

Pre-Service Primary General Teacher-Students' Attitudes Towards Written Language Activities Based on Musical Stimuli

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Abstract—The paper investigates pre-service primary general teacher-students' perceptions of how music can act as a stimulus for writing, through short story group writing activities. More specifically, we look at their attitudes regarding i) team collaboration, ii) the enhancement of their creativity, iii) classroom atmosphere, iv) the suitability of the activities for their implementation in primary school classes in the future and v) the advantages the use of music can have for language development. In our study, pre-service primary general teacher-students' views were shaped by the experiences they gained from their participation in group activities which were implemented as part of an undergraduate elective course, entitled “Music Education”. The participants recorded their ideas on worksheets. Data were collected through observation, diaries and questionnaires with open and closed-ended questions. The results revealed that the pre-service primary general teacher-students had a positive attitude towards story inventing and story writing activities based on musical stimuli. Such activities boosted their creativity and gave them the opportunity to develop their teamwork skills as well as to participate in a pleasant and innovative classroom atmosphere. Finally, they were positive about the suitability of the activities for their future students and the advantages the use of music can have in language lessons for teachers, students and the educational process.

Index Terms—music and language, writing, creativity, pre-service primary general teacher education, arts in education

I. INTRODUCTION

A creative person is not one who simply uses their imagination but one who gives birth to a new product through the knowledge and education they possess (Suciu, 2014). Education¹ ought to provide ways which contribute to the development of creativity, as the latter is not only a valuable skill for individuals and society in general but, in our time, it is also linked to the cultivation of economic growth (Shaheen, 2010). Creative-type activities enhance the development of divergent thinking, as they enable participants to find multiple solutions to a problem (Kratus, 2017). The integration of arts in education can contribute to the enhancement of creativity, as arts offer participants opportunities for personal expression and creation (Roeger & Kim, 2013) through processes that create “interest, fun and active participation” (Wallin & Durr, 2002, p. 30).

In our study, creative activities that connect music to other arts (i.e., visual arts and drama) and school subjects (e.g., Language) were designed and implemented as part of an undergraduate course, entitled “Music Education”. The course aims, apart from developing teacher-students'² musical skills, to familiarise them with the integration of arts—and more specifically of music—in education. Arts could function as teaching tools in an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular setting, within which the teacher-students will be employed—not as music specialists but—as generalist teachers. The researchers—who specialise in the subjects of Music Education and Greek as a foreign language, respectively—adopted the “subservient approach” to music in the activities. According to this approach, “the arts serve the basic academic curriculum in its contents, pedagogies, and structures” (Bresler, 1995, p. 5). Finally, the activities aimed to serve as “teaching strategies that challenge the students to write” (Setyowati, 2016, p. 80) and as stimuli and examples that the teacher-students could use in their future classrooms.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: in section II, the context of the study is briefly outlined. In section III, a complete account of the study is presented, whereas the results are discussed in section IV. The discussion is rounded off in section V.

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¹ See Soulis et al. (2023) for a discussion on various current educational issues.

² In the rest of the paper, we use the term “teacher-students” to refer to “pre-service primary general teacher-students”. In Greece, they teach in Primary Education (first to sixth grade, ages 6 to 11).

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The integration of arts in education may “change the learning experience”, as arts can “reach students who are not otherwise being reached”, “connect students to themselves and each other”, “transform the environment for learning” and “connect learning experiences to the world of real work” (Fiske, 1999, pp. ix-x), among other things. A meaningful education through the arts, which aims beyond the entertainment of students, “can foster the creative and flexible thinking skills needed for coping with the new knowledge, dilemmas, technologies and inventions that constantly challenge our thinking and being” (Gibson & Ewing, 2020, p. 5).

Although music has a different place and a different meaning in each person's life, it is a language that can be understood by everyone, it has a social character and the power to engage people who may differ from each other (Heyworth, 2013). In education, pleasant activities that incorporate music can have a positive impact on participants (Hallam, 2010) and contribute to the enhancement of their creativity (Nikolaou, 2023a; Coulson & Burke, 2013).

The chosen instructional methods used in our study focused on the use of the collaborative model, which aims to develop students' collaborative skills (Kervinen et al., 2016) and stimulate their socioemotional ones (Jacobi, 2012). Group work has several benefits, among which are the following: respect for others, cooperation, communication with peers, impulse control (Varner, 2020), co-creation to achieve the final product, cultivation of empathy, critical thinking and the ability to manage conflict (Jacobi, 2012). Moreover, as the study's aim was to cultivate the participants' critical and creative thinking (Alter, 2009), they were encouraged by the trainer-researcher to produce original work that would also be of interest to their fellow teacher-students (Hickey & Webster, 2001).

