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A Study of Karaoke Singing by Mature Adults in the Singaporean Chinese Community

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to study the different methods used by mature adults, age 50 and above in Singapore, to learn informal singing with Karaoke in the Chinese community. Through interviews and observations of the participants, the researcher studied the methods employed by the participants in learning to sing Mandarin Karaoke songs. Knowing when, where, what and how the participants learn and practise the songs provided necessary direction in understanding the processes of informal music making. Also important to know are the motivations of the participants and their concerns when learning Karaoke singing. The observations indicated that the methods employed to learn music are a function of the motivation for joining the class. In addition, karaoke and recording devices are indispensable learning tools in the participants' learning of songs which are built on various forms of aural and oral repetition. Music educators can draw on the findings to develop informal music making programmes outside the classroom. The results indicate that Karaoke singing has the potential to attract and nurture a community of lifelong music learners.

Introduction

While there have been numerous researches (Myers, 1992; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Kellmann 1986; Darrough, 1992) in community music making and how mature adults learn music formally in bands and choirs, there is little research (Cope, 2005) on mature adults' informal music making. This study examines how mature adults from the Singaporean Chinese community learn informal singing of Mandarin Karaoke songs, focusing on the participants' motivations and method employed in their learning and practising. There is a growing perception of Karaoke singing by mature adults as a healthy way to pass time and as an accessible and enjoyable social activity that they can be a part of in their golden years. Karaoke singing is highly accessible as every community centre offers numerous Karaoke singing classes and has Karaoke singing facilities readily available to the residents.

Understanding their motivations and music learning methods would create more opportunities for lifelong music learning in the community. Furthermore, these music learning methods may be adopted by teachers to encourage students to engage in informal music making outside the classroom. Music teachers can draw upon the application and benefits of using Karaoke in the classroom which were discussed in Wagner & Brick (1993) to help students learn music with greater ease and enjoyment.

Review of literature

Motivation

Ernst & Emmons (1992) describes senior adults' participation as being motivated entirely by "the intrinsic value of creating music" (p. 33). This view is echoed by Cope (2005), and Ernst (2001) who claims that extrinsic motivations such as grades, competitions and festivals are not

reasons for adult motivation. Darrough (1992) observes that the older adult choir members are highly motivated and actively engaged in their learning. They would notate performance directions on their scores, accept suggestions on ways to improve and they showed great interest in improving the standard of their performances and rehearsals. While Livingston (2003) and Myers (1992) agree with the view that adult students are highly motivated, they pointed out that adult students were usually unable to sustain the motivation when faced with musical problems. Livingston (2003) mentions strategies such as selecting appropriate repertoire, organizing social events to create opportunities for interaction and using technology to enhance the learning process as ways to sustain long term adult motivation. Avery (2004) in building on Livingston's point about selecting appropriate repertoire suggests that factors such as text to complement the singer's age and maturity, changes in range and ability, social factors and preferences should be considered when selecting repertoire for adult choruses.

Cope (2005) suggests that the non musical motivation for sustained involvement in playing traditional music was social interaction and participation. Small (1998) adds that musicking gives the participants who are engaged in a musical performance, a sense of identity and belonging to the society. Ideal relationships are also formed and developed amongst all those who "music". The social benefits to senior adult participating in music making and learning are described to be as valuable aspects of their lives (Avery 2004; Darrough 1992; Ernst 2001; Ernst & Emmons 1992; Kellmann 1986; Livingston 2003). Ernst (2001) points out that group music making provides opportunities for senior adults to make friends with common interests and goals. Ernst & Emmons (1992) further elaborates that "the band replaces the workplace as a source of making new friends and gives a feeling of attachment to a group" (p. 32) and the band members would meet up before and after music practices to socialize.

Formal and informal learning

Jorgensen (1997) describes learning as occurring through Schooling, Training, Education, Socialisation and Enculturation. Her description of learning through socialisation and enculturation is described by Folkestad (2006) as informal learning, while schooling and training is described as formal learning. ‘Education’ is described as a “meeting place for formal and informal learning”. Formal learning occurs when a teacher takes the lead while informal learning is achieved through methods similar to that of outside the school (Folkestad, 2006, p.139). He identifies four factors that differentiate formal and informal learning – situation, learning style, ownership and intentionality. Because the distinction between formal and informal learning is not always clear, Folkstead suggests that instead of considering the physical environment, we should consider the learner’s intentions and learning situations. He commented that the way music is learnt plays a large part in constructing the identity of music; this is often overshadowed by the choice of content.

