Praxis Paper: Connecting Theory to Practice

Introduction to Jazz Listening and Chord Building

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The introductory activity is a listening activity. The activity is intended to provide students an opportunity to write down their thoughts using content-specific terminology. This is facilitated with leading questions and a musical terminology sheet that students have been building together as a class all semester. The teacher and students frequently use these terms when talking about listening’s and about their own playing, this way terms are scaffolded into the vocabulary before students are expected to use content-specific terms in their assignments. Having a group discussion and handing in the sheet with their thoughts gives students a low-risk opportunity to practice using the content-specific language.

Social justice is also introduced in the listening activity. The piece was chosen to emphasize the marginalization of African American musicians in jazz throughout history. Before listening to the piece no historical context will be given, because the key is to see what students think is memorable without historical context. The piece features a solo instrumentalist who is white and a rhythm instrumentalist who is African American. Which part of the music that students think is the most important it is an aural representation of how jazz musicians were viewed at the time the piece was written. It is most likely that the melody will stand out the most. Students will hear the piece once again without the rhythm section. This will demonstrate how important the rhythm section is in all styles of music, including jazz and will parallel not only the marginalization of African American musicians, but also the marginalization of rhythm players.

The main activity is a game, which can be a useful and effective mode of reinforcing prior student learning. The “bingo” chord building game gives students an opportunity to work with others to build chords. The game involves visual, kinesthetic, aural, and interpersonal learning modes. The multimodality aims to be effective for more learners, the ones that did not previously understand the chord learning from individual and teacher oriented learning. It also works to reinforce for the students that learned the material in the last lesson.

“Subcultural diversity also extends to the ever broadening range of specialist registers and situational variations in language, be they technical, sporting, or related to groupings of interest and affiliation” (Cazden et al., 1996). Music uses technical language and technical symbols, often included terms outside of the English language, to describe various aspects of music. It is important for students to be able to read/write/speak using the technical language of music effectively. This lesson plan included a listening, with a musical term sheet that students had actively been a part creating. The listening provides students with an opportunity to practice writing and speaking using musical language. Students then have a game that engages a different type of technical language, music notation, both in writing, speaking, and translating to a keyboard. Finally, students play music as a band which is an application of reading in musical language.

References

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