The use of music for the development of students' language skills served as a “learning strategy” (Engh, 2013, p. 118) and a means to activate student interest in language (Dwayne, 2013), as it provides additional motivation for learning (Kao & Oxford, 2014) and enhances creativity (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Teachers, through the use of music in language teaching, can create a more pleasant and innovative learning environment in their classes (Israel, 2013; Pérez Niño, 2010), by adopting less traditional teaching methods³.

According to previous—relevant to our work—studies, it has been shown that music contributes to language development and the cultivation of language skills, through activities which involve “chanting and rhythmic speaking, singing, and listening” (Mizener, 2008, p. 11) or music composition of simple phrases or short poems (Brophy, 2001). The use of songs in language acquisition, especially in the early stages (Schön et al., 2008), and in English language teaching (Engh, 2013) is also widespread. In the context of foreign language classrooms, song texts and different musical styles can activate students' interest in other cultures (Failoni, 1993). Music is also effective in vocabulary teaching/comprehension (i.e., through the implementation of activities in which words are represented with sounds or in which texts are rendered with sounds and converted into sound stories (Lawson & Dickinson, 2020). Finally, as both music and language can describe emotions (Juslin & Laukka, 2003; Scherer, 1995), research has investigated active listening activities through which students can describe—orally or in writing—the feelings that music evokes in the listener.

Taking into consideration the afore-mentioned points, the present study aims to provide teacher-students with several ideas for incorporating more creative forms of teaching in their future classes. The significance of the implementation of such diverse activities is that they take place in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary setting, where students—while working in groups—use musical stimuli for language development.

III. THE STUDY

A. *Research Purpose and Questions*

Our paper focuses on exploring teacher-students' perceptions of how music can act as a stimulus for writing through short story group writing activities. The following research questions are addressed:

- (a) What are the perceptions of teacher-students regarding the implemented activities in relation to 1) team collaboration, 2) the enhancement of their own creativity and 3) classroom atmosphere?
- (b) What are the beliefs of teacher-students about the suitability of the activities for their future students?
- (c) What are the perceptions of teacher-students as far as the potential benefits of the use of music for language teaching are concerned?

B. *Methodology*

(a). *Participants*

The study took place at a Department of Primary Education in a Greek University during the spring semester 2022-2023, as part of an undergraduate elective course, entitled “Music Education”. The activities were implemented during a three-lesson sequence in a total of 13 teaching weeks. Two hours of each three-hour lesson were devoted to the activities' implementation (a total of six hours). The participants (N=35) (30 women and 5 men) were in the first year of their studies. The majority of the participating teacher-students had received some music education when at school.

³ Similar benefits are obtained from the use of gamification in education (i.e., see Kapsalis et al. (2020) for a discussion on the effectiveness of Kahoot! as a formative assessment tool in foreign language teaching, among other studies).

(b). *Project Design*

The activities were designed around the following topics which were part of the course syllabus: Activity A—sound stories, Activity B—dramatisation of a musical work, Activity C—active music listening. The first two activities were based on material drawn from the textbooks of Physics and Geography which are used in Greek primary schools⁴. The aim was to demonstrate to the teacher-students how they can combine different subjects in an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular setting. The lessons were first designed by the researchers and the activities were then implemented in class by the first researcher, who also acted as the trainer. Once the implementation of each activity was completed, the researchers discussed the project's progress and made changes to the subsequent activities, where necessary.

The three activities of the study, in which music serves as a stimulus for writing, are the following:

- 1) Activity A: Represent the pictures with sounds/create and write a story/render the story with sound and convert it into a sound story,
- 2) Activity B: Represent a natural disaster with sound/create and write a sound story about natural disasters that can be dramatised.
- 3) Activity C: Create and write a short story based on a four-part musical collage.

The teacher-students worked in groups and recorded their ideas on worksheets that were given to them (see Section III.C.). In the activities, they were asked to use all possible means of musical expression (their voices, their bodies, percussion musical instruments, any sound-producing body, sounds from the internet, etc.) and to write their stories within an allocated time frame. This aspect of the activities also aimed to further develop teacher-students' problem-solving skills in a short period of time. Generally-speaking, the cultivation of such cognitive skills is particularly important for the students' mental development (Sotiropoulou-Zormpala & Argyriadi, 2015) and can be useful in their everyday lives (Eisner, 2002). At the end of each activity, each group presented their work to the class and a discussion followed. Questionnaire 1 was filled in, once the presentations of each activity were completed, whereas Questionnaire 2⁵ when all four activities had been carried out.

