance of note intervals in music. The results of the rhythm section indicated that rhythm clapping was better than rhythm singing. The strength of the rhythm reading was that students found it significantly easy to read and clap along with rhythm patterns in the selected songs. However, tempo could not be maintained while playing the beat at an assigned speed. However, when students initiated a tempo, they could refine their potential to sing with a steady beat. Students who had shown a fair ability to understand performance signs and directions could not perform the signs of expression 'dynamic' in written music when performing alone during the assessments. However, when the researcher guided them, they performed the dynamic well. The most successful part of learning sight-singing was achievement in rhythm clapping in Week 5 assessment.

3) Teaching and learning in Weeks 6-8 In week 6, students engaged in more practice with reading music notation, using hand signs for familiar songs, and applying this knowledge to new material. Instructions during this period focused heavily on music theory, terminology, and technical aspects of sight-singing. However, some students appeared less focus and attentive when engaging with the more theoretical components of music reading.

In weeks 7 and 8, students actively practiced note reading, analyzing music, and writing patterns to tunes and songs that they had previously studied. Students were able to recognize the pitch patterns and then articulate the whole pattern of music, think and write musical notes and rhythm patterns of the songs, and practice sight-singing successfully. However, at this stage, teachers still facilitated practice in pitch singing by using hand signs for one-to-one phrases and each section of music.

4) Week 8 Assessment: During the Week 8 assessment, students were given more challenging tasks for each musical element. The test covered the entire 'do' pentatonic scale, pitched syllables (do, re, mi, sol, la), mixed tonal patterns, intervals, steps, and leaps. When students attempted to sing all the pitch combination, the results showed

they struggled with intonation and were unable to connect mixed pitches patterns and their relationships. However, students were able to perform familiar pitch patterns (so-mi-la-do) in descending motions within a small range of simple patterns that they had practiced several times, using familiar repertoire songs. While students were able to generalize these familiar patterns through visual or sight-word solfege syllables and recognize tonal motions in class, they were unable to reproduce these patterns in the assessment based on their prior learning experience. Most pitches were sung smoothly except for 're', which was difficult, particularly when descending from 'sol' to 're'. Singing leaps or skips, such as from 'so' to 're' or 'so' to 'do', also posed challenges, and many students struggled with wide range pitches in the test. Incorporating rests into short rhythmic phrases and creating groups of rhythm patterns with equal measures also proved difficult for students. Although, they appeared to understand dynamic markings in written music they struggled to apply these when singing alone during the assessment.

One positive outcome from the Week 8 assessment was that students demonstrated increased speed in reading music. However, their overall test scores were lower compared to earlier assessments. Although they showed improved understanding during the learning process, their performance had not yet reached a proficient level at this point.

6.1.3 Practice and performance phase: This phase was completed in the additional four weeks of the study (Weeks 9 to 12). A post-assessment took place at the end of this phase. Students acquired time at this phase to practice a more difficult sight-singing exercises utilizing both familiar songs and unfamiliar songs.

1) Teaching and learning in Week 9-12: In weeks 9 to 10, students were challenged to read and sing the selected songs both individually and in groups without assistance from the teacher-researcher. They were also engaged in writing music exercises by first decoding the rhythm pattern of the songs and writing the rhythm stick notation above the words, secondly decoding the melody of the songs and write the pitches under the rhythm patterns, thirdly writing do-pentatonic pitches on musical staff, and finally transcribing the songs and writing the pitches on musical line with standard notation.

In Week 11-12, beside practicing sight-singing lessons, students had opportunities to develop creative music writing skills by decoding an original music and transfer their ideas to new music making. They also intensively practiced the melodic and rhythm drill exercises; and melodic dictation. The students who routinely practiced reading and sight-singing had become more confident and sang competently individually or in pairs. They were enthusiastic about practicing pitch singing with hand movements and working in groups to enhance their competency.

At this stage students improved significantly in academic performance and social and creative skills. A majority of students showed more confidence in their reading and singing of music in class. They understood why and how music reading was useful in choir singing. Gaining all these musical skills helped students enjoy singing and playing music activities individually and with peers. However, the students acquired the learning skills at a different speed. The teacher-researcher thus provided many opportunities for them to choose core content to practice by themselves with assistance from the teacher.