Listening

Criss (2008) describes the natural learning process as involving 5 steps beginning with observing to set a goal, then forming a mental imagery, imitating, trial and error, and finally practicing. Motivation was mentioned as an important factor that sparks off learning in students. Amongst the 5 steps, imitation is described as a “natural ability we have when we are born” (Criss, 2008, p.44) and through imitation, students can “feel and experience” and thus learn better. This view of imitation is shared by Green (2002) who discovered that popular musicians learn through listening and copying recordings by ear. She classifies three types of listening strategies involved in copying recordings as purposive, attentive and distracted listening.

Purposive listening is listening with a specific aim and goal to learn something that would be used in some way later. Attentive listening is similar to purposive listening but there are no specific learning objectives. Distracted listening is listening for enjoyment or entertainment. Green describes the process of listening as part of music enculturation, a concept that encompasses the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by immersion in the everyday music and musical practices of one's social context, which includes playing and composing. Part of a popular musician's learning occurs in groups where musicians can watch and imitate other experienced players. Group learning gives musicians a chance to "copy and exchange ideas, knowledge and techniques, [and] learn to play together" (Green, 2002, p. 97).

Campbell (2005) provides a three phrase framework for teachers to encourage music listening in classrooms. The first is Attentive Listening, followed by Engaged Listening and Enactive Listening. Attentive listening is described by Campbell as guided listening with the aim of being aware of the sounds. Engaged listening is getting listeners involved in the music, allowing them to connect with the music. In Enactive listening, listeners are on their way to performing music. This process is similar to "purposive listening" as described in Green (2002); listening for details and nuances to reenact them in a performance.

Cappon (1974) describes music listening as the crux of music, and he describes two processes of listening; listening to learn and learning to listen. This two level approach to listening to music begins with learning to listen, which supports music discovery and responses to music. Listening to learn is described as a more advanced skill which requires knowledge of music elements and understanding of music relationships. Cappon suggests that this be applied to students who are more mature, while learning to listen can be carried out with elementary

students. He adds that should teachers facilitate the transition from learning to listen to listening to learn, students would engage in life-long music appreciation.

Performing

Lilliestam (1996) as cited in Folkestad (2006) describes the process of learning as consisting of the three major steps of listening, practicing and performing. This performance aspect of music learning is emphasized by Drinker (1967) who advocates active participation in the performance of music by amateurs, in addition to intelligent listening which is described as a prerequisite to musical understanding. Small (1998) elaborates that engaging in a musical performance is an affirmation to the world of the performer's identity and therefore needs to be taken seriously. He describes the performer as empowered to make decisions about the work and may interpret it as they wish. Even though it may not be well received by the listener, the performer's authority does not change. Small emphasizes that the success of a performance should eventually be based on the development and establishment of the different relationships; between the sounds as a reaction to the instructions, and positive relationships between participants involved in it.

Method

The researcher attended 16 sessions of Karaoke Singing lessons held at the Yu Hua Zone 3 Residents' Committee club. These lessons were held every Saturday from 2pm to 4pm and attended by mature adults, age 50 years and above. The class consisted of 48 participants, 45 females and 3 males. The participants were asked to take part in the study consenting video recorded observations of their learning, unstructured and structured interviews. One male

participant did not wish to participate in the study and was there not included. The participants expressed that the researcher could quote their names in this paper.

Phelps, Sadoff, Warburton & Ferrara (2005) describes Spradley's (1980) three types of field observations – descriptive, focused and selective. This was the model the researcher adopted in this study. In the initial stage, the researcher took on the role of a non participant, making descriptive observations of the lesson procedures, interactions between teacher and participants, learning methods of participants. The observations were recorded with a video camera. This process took up five out of the 16 sessions. The researcher was also invited to activities organised by the teacher for the participants, and impromptu outings with the participants to get to know them better and to reduce her outsider status. These activities included, after lesson tea sessions, a Chinese New Year party, dinner at a restaurant, and student exchange concert. However, to maintain an impartial position in the study, during these activities the conversations between the researcher and the participants were restricted to their families, jobs and travels. Subsequently, the researcher selected potential participants for further observation. Through the initial observation stage the researcher selected participants based on the learning methods they employ in the lesson. This is based on the types of notes they make to aid their learning, the use of recording devices, the level of participation during the lesson and the motivations for attending Karaoke singing lessons.