In the following subsection, the three activities that were implemented in our study are discussed in detail. For each activity, we present one of the worksheets as completed by a teacher-student group as an indicative example.

C. *Activities*

(a). *Activity A: Represent the Pictures With Sounds/Create and Write a Story/Render the Story With Sound and Convert It Into a Sound Story*

The topic of the course syllabus was sound stories. Sound stories enable students to get acquainted with sounds and speech in a creative way. In sound stories, music and language are combined; “language through storytelling, and music through the rendering of the story with sounds” (Nikolaou, 2023b, p. 52). The texts used should be structured in such a way so that they contain words, phrases or meanings which can be rendered with sound.

More specifically, in the first activity, each teacher-student group had to choose four out of the five pictures that were given to them (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Pictures From the Physics Textbooks (5th and 6th Grade, Ages 10 and 11) Used in Primary Schools in Greece⁶

⁴ See footnotes 7 and 8 for information about the Greek textbooks.

⁵ The questionnaires appear in the Appendices (1 and 2).

⁶ Picture 1: http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2190/Fysika_E-Dimotikou_html-empl/index_8.html

Picture 2: http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2011/Fysika_ST-Dimotikou_html-empl/index_2.html

Picture 3: http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2011/Fysika_ST-Dimotikou_html-empl/index_6.html

Picture 4: http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2011/Fysika_ST-Dimotikou_html-empl/index_1.html

Picture 5: http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2011/Fysika_ST-Dimotikou_html-empl/index_10.html

They were then asked to find a way to represent each picture with a sound. Once they connected all four pictures in a conceptually meaningful way, they created and wrote a short story that included the pictures they had chosen. During the next step, the teacher-students invested the story with sounds which represented the pictures acoustically and added sounds to other parts of their story, hence turning it into a sound story. Finally, each group appointed a narrator and everyone else in the group performed the sounds to accompany the narrative, with all of this presented to the class.

In Table 1, the worksheet given to the teacher-students as well as the responses of group B are presented.

TABLE 1
TEACHER-STUDENT GROUP WORKSHEET 1

Activity 1: Create a short sound-story based on pictures which can be found in the 5th and 6th grade Physics textbooks.				
Group number: B				
Underline the pictures that you used:				
<u>Picture 1</u>	<u>Picture 2</u>	<u>Picture 3</u>	<u>Picture 4</u>	Picture 5
Make a note on how you represented the pictures with sounds. PICTURE 1: Dragging our feet for the sound of water, mouth blowing for the sound of wind and beats on cymbals. PICTURE 2: Using our own voices for a seagull's voice. PICTURE 3: Playing notes on the metallophone for birds chirping in the forest. PICTURE 4: Beats on the claves for horse galloping.				
Write the sound-story you created on the basis of the chosen pictures. Put the sound and where this will be heard in your text in brackets: A castaway is in the rough sea (PICTURE 1: <i>dragging our feet, mouth blowing and beats on cymbals</i>) trying to get ashore. Suddenly he sees a seagull (PICTURE 2: <i>seagull sounds using our own voice</i>), which leads him to nearby land. When he comes ashore, he sees a forest and enters it (PICTURE 3: <i>playing notes on the metallophone for forest birds' chirping</i>). He walks for hours in the forest (<i>footsteps sound</i>), listening to the chirping of birds (<i>metallophone</i>), when he suddenly finds a clearing in the center of which there are two horses (PICTURE 4: <i>beats on the claves for horse galloping</i>) and a small village in the background. He gets on a horse and goes quickly to the village (<i>claves and quick footsteps</i>). The villagers greet him with joy and he is over the moon because he managed to save himself (<i>metallophone and bell sounds</i>).				

(b). *Activity B: Represent a Natural Disaster With Sound/Create and Write a Sound Story About Natural Disasters That Can Be Dramatised*

The topic of the course syllabus was dramatisation of a musical work (song, orchestral music, etc.). In the dramatisation of a musical work, “students can imitate the characters and the situations described in the music they listen to” (Nikolaou, 2023b, p. 51). During the course of the module (“Music Education”), the teacher-students had already participated in song dramatisation, sound-stories and works of programme music.