2) Week 12 Assessment: On Week 12 assessment, all the students performed well with higher scores than the prior assessments. Rhythm clapping was completed, with 80% of students received 9 out of 10 points at the post-assessment. Only 20% of students received 9 out of 10 points for rhythm singing. During class students practiced rhythmic syllables and recognized patterns in many activities, for examples, repeating (call and response), singing (echo and inner singing), clapping, creating rhythm patterns, and writing. Their pitch singing also improved. At the beginning of the program, students could not read the pitch name, but with intervention, their pitch reading and singing gradually improved with good intonation. At the post-assessment, 33% of students received 9 out of 10 points. Some students use hand gestures while singing to make it easier to sing with the correct pitch.

Results from the final assessment demonstrated that while some students could reach the correct pitch, others need improvements. From the researcher's observation, some students could not find the starting pitch register and needed some guides to begin. Observation also showed a few students could not move the pitch contour either from low to high or vice versa. It was presented in an unvaried tone, called monotone or a tone-deaf

singer. Many of the students made repeated improvements in tempo singing. At the post-assessment, 33% of students received 8 out of 10 points. At the beginning of lesson, students followed or matched the tempo when singing. After they practiced sight-singing drills and rhythmic pattern exercises, students could follow a steady beat while singing. It was one of the positive effects in this study. However, on the final assessment, students were unable to use ‘dynamic’ as musical expression. In fact, throughout the program, signs of improvement were not evidenced in the assessment. During the intervention all students could not follow dynamic singing without teacher support. However, during the post-assessment, the researcher found that despite the differences in competence among all the students, some were aware of their mistakes and promptly self-corrected.

Table 1 Performance Scores obtained by Individual student.
(S. John and K. Jittivadhna, Thailand, 2024)

Student #	Student Score																	
	Rhythm Clapping			Rhythm Singing			Pitch			Dynamic			Tempo			Total		
	W5	W8	W12	W5	W8	W12	W5	W8	W12	W5	W8	W12	W5	W8	W12	W5	W8	W12
1	7.66	9	9.33	5.66	4.33	6.33	9.33	4.33	8.33	2	2	2	6.33	5	7.33	30.98	24.66	33.32
2	9	7.33	9.33	6.33	3.66	8.66	7.33	2.66	9.66	2	2	2	6.33	4	8.33	30.99	19.65	37.98
3	10	9.33	9.33	8.66	5	7	9	4.33	8	2	2	2	9.33	6.33	7.33	38.99	26.99	33.66
4	9	7.66	9.33	6.33	5.66	8	7.66	5	9.66	2	2	2	7.33	6.66	7.66	32.32	26.98	36.65
5	8	8	9	6.33	3.66	7.33	7	3.33	5	2	2	2	7.33	6.33	7	30.66	23.32	30.33
6	9.33	10	9.33	8.33	8.33	8.66	9.33	8	9.33	2	2	2	9.33	7.33	8	38.32	35.66	37.32
7	8.33	7	8.66	6.33	3.66	8	5.66	4	8	2	2	2	8	5.66	7.33	30.32	22.32	33.99
8	6.33	8.33	8.33	6.33	3.33	4.66	6.33	3.33	6.66	2	2	2	8.33	4	6.66	29.32	20.99	28.31
9	8.33	8	8.66	6	5.33	6.33	6.66	5.33	8.33	2	2	2	7	5.66	7.33	29.99	26.32	32.65
10	7	7.66	9.33	6.66	5	6.66	6	5.33	7.33	2	2	2	8.66	5	7.33	30.32	24.99	32.65
11	8	9.66	9.66	7.33	5.66	8	7	5.33	7.66	2	2	2	8.66	5	8.33	32.99	27.65	35.65
12	9.33	10	10	8.66	7.66	9	8	7.66	9.33	2	2	2	9.66	7	9.33	37.65	34.32	39.66
13	7	8.33	9.33	4.66	5.66	5.33	5	5.66	7	2	2	2	5.33	5.66	7.33	23.99	27.32	30.99
14	5.33	7.33	9.66	4	5.66	7.33	3.66	5.33	8.66	2	2	2	7	6	8	21.99	26.32	35.65
15	6	4.66	7.66	4.66	4.33	6	4.66	3.66	6.66	2	2	2	6	5	6.33	23.32	19.65	28.65