With the consent of the selected participants, the researcher began focused observations and semi-structured interviews of their learning styles and methods. As the majority of the participants attending the lesson were Mandarin speaking, all interviewees were given a choice of being interviewed in Mandarin or English. All but one of the interviewees spoke in Mandarin. The Mandarin interviews were translated to English. Across six weeks, the researcher would

observe and interview two of the selected participants in class each week. The researcher would sit next to the participants during the lesson to observe their responses to the teacher's instructions, how they learn music, and also ask them questions regarding their learning styles and methods as well as their background and musical experiences. These observations and semi-structured interviews were noted down in a log book. The data was analysed and to further understand certain learning methods, structured interviews were conducted with selected participants by arrangement outside lesson time. These interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location of their choice and were recorded with a video camera. The focus of the interview was on topics concerned with learning to sing, such as motivation, practice, learning methods, teacher's guidance and performance. These interviews varied between 20 and 60 minutes in length and were transcribed and translated for analysis. Ten participants were selected for the semi-structured interview and observation, out of which six were selected for the structured interview based on their learning methods observed and motivations for attending the Karaoke singing class. However, three out of six participants were not comfortable with having the interview recorded on camera. Therefore, the researcher took notes of their responses to the interview questions in the field journal. The age range was from 54 – 77 years and they were all female. At the point of the field work, the participants' years of learning Karaoke singing with the teacher ranged from 4 months to 15 years.

Results

The backgrounds of the participants are rather similar in that most of them did not have any previous formal musical training/music learning experiences before attending the singing class with the exception of Ma Li and Daphne, who attended music lessons when they were in school.

Motivation

The participants had various reasons for joining the Karaoke singing class. These can be broadly categorized into personal and social reasons. Daphne and Li Juan cited personal reasons such as the desire to learn the proper techniques of singing and to improve on their singing. Daphne explained that while she sang in a choir, she was not learning any proper singing techniques or musicianship skills.

I don't know what do re mi means, what is one beat, how long to hold a note. I was just following everybody. The conductor will say breathe here, then I'll follow, I do not understand what the score is saying. (Daphne)

She decided to polish up her singing techniques and learn the fundamentals of music thus prompting her to sign up for this Karaoke singing class. Ma Li attends the class because she enjoys listening to songs and wanted to join a group to learn to sing. She thought of joining a choir initially, but she did not know of any choirs that she could join so when she heard about the Karaoke singing class from her friend she signed up eagerly. Mee Lin, who is Ma Li's mother, says that she is being forced by her daughter to join the class. However, she seems to enjoy the lessons. Ma Li explained that she wants them to bond over a healthy activity instead of going shopping and lazing around the house. Jennifer says that she attends singing classes as a past time and to take up leisure singing as a form of relaxation. Yu Lian, Hui Xian, Lucy and Su Er attended Karaoke singing classes because their friends brought them to the class. They found that they enjoyed singing and the teacher was very patient and taught very well so they continued to attend classes. They also added that they were senior citizens and singing was a good way to pass time, meet new friends and spend time with their friends.

Repertoire

The songs that the participants learn are mainly oldies and current songs written in the style of oldies by female singers. The teacher explained that the participants were not keen on singing popular Mandarin songs because they found the songs too fast and each song had too many words. His criteria for choosing the songs are namely simple rhythms of up to one quaver to one word, manageable vocal range, moderate tempo and a variety of up to seven notes in the piece. He commented that the participants preferred to learn all the songs of one singer at a time. This is because they feel that it is value for money as they would only need to purchase one Karaoke Video Compact Disc (VCD) that would contain all the songs. During the research, the participants were learning songs sung by Su Jia Yu. The teacher added that he would include one or two festive songs during the Chinese festivals.