The second activity was based on the chapter entitled “Natural disasters and their consequences on people's lives” which is included in the 6th grade Geography textbook (for 11-year-old students)⁷. Each teacher-student group was invited to represent a natural disaster phenomenon of their choice (earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, etc.) with sound and write a sound-story that could be dramatised. They also had to provide information about the characters and where the action took place as well as to write the social message conveyed by the story. The message had to be related to the solidarity of people in such disastrous situations. In this way, the sound story might be more than just a way to teach Geography; it may also cultivate empathy and intercultural awareness. The teacher-students were not asked to dramatised the sound story in class, as there was only one activity goal set, namely, to write a story that could be dramatised. The worksheet given to the teacher-students and the responses of group C can be found in Table 2.

⁷ http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2272/Geografia_ST-Dimotikou_html-empl/indexB_16.html

TABLE 2
TEACHER-STUDENT GROUP WORKSHEET 2

Activity 2: Create a sound-story about a natural disaster phenomenon that can be dramatised.
Group number: C
Write which natural disaster phenomenon you chose to represent with sound and show how this was achieved: Volcano sound: cymbals, tambourine, sleigh bells with simultaneous and prolonged playing
Write a short story about a natural disaster phenomenon that can be dramatised. Choose the character(s) who participate(s) in your fictional story. Write the social message conveyed by the story; the message is related to the solidarity we should show to our fellow humans as individuals and as a society in the event of natural disasters. Render your story with sounds and describe people's feelings and actions. A tribe of indigenous people lived at the foot of a volcanic island. It was dawn on a festive day and they were making preparations (<i>glissando on the metallophone</i>). The elders, though, were afraid that something bad was going to happen (<i>one beat on the tambourine</i>). The celebrations began and, while everyone was dancing around the fire, a loud explosion was heard (<i>cymbals, tambourine, sleigh bells, with simultaneous and prolonged playing</i>). Everyone was terrified when they saw the lava heading towards the village (<i>beats on claves</i>). They ran (<i>stamping</i>) to the boats to save themselves. As they boarded the boats, they realised that the wise man of the village was missing. A young man defied danger ignored the shouts of his fellow villagers and turned back to find the wise man. Once he released him, he carried him to the boat and they all went together to the island across the water (<i>glissando on the metallophone</i>).
Write a short poem or a phrase that contains a social message related to your story: Every person is important whether old or young, always help your fellow human beings Let go of fear, don't give up
Describe how your story could be dramatised: Characters in the story. Main and secondary roles: Main roles: Brave young man, wise old man of the village Secondary roles: The villagers Where the story takes place: A volcanic exotic indigenous island Episodes of the story: Episode 1: Preparation for and start of a feast Episode 2: The eruption of the volcano Episode 3: Terrified inhabitants run for their lives. Episode 4: The brave young man returns to rescue the trapped wise man.

(c). *Activity C: Create and Write a Short Story Based on a Four-Part Musical Collage*

The topic of the course syllabus was active music listening. Active music listening combines listening to music with at least one additional activity in which participants act. Generally-speaking, both professional musicians and those who have not received any special musical training can participate in music listening activities. By listening to music, each one of us can arrive at our own interpretation, which may focus on the musical elements (Johnson, 2013), the images (Kratus, 2017) or on the emotional impact that music can have on its listeners (Proverbio & Russo, 2022). Indeed, in an educational setting—where we want our students to be creative—the use of unfamiliar music can lead students to “original interpretations” (Johnson, 2013, p. 50).

In the third activity, a musical collage with four musical excerpts, the duration of which was 20 to 30 seconds each, served as a sound stimulus. Initially, each teacher-student was asked to record on the worksheet the images and the sentiments that came to their mind when they listened to each of the four pieces of music. This was followed by a class discussion about their views and the reasons for which they think music creates the same or different feelings in its listeners. Then they worked in groups and wrote a four-part short story; one part of the story for each part of the musical collage. They had to imagine that each part of the story is musically invested with the corresponding musical excerpt. They were not informed, though, about the composers of the musical excerpts or the genres of music they represent.

The musical collage included the following:

- 1) 20 seconds of hip-hop music,
- 2) 20 seconds of space sounds,
- 3) 30 seconds of the work “Lion” from “The Carnival of the Animals” by Camille Saint-Saëns,
- 4) 30 seconds of the work “The Blue Danube” by Johann Strauss.