6.2 Students' perception: Informal interviews were conducted in the final week of classes to determine students' satisfaction with the sight-singing lessons provided. Interview results revealed that all student participants gave positive responses when the researchers asked the questions: Did you enjoy the sight-singing class? Some student nodded their head and showed smiling faces, while many of them gave cheerful verbal responses and extended explanations. These included "easy to follow", "like the ta-ti-ti", "like a teacher showing hand signs", "helpful for choir practice", "I have fun", "all are good", "all are easy", "I can sing with my friends", and "I learn many things". Some students found singing in a group was beneficial, they said "Group singing help me identify my mistake easily". Many students enjoyed the lesson structure and expressed interest in participating future sight-singing classes. Another group of students suggested that the music institution they currently attend use the sight-singing program. The interview results demonstrated that our self-created lessons were practical and welcomed by our local junior choir students.

7. Conclusion and discussion

Previous research shows that many choir educators prefer to create their own sight-singing materials to better meet students' specific needs. Demorest (2004) notes that teacher-created resources offer flexibility, allowing adaptation based on learners' progress and challenges. In line with this, the present study developed a Kodály-based sight-singing lessons for junior church choir students in Myanmar, integrating modern, multisensory strategies -- aural, visual, and kinesthetic -- appropriate for middle childhood development. Lessons introduced musical concepts sequentially, starting with foundational elements like pitch, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics. At the pre-notational level, students engaged in singing Karen folk songs, listening tasks, flashcard reading, and movement games. Rhythm was taught through body-based activities that helped internalize tempo and meter. Rhythmic notation was introduced only after these concepts were physically experienced, which supported rapid connection to sight-reading.

Pitch was taught using the do-pentatonic scale through chants and folk songs, with Kodály hand signs reinforcing pitch height visually and kinesthetically. Movable-do solfege aided understanding of tonal relationships. Once students demonstrated aural familiarity, they progressed through writing down what they sang.

Dynamics were introduced, though students struggled to apply them independently—consistent with research suggesting children aged 9 to 10 find abstract musical elements challenging without direct support (Gembris, 2006; Gordon, 2007; Demorest, & Pfordresher, 2015). Still, dynamics were included to build musical expression and sensitivity.

Students' performance improved steadily over the 12 weeks, except during Week 6 and 8, when reduced movements and increased theory led to a dip in scores. This highlighted the value of kinesthetic learning for comprehension and retention. Overreliance on rote learning also proved ineffective—students engaged less and showed limited independence when lessons lacked visual and physical components. These results underscore the need for balanced instruction that combines auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities (Jacobi, 2011).

Interview responses affirmed the program's impact. Students described the lessons as enjoyable, easy to follow, and helpful for choir practice. They especially appreciated rhythm syllables, hand signs, and group singing, which boosted their confidence and learning. Their enthusiasm and suggestions to continue the program indicate its developmental and cultural relevance.

Overall, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating the Kodály method with multisensory strategies to enhance sight-singing skills in children. Educators, especially those in community-based or culturally specific settings, are encouraged to adopt flexible, engaging lessons designs that align with young learners' developmental needs.

8. Suggestion

The Kodály-inspire approach to teaching sight-singing proved effective and engaging for young choir students in Myanmar. With structured, developmentally appropriate instruction, students were able to sight-sing simple melodies within a few weeks. Educators in other countries may adapt these lessons using their own national or cultural folk music to enhance relevance and accessibility. It is important to recognize that building music literacy in middle childhood requires intentional planning and sustained effort. Sequential instruction that builds on prior knowledge, combined with multisensory activities tailored to diverse learning styles, can significantly support student progress. Regular assessment, constructive feedback, and responsive task design are particularly valuable for learners in this age group.

Future research may expand this work by incorporating more advanced musical elements, exploring long-term skill retention, or examining how sight-singing ability transfers to broader music-making contexts.

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