Listening to recorded media

Of the ten participants interviewed, four participants (Daphne, Hui Xian, Su Er and Yu Ying) did not use recording devices to tape the lesson. Yue Ying said that she used to tape the lessons during her first year of attending the Karaoke singing class. However, she stopped because she felt that she could grasp the concepts and songs that were taught and did not need a recording device to help her recall what she has learnt. Hui Xian initially used a tape recorder but she stopped after a few lessons because she found the recordings unclear and felt that the noise picked up by the tape was very disturbing.

The interviewees who used recording devices had various recording preferences. Ma Li and Jennifer record everything the teacher says in class as well as challenging parts of the song

that they were learning, with their tape recorders. Yu Lian, Li Juan and Lucy only record what the teacher says in class while Mee lin says that she only records the songs that she likes.

The interviewees have different ways of learning from the recordings. Lucy and Ma Li's learning styles are rather similar. When they are engaged in listening to the recording, they would select certain passages to practice each time. They would listen to the teacher's comments on the passage and repeatedly listen to the section of music. While they are listening, they would refer to the score and sing along with the recording. Ma Li says that she would first practise singing in solfege to familiarize herself with the melody and rhythm, followed by the technique of singing the song. Jennifer and Yu Lian explained that they listen to the recording from beginning to the end because they do not want to miss out any detail.

Li Juan says that she would look at the score while listening to the recording. In an example of the use of the attentive listening strategy, she listens to the song a phrase at a time, paying special attention to the rhythm and pitch. She also makes additional notes on her score. She expresses that her sense of rhythm is very weak. This is based on the feedback of her sister who frequently listens to her sing; therefore she makes an extra effort to learn the rhythm of songs. She uses her Karaoke set to gauge her progress. She believes that once she can sing with the Karaoke she has already learnt the song and will then stop referring to the score and taped lessons. Yue Ying says that the key to learning a song is listening.

First, listen to the original singer on the Karaoke while looking at the score. Then follow the process the teacher taught. The most important thing is listening to the song and be very familiar with it. When you listen, you must listen to different aspects such as the rhythm, the melody the pronunciation of the words. After many many times, I will be

familiar with the song. Then after that when I am familiar with the song, I will sing with the Karaoke. (Yue Ying)

Regardless of whether participants listen to taped recordings of the lesson or to the Karaoke recording of the songs, all participants agree that listening is the main way to learning the songs.

Learning from scores

During the Karaoke singing lessons, participants are given the score of the song that they will be learning. These scores are typed out by one of the teacher's students from another Karaoke singing class. The scores contain information on the time signature, the key of the song, the ideal keys for males and females to sing in, the original singer, composer and lyricist as well as music and lyrics. The music is in cipher notation, which gives the singer information on the pitches and rhythm of the song. The teacher gives the participants scores because he wants to enforce a "structured" way of learning singing. He recalled that initially when he started using scores to teach singing, he met with a lot of protests from the participants. They claimed that they wanted to learn singing for leisure and felt that having scores was too stressful. However, he insisted that they all learnt with scores and now all his students willingly accept this method of learning Karaoke singing.

The researcher observed that two out of ten participants (Yue Ying and Su Er) do not make notes on their scores during and after the lesson. They explained that they want to keep their scores clean and they can remember the points that the teacher talks about in class. All ten participants said that prior to attending the lesson, they could not read cipher notation but now they can. However, the participants feel that the pitches indicated by numbers on the score were

not as important as the lyrics and rhythm. All participants said that when learning to sing a song, they are most concerned about the pronunciation of the words and the rhythm.

I will write the pronunciation in han yu pin ying for every song because my Chinese is not good. For words that are difficult, I will write a substitute word (in mandarin), like a word that sounds the same under it. Sometime I use English words also; like the word 哎 I use "I" to remember the sound... Lucy)

Lucy's method of learning the pronunciation of the words is also employed by Jennifer and Daphne. However, they do not write the han yu pin ying for the lyrics of the entire song; but only for specific words that they are unfamiliar with. They also replace words they find unfamiliar with a Chinese homonym character or similar sounding English word.