In Table 3, the worksheet which was completed by one teacher-student is presented. The group worksheet, as completed by teacher-student group D, appears in Table 4. The teacher-students listened to the musical collage twice prior to completing the group worksheet.

TABLE 3
TEACHER-STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

Write down the feelings or the images that each of the four musical excerpts evokes for you.
Pseudonym of the participant: Hero
1st musical excerpt: concert music, action, energy, start of an event, an excursion.
2nd musical excerpt: suspense, fear, movie in which we expect a situation to culminate, unpleasant event, bad development.
3rd musical excerpt: peace, spring, nature with flowering meadows, optimism, time passing calmly.
4th musical excerpt: carefree, dancing, romance, return to the pleasant event, normality.

TABLE 4
TEACHER-STUDENT GROUP WORKSHEET 3

Activity 3: Create and write a story based on a four-part musical collage.
Group number: D
Write a short story based on the four musical excerpts you listened to.
1st musical excerpt: On a sunny day in April, five friends decided to go on a picnic in the mountains. Once they organised their equipment, they started eating while listening to their favorite music.
2nd musical excerpt: Suddenly because of the music, a bear approached. When the group of friends heard its pacing and saw the animal, they burst into howls. A few seconds later, they started running around in agony, which reached its peak.
3rd musical excerpt: However, the bear did not approach them with ferocity. It was content with their food, and especially with the honey jar, which was lying open on the plaid tablecloth.
4th musical excerpt: About 10 minutes later, the children arrived home, relieved and having overcome the shock of this unforeseen experience. They blithely continued their picnic in the garden of their home.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected through observation, diaries and two questionnaires with open and closed-ended questions. The completion of the questionnaires was anonymous, as the teacher-students used pseudonyms. As for its analysis, once all three activities were implemented, the researchers examined the teacher-students' responses to the questionnaires as well as the observation/diary notes of the trainer-researcher and reflected on the research questions. The combination of the afore-mentioned methods ensures triangulation and it is consequently considered the most appropriate method for answering the research questions. For the analysis of the qualitative data drawn from the open-ended questionnaires, the method of content analysis was adopted.

IV. FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis and interpretation, the following key themes are:

- a) Teacher-students' perceptions of each implemented activity concerning: 1. Team collaboration, 2. Creativity enhancement, 3. Classroom atmosphere.
- b) Teacher-students' beliefs about 1. the suitability of the activities for their future students and 2. the probability of implementing the activities in their classes in the future.
- c) Teacher-students' perceptions about the advantages the use of music can have for language teaching based on the experience they gained in the current academic semester.

In IV.A., the teacher-students' indicative responses in relation to each key theme are presented for each activity separately, as these were obtained from questionnaire 1 which was completed straight after each activity's implementation. In IV.B.-C., their responses to questionnaire 2, which was completed once all three activities were implemented, relate to their overall views about the activities—in terms of the key themes—and this is why they do not refer to each activity separately.

A. Teacher-Students' Perceptions of Each Implemented Activity Concerning Team Collaboration, Creativity Enhancement and Classroom Atmosphere

(a). Team Collaboration

The teacher-students showed a positive attitude regarding the development of their collaborative teamwork skills, as they believe that the activities created conditions that enabled pleasant cooperation among the team members. They also provided opportunities for members with different ideas to come closer and work together in order to obtain a good result by incorporating everyone's ideas in the final work they produced. In what follows, we present indicative teacher-students' responses to the open-ended question 2 of questionnaire 1.

1. Activity 1

The activity is certainly a way in which different people can communicate and work together to produce a story. Good coordination is needed for the story's presentation, so individuals must be willing to listen to others and prepare appropriately.

I really liked the way we all worked together as a team and we came up with a remarkable result.

The collaboration with my team was particularly pleasant and the best part is that each one of us had different ideas and so we put them together and the result was a good story. The presentation was very easy, as each one of us performed their role perfectly. We are working in a similar way on other such assignments.

In this activity I was given the opportunity to express my own ideas and as a result I also contributed to the creation of the story.

However, there were also less positive opinions. More specifically, two teacher-students commented:

The activity was very nice, creative and in general an assignment that excites the imagination. Nevertheless, the collaboration was not good at all, something which made the process slightly unpleasant.

There were a lot of ideas given for the plot of the story, but there were also disagreements, which is bad. The activity was interesting, but there was not good collaboration on the choice of the sounds we had to render the story with in specific parts.

