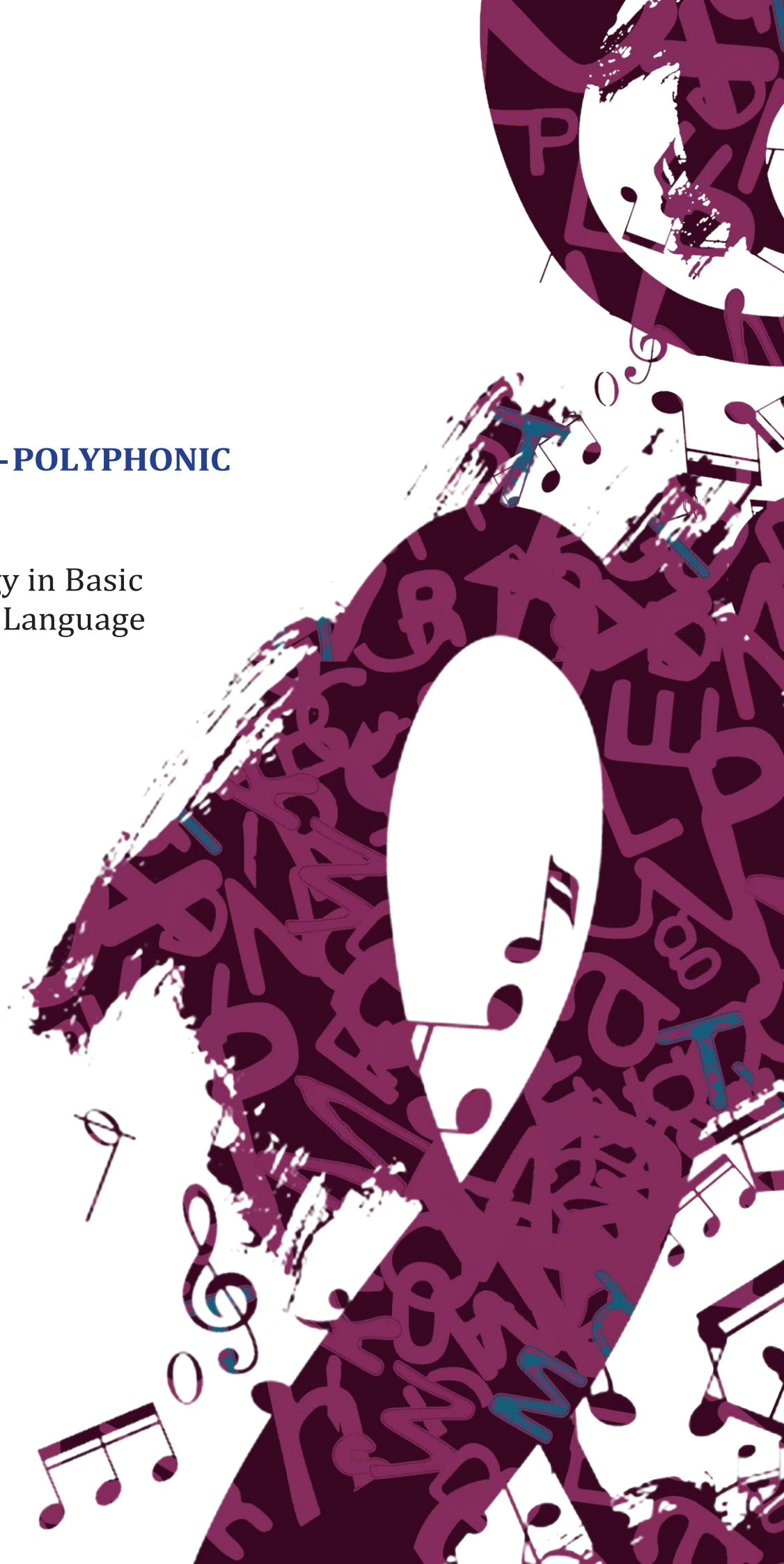


HAM`AVAAZ – POLYPHONIC

Music Pedagogy in Basic
Education and Language
Learning





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Music Pedagogy in Basic Education and Language Learning
Methodology



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1. Ham'avaaz - Polyphonic: Music Pedagogy in Basic Education and Language Learning

"Ham'avaaz - Polyphonic" is a transcultural music project, funded by the Erasmus+ adult education programme, which aims to enhance the creativity and self-efficacy of adult learners in the areas of basic education and language acquisition. It aims to create an inclusive and diverse learning atmosphere in which learners work together on pieces of music, song lyrics, melodies and rhythms from diverse cultural contexts. At the same time, the results present innovative possibilities for working with vocabulary and linguistic structures in the learners' second language. Although there are already numerous links between language acquisition and music education, our project idea began with the conviction that there is a lack of music-based teaching ideas that are orientated towards the needs of educationally disadvantaged adults.

The Persian project title Ham'avaaz has a double meaning: on the one hand, it refers to singing together; on the other hand, it expresses that two people come to an agreement on a matter. Even if musical tastes are debatable, music has proven to be an effective tool for bringing people together in dialogue (Howell 2011; Weston and Lenette 2016). With this in mind, the project pursues several objectives:

- Co-creating an appreciative learning environment at the interface of music and language acquisition for educationally disadvantaged adults who have often had discriminatory and negative learning experiences. The activities emphasise existing skills and actively involve the participants in the learning/teaching process.
- Strengthening learning skills and memory strategies for learners in different areas of adult education, especially literacy, basic education and second language acquisition. A wide range of music is presented to create conversation starters and teach strategies to help memorise language structures.

- Promoting social skills and the ability to articulate feelings, opinions and attitudes. The methods used aim to improve learners' ability to actively listen and analyse information in a social context.
- Promoting resilience by supporting participants in recognising and using their potential resources and skills, such as multilingualism. The specific design of the material builds on the participants' existing resources and activates them. This aims to promote self-efficacy rather than emphasising deficits in certain areas.
- Promoting creativity: Creativity plays an important