I have different ways to mark the sound of the words. This circle around the character means make my mouth into a 'O' shape, 'ee' means drag the 'E' vowel sound... (Ma Li)

Ma Li's method of notating the pronunciation of the words is common amongst seven of the eight participants who take notes on the pronunciation. Participants would indicate the mouth shape to form when singing the word and also the vowel to pronounce. Mee Lin, who is a Thai Chinese, makes notes on the pronunciation of the words in Thai. She says that she is more familiar with Thai words although she has stayed in Singapore for 50 years. This is because she learnt Thai in school when she was young.

Unlike the other participants, Daphne notes down the pitches of the song in solfege as indicated by the numbers. She says that while she can read the numbers, it is very inconvenient to sing in numbers because the pitch relations are not clear to her. Solfege allows her to hear the pitches and melody of the song easily. Hui Xian also finds reading numbers inconvenient and

uses her own system to recognize the numbers and pitches. She matches a similar sounding Chinese character to the cipher notation; 1 – 到 2- 丽 3- 眯 4 - 化 5 - 素 6 - 拉 7 - 低. She would write a corresponding Chinese character under each number for the entire song. However, she only does this for the songs she likes.

Learning from the teacher guided process

The teacher teaches the participants Karaoke singing using an eight stage learning framework that is usually conducted across three weeks. This begins with repeated listening of a selected song sung by the original singer. Students then imitate the teacher who will sing the melody of a selected song in solfege phrase by phrase. The teacher would play the melody on a keyboard to get the accurate pitches/key. Next, the students would sing the melody phrase by phrase in solfege, with the teacher playing the melody on the keyboard. This would be followed by imitating the teacher in singing the words with the melody, phrase by phrase until they have learnt one verse of the song. After much repetition, the teacher would test the participants by getting them to stand up one row at a time to sing the verse. During this stage, he would correct their diction, singing techniques, rhythm and pitching problems. Stages two to five would be repeated with the other verses of the song. Once they have learnt the whole song, they would listen to the Karaoke and sing along to it. Some participants would be selected to lead the class in singing the song. In the next stage, to ensure that the participants know the song, the teacher would get them to sing it without any accompaniment as a form of assessing their singing. The final stage would be performing the song during ‘5 idols of the week’. All the participants felt that learning the pronunciation of the lyrics as the most useful stage of the process. This is reflected in the notes made by the participants, which consist of the pronunciation of the words and the ideal shape of their mouth when pronouncing the words.

Practise

Much of the singing practices consist of imitating the original singer or singing along to the recording of the lesson. This is followed by trial-and-error practise, where the participants would try to sing the song without following the singer's voice on the Karaoke VCD. If they are unsuccessful, they would go back to imitating to correct the error. Once the participants are satisfied with their singing and learning of the song, they would practise without looking at the screen and try to memorise the lyrics of the song. All these will culminate in the performance of the song.

To most interviewees, listening to the recordings and singing along to it is considered practising. During a practice session, they would try to learn and memorise the lyrics of a song. While Jennifer and Li Juan only listen and sing along to the recordings when they are free, Yue Ying says she practises everywhere and all the time. Ma Li, Lucy and Yu Lian practise by singing along to the recording of the current song they are learning everyday for 10-20 minutes, usually before they go to bed.

Performing

The teacher creates many opportunities for the participants to perform to help develop a deeper understanding of the song and gain self-confidence. During the weekly lessons, he would conduct '5 idols of the week', where five participants would perform a song learnt previously during the Karaoke singing lessons to the class. They would have to sing from memory with the Karaoke as accompaniment. He would also organise student concerts and workshops for students from his various classes. The purpose is to encourage participants from different classes to learn from each other and also to give them an opportunity to experience singing in a concert.

Out of the ten interviewees, Li Juan has not performed in the student concerts because she just joined the class. Five out of the remaining nine who have performed in the student concerts expressed that they enjoyed performing. Ma Li, Mee Lin, Jennifer and Su Er expressed their dislike for performing. Ma Li said that she would only perform if the teacher asks her to and she has performed only five times since she started learning singing with the teacher. She explains that singing lessons are a form of enjoyment to her and she does not like the stress of performing.

Yu lian, Mee Lin, Ma Li, Lucy, Hui Xian, and Su Er share that having the confidence to face the audience as the most challenging aspect of performing. They also mentioned that memorizing the lyrics of the songs is a challenge because of their age and mental abilities. Daphne considers the appropriate portrayal of feelings and emotions of the song as most challenging.