2. Activity 2

Our collaboration on the representation of the natural disaster with sounds was particularly good. The activity helped in fostering team spirit.

The activity promotes collaboration and team spirit and also passes on social messages.

Although the second activity worked least well for collaboration (Table 5), there were no negative comments in the teacher-students' responses.

3. Activity 3

We collaborated very well to get the best possible result for the story we were asked to write.

There was very good collaboration with the team as we shared ideas and suggested different things. Nevertheless, there were also less positive views, as two students wrote:

Today's collaboration was not as effective as the previous ones, to be honest, but, despite all, we did our best.

We collaborated very well until the third musical piece, then time ran out and one person in the group wrote the last piece on his own without consulting the others. It could have gone better.

Furthermore, the teacher-students' positive attitudes concerning team collaboration are confirmed by their responses to the closed-ended question 1 of Questionnaire 1 (Table 5).

TABLE 5
TEACHER-STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON TEAM COLLABORATION

Activity	Question 1/Questionnaire 1: How well do you think you cooperated with the team as far as the organisation of the activity and its presentation to the class are concerned?	
	Activity 1	86.8%
	7.9 %	moderately well
	5.3%	slightly well
Activity 2	85.3%	extremely well/very well
	5.9 %	moderately well
	8.8 %	slightly well /not at all well
Activity 3	88.5%	extremely well/very well
	11.5 %	moderately well

The above percentages show that the teacher-students' perceptions about their collaboration with their team members in all three activities were extremely good. The responses "extremely well" and "very well" are lumped together, since they indicate the respondents' positive attitude, "moderately well" is listed separately, as it indicates a less positive attitude, while "slightly well" and "not at all well" are lumped together as negative.

(b). Enhancement of Teacher-Students' Creativity

The teacher-students also responded positively as far as the enhancement of their creativity is concerned. As can be seen from their indicative answers to the open-ended question 2 of questionnaire 1 below, they were given opportunities to activate their imagination, to imagine themselves in situations they have not previously experienced, to find solutions to problems through creative thinking and to creatively connect music with language.

1. Activity 1

The activity of representing the pictures with sound was creative and presupposed the activation of imagination. The same also goes for the process for the creation of the story.

The activity helped us to develop our imagination and our creative side through the rendering of the images with sounds and their capturing in the story we created.

Let us note that the teacher-students made no negative comments for this activity.

2. *Activity 2*

As an activity it seemed to me very interesting as it mobilised our imagination, something that will be useful to us as future educators.

These activities help us to expand our imagination. It makes us imagine what it would be like to live in difficult life conditions, such as an earthquake, a storm, etc.

It was a pleasant activity and quite creative.

The activity in class was very good, creative and cultivates our imagination.

Nonetheless, one teacher-student—who described the activity as creative—felt that the group did not respond well to the requirements of the activity.

The activity was pleasant and creative; it just happened that I and my team did not have ideas and inspiration to carry it out as we should have had.

3. *Activity 3*

It was a pleasant activity and activated our imagination. We also listened to the presentations of our fellow students and got even more ideas.

The whole activity was very creative and pleasant because we put our imagination to work and our ideas together.

It stimulates the imagination.

However, one teacher-student was not positive towards the activity's contribution to the development of their creativity and commented:

There was hardly any creativity and our story had no unexpected parts and seemed dull to me at least.

(c). *Classroom Atmosphere*

The teacher-students' responses about the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere were equally encouraging. As shown by their indicative comments, they participated in a pleasant classroom atmosphere that brought them together not only with each other but also with the trainer-researcher. Additionally, it helped them not to feel stressed and enhanced their interest in the course, as there was more fun and joy—compared to the usual classroom atmosphere—which made it easier for them to present their work.

1. *Activity 1*

The activity was very fun and pleasant, breaks the ice between the students and between the students and the trainer.

Such activities are equally pleasant for both teachers and students.

The activity stimulates interest in the course and it was quite fun.

It was very interesting and pleasant to use musical stimuli to write stories and my appetite for learning was increased.

2. *Activity 2*

The activity seemed to me pleasant and fun and the lesson was made more interesting and enjoyable in this way.

Such activities are equally pleasant for both teachers and students because a stress-free classroom atmosphere is created.

3. *Activity 3*

When we started thinking about the story, different ideas were mentioned and we selected the one we all liked. I was happy with the team spirit, the collaboration and the excellent atmosphere between us and in the classroom during each group's presentation of the activity.

We spent this time creatively and fun and to tell you the truth I did not realise how time went by so fast.