Ma Li says that she has gained stage experience through the performance. She is more aware of other performers' good and bad points and she can tell a good singer from a weak singer. Jennifer, Hui Xian and Mee Lin say that through performing they have learnt to overcome stage fright and are more confident of singing in front of an audience.

Discussion

Karaoke singing has raised many questions on its relevance as a form of music learning. Given the nature of the musical practice, it is largely considered to be an informal musical activity. However, this activity is driven by motivation, commitment, and may include formal training processes in music learning and individualized learning strategies.

Motivation

The research findings contrast with Ernst & Emmons (1992), Cope (2005) and Ernst's (2001) view of senior adults' participation as being motivated entirely by "the intrinsic value of creating music" (p. 33). The results imply that non musical aspects such as social interaction are the main motivation for sustained involvement. Most of the participants take part in the Karaoke singing class for social reasons and as a leisure activity. It is through the lessons that they found learning Karaoke singing to be enjoyable and subsequently decided to stay on. Although all participants are actively engaged in the lesson, participants who attend the lesson to improve their singing and to learn singing techniques are more conscientious in their learning. They would take down notes, tape lessons, practice diligently every week and ask questions in class. Nevertheless, regardless of the reason, all participants benefit from the non musical aspects of attending Karaoke singing lessons (Avery 2004; Darrough 1992; Ernst 2001; Ernst & Emmons 1992; Kellmann 1986; Livingston 2003). Participants describe having tea after lessons and attending the lessons with their friends as a treat they look forward to every week and reasons for keeping them mentally active and happy.

The choice of songs also affects the participants' motivation and participation. Participants commented that they would practise and learn a song that they like and would not put in any effort into practising a song they dislike. This is also reported by Avery (2004) and Livingston (2003) that repertoire selection is very important.

Another extrinsic motivational factor is performing. Performances motivate the participants to practise harder and be more attentive during the lesson. Whenever there is an upcoming performance, the participants explained that they would practise every day to perfect

their singing; however they would not practise as regularly when there is no performance.

Livingston (2003) discussed the importance of sustaining adult learners' motivation. From this research, it was found that weekly performances, quarterly student concerts, enjoyable lessons as well as giving students a sense of belonging to the class are factors that sustain adult learners' motivation.

Learning

Although lessons are conducted in a resident's committee centre as part of a list of courses offered by the community centre to residents, nothing about the learning or teaching process is informal or casual. Although traditional staff notation is not used, the lessons are structured and well organised, building on music educational foundations, using other forms of musical notation such as cipher notation and solfege. According to Folkestad's (2006) guidelines that differentiate formal and informal learning, the Karaoke lessons belong to the formal learning situation, however, the learning that takes place is a continuum of formal and informal. Folkestad describes that "in most learning situations, both these aspects (formal and informal) of learning are in various degrees present and interacting in the learning process" (p. 143). The presence of the teacher creates a formal learning situation. Participants undergo structured music learning processes conducted by the teacher, who approaches the music with formality and knowledge. Despite the formalized learning situation, the intentionality of the participants shifts between what Folkestad describes as "music making" and "learning about music". Although he regards learning about music as formal, the results show that some participants draw on the teacher-directed formal learning processes and incorporate informal learning strategies in their own music practices, to personalise their learning. This is also noted by Hultberg (2000) in Folkestad (2006). The nature of Karaoke singing is informal music making. However, the learning process

of the Karaoke songs is formal. Music learning complements music making (singing) in this context, and it can be described as informal musical practice facilitated through formal music learning processes.

Listening to recorded media

Due to the nature of Karaoke singing, the participants are heavily reliant on their aural skills. Listening constitutes much of the learning in Karaoke singing. It is interesting that participants do not practise singing as much as they do listening. The results show that the participants who use recording devices use it to guide their learning and practising. Participants who do not use any recording devices use the Karaoke VCD as a guide. Participants engage in both purposive and distracted listening as described in Green (2002), when they listen to recordings. Through distracted listening participants listen to the songs repeatedly and through this conditioning, they learn the melody and rhythm of the song. To further their learning of the song or to correct an error, participants would engage in purposive listening, picking out specific phrases to focus their attention on. Participants would engage in distracted listening to familiarise themselves before proceeding to purposive listening. This finding supports Campbell (2005) and Green's (2002) work on the different types of listening.