B. Teacher-Students' Beliefs About the Suitability of the Activities for Their Future Students and the Probability of Implementing the Activities in Their Classes in the Future

The teacher-students were positive about the suitability of the activities for their future students, as they contribute to the development of children's critical thinking, allow them to be creative, entertain them and promote opportunities for collaboration. Indicative teacher-students' responses to the open-ended question 1 of questionnaire 2 are presented below:

(a). They Develop Students' Critical Thinking

The first activity was enjoyable and interactive, the atmosphere of collaboration was quite good, the ideas effective and efficient, and (the activity) can broaden a child's thinking and develop their critical thinking skills.

Activities such as the second one develop students' imagination and critical thinking as well as their composure in difficult situations. At the same time, it raises awareness of environmental issues.

(b). They Provide Students With Opportunities to Be Creative

The first activity stimulates the students' imagination and thus they become more creative and productive.

The implementation of the second activity in class is very beneficial for the students, as they can develop their imagination and creativity.

The third activity was very interesting, because by using our imagination and the stimuli we got from the musical excerpts, we created our own story. In class, I think that this activity will be excellent, as the children will work together and understand the importance of creativity.

(c). They Entertain Children

Activities like the first one can entertain children in a nice way.

The second activity is very interesting and can be implemented in a classroom and entertain children. It requires imagination, something that children have to a large extent, action and collaboration!

(d). They Provide Opportunities for Student Collaboration

The first activity is like a collaboration game, as children are asked to develop, with their team spirit, a fantasy story and represent it with appropriate sounds.

The second is a very good activity, especially for primary school children, because they can produce the sounds of nature themselves and perform them with their bodies. The most important, however, is the collaboration of the children so that a pleasant result is implemented and reached.

Such activities, as the third one, are very good to be implemented, as they are a pleasant break from everyday life routine, children are further familiarised with music, collaboration is encouraged and they provide occasions to make new friendships.

Almost all teacher-students (94.1%) responded that they would implement the activities carried out in the study with their future students (Figure 2).

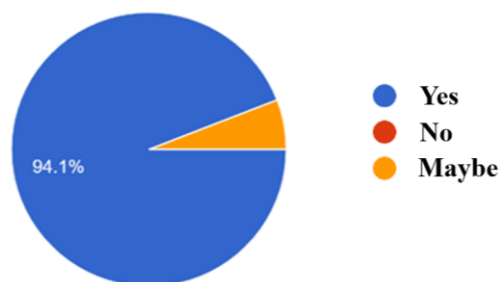


Figure 2. Answers to the Question "As Future Teachers Would You Implement Such Creative Activities in Your Classes?"

One teacher-student—whose answer was "Maybe" to question 1 in questionnaire 2—justified the answer:

I would perhaps apply such creative activities, because if the children are unruly, in my opinion, the lesson will be completely derailed.

This is an important point, as the behaviour and learning styles of pupils as well as the classroom atmosphere—among other considerations—should be taken into consideration when implementing such activities.

C. Teacher-Students' Perceptions About the Advantages the Use of Music Can Have for Language Teaching Based on the Experience They Gained in the Current Academic Semester

The teacher-students believed that music increases student interest in “Language”, provides a more creative and alternative way to teach the language classes, contributes to the students’ understanding and learning, activates their imagination and provides ideas for writing. Indicatively, their comments from the responses to the open-ended question 2 of questionnaire 2 for each key theme are listed below:

(a). Music Increases Students' Interest in “Language”

Activities that combine music and language stimulate student interest and make the lesson more pleasant and, at the same time, more interesting.

Through the presence of music, children will follow the lessons with greater interest.

Generally, the use of arts in education attracts the interest of the students and we get away from monotonous teaching.

With such creative activities, children show greater interest in the language classes, which become more creative and change the routine of the lesson.

Activities of this type which combine two subjects, are a pleasant way to teach the language classes but also a pleasant “break” for the children.

Such creative activities are expected to develop the child's interest in language and, at the same time, to expand their imagination.

(b). Music Provides a More Creative and Alternative Way to Teach the Language Classes

The use of music in Language teaching has advantages, as it enables teachers to teach in more creative ways and enriches their teaching, avoiding repetitions.

Teaching becomes more creative and pleasant for both teachers and students.

(c). Music Contributes to the Students' Understanding and Learning

I would implement such activities, as I think they can help children learn more easily.

Such activities, due to the presence of music, help children follow the language lessons with greater interest and maybe even retain the information of the lessons with more ease.

As music is part of everyday life, it can be used so that a better understanding of the meanings and a more active participation of the students are achieved.

(d). Music Activates the Imagination and Provides Ideas for Writing

Such activities can lead students to generate ideas, by activating their imagination and their creative side, and to write nice stories which are inspired by sounds.

Such activities can inspire students to write something without getting bored.

V. DISCUSSION—CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study exemplified the implementation of three activities which aimed at the production of written language through musical stimuli and examined the teacher-students’ reflections on them. It was conducted as part of an undergraduate course, entitled “Music Education”. An attempt was made to create a learning environment where the teacher-students could enhance their creativity and get ideas on how they could work in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary setting as in-service generalist teachers at Primary level (ages 6 to 11) in the future.

The results revealed that the teacher-students showed a positive attitude towards the activities due to the following reasons: they were given opportunities to develop their teamwork skills, to stimulate their creativity and to participate in a pleasant classroom atmosphere. Moreover, they were positive about the suitability of the activities for their future

students, as such activities can develop students' critical thinking, allow them to be creative, entertain children and provide opportunities for collaboration. Additionally, they can increase student interest in the school subject of Language, allow teachers to be more creative and adopt alternative ways of teaching language classes, facilitate the understanding of concepts which are presented in the lessons, activate student imagination and offer students ideas for the production of written language.

Each one of the activities, or even all together, could be implemented with primary school students, either exactly as described in the study or with changes or they could be extended. For example, in the second activity in which we propose the creation of a sound story that can be dramatised, the story can be acted out in the classroom. Apart from rendering the story with sounds, a song can be also included in the activity. Its lyrics, which would be related to the plot of the story, can be written by the students and the song can be composed by the students themselves with the assistance of the music specialist teacher. All students can participate in the process of the story dramatisation in the classroom; one or more students can take on the role of the narrator, others the roles of the various characters, some can produce the sounds of the story while other can sing the song.

Such creative activities, which include “verbal spontaneity games, role playing, and physical movement” (Toivanen et al., 2011, p. 60), contribute to the students' language development (Liu & Ding, 2009) and strengthen their “social and emotional well-being” (Gibson & Ewing, 2020, p. 77). Additionally, by taking on characters different from themselves, students “can start to see things from another perspective” (Gibson & Ewing, 2020, p. 79), something which helps them understand others more easily, find solutions to problems and generally develop their creativity (Wee et al., 2013). Thus, such activities cultivate empathy.

In these types of activities, the teacher has the role of a facilitator and animator, who guides the group and intervenes, when necessary (Nikolaou, 2023c). During the implementation of creative activities, it is important to create an appropriate classroom atmosphere (Economidou Stavrou, 2022), so that students feel safe—on the grounds that they are not judged—while they are given the chance to experiment and create.

As this is mainly a qualitative study, there are some limitations. Although the sample size is sufficient, it does not allow us to make generalisations about the results. In addition, the validity of the results is subject to the teacher-students' truthful responses to the closed and open-ended questions. Nevertheless, considering the universality of music which transcends the boundaries of language, we would expect that such activities could be easily adapted—with the necessary modifications—to serve the educational needs of different learner groups and/or appeal to learners with different learning styles. Consequently, we hypothesise that similar benefits could be obtained by any group of learners. Moreover, the activities could be also implemented outside Primary Education (i.e., Secondary Education, training programmes) and by learners in different disciplines (e.g., foreign language learning, etc.). However, these issues remain open for future research.

The results of the present study should be viewed in the context of arts integration in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary setting, where the utilisation of arts can creatively contribute to the teaching of other subjects (Eisner, 1999), thus creating a more attractive and interesting environment for students. This environment will allow students to be more active, will activate their imagination (Greene, 2008) and unfold their creative side.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE 1

1) How well do you think you cooperated with the team as far as the organisation of the activity and its presentation to the class are concerned?

Extremely well	Very well	Moderately well	Slightly well	Not at all well
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2) Reflect on the activity and comment on: your personal participation, the collaboration and coordination with the team, the opportunities you were given to develop your creativity, the classroom atmosphere, how you felt about the activity or anything else you would like to mention.

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APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE 2

1) As future teachers, would you implement such creative activities in your classes?			
A)	Yes	B)	No
C)			Maybe

Please explain your answer:

.....

2) In your opinion, what are the advantages of the use of music in “Modern Greek Language” classes?

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