There are some resonances with Criss's (2008) article on the natural learning process, where forming a mental image, imitating, trial and error, and practise are all reported in this study. Interestingly, this natural learning process which is described in children is found in adults too. However, a feature absent from Criss's article is the involvement of listening in forming mental images and imitation. Listening is the foundation of forming mental images of a model to imitate. To draw on Green's (2002) findings about listening and copying recordings by ear, the

results indicate that participants engage in similar listening practices but for different purposes. Distracted listening supports the forming of mental imagery of the song and allows the listener to gain familiarity with the music. While purposive listening supports the detailed learning and imitation of the song. Participants who sing along with their recordings tend to engage in imitation of the singer and teacher.

Diction

Much of the participants' attention is focused on the diction of the songs they learn and practise. This is a very interesting finding because one would assume that the diction is of lesser importance than the pitching and rhythm of a song. This concern of the participants has led to them making notes about the pronunciation and the ideal shape of their mouth to form when singing the lyrics. This is probably a result of using Karaoke to teach singing; because the songs are guided by the lyrics on the screen and participants may feel that singing the lyrics accurately is achieving the goal of learning the song. This concern with the lyrics extends into performance of a song. Participants mentioned that learning and memorising the lyrics of the song is challenging.

Solfege

Because the teacher uses solfege to teach the melody of the songs to the participants, they have learnt cipher notation. However, while they can read cipher notation, some participants do not find the numbers helpful in indicating the pitches, instead they rely on solfege to guide their learning of the melody. It may be that since the participants were taught the melody in solfege, they learnt to identify pitches with solfege. Since cipher notation is used to represent the melody of the songs on the score, the participants are receiving two different sets of musical notation

systems. They find themselves transcribing the numbers into solfege so that they can learn the melody in a system they are more familiar with. One participant devised her own solfege system from Mandarin characters. Although the system enabled her to translate the cipher notation into the solfege, it did not help her pitch accurately because she does not assign a pitch to each character.

Limitations

The findings are based on a female point of view as the interviewees of this study are all females. This is because only three male participants signed up for the Karaoke singing class and they did not attend the lessons regularly; making it difficult for the researcher to observe and approach them. However, the teacher mentions that in the other Karaoke singing classes, male participants usually make up about one-quarter of the participants. They usually attend the singing class with their wives. The participants selected for the interview do not represent the Chinese Karaoke singing community in Singapore. However, they do embody the general characteristics of members from the Karaoke singing community to a large extent that they make appropriate interview subjects for the research.

Conclusion

A study of the motivation of and methods employed by mature adults in Karaoke singing is useful for shedding light on informal music making in the community amongst mature adults. With this awareness, music educators can develop informal music making programmes outside the classroom and use similar methods to encourage lifelong music learning in the community.

Although the primary motivation of the participants is social, through learning Karaoke singing, they become intrinsically motivated by music. Performances play a large role in

motivating the participants and enhancing the music learning experience (Small 1998). Music educators should consider the appropriate selection of repertoire to engage students. Given the nature of the musical practice, Karaoke singing has been regarded as an informal music making activity. However, learning to sing Karaoke is a formal music learning process where participants learn musical skills under formal musical instruction. Some participants incorporated their own informal learning strategies such as listening to recorded media and using scores to facilitate their learning. These methods participants used to learn music are centred on distracted and purposive listening as described in Green (2002). Participants engage in distracted listening of the song to gain familiarity before following on with purposive listening to learn it in detail. This would help teachers understand how to engage students in informal singing and music making activities.

While Karaoke singing is a convenient, accessible and enjoyable music activity, it may not provide for holistic music learning. Participants claim that their main concern about learning to sing Karaoke songs is learning the pronunciation of the lyrics. Some participants expressed concern about the rhythm of the song because they have to sing with the Karaoke music. Other aspects such as intonation, singing techniques and the melody of the songs are neglected as a result. Nevertheless, Karaoke singing presents a new era of music learning among mature adults in the Singaporean Chinese community. It is a musical practice music educators should realise to the full potential to develop lifelong music learning in the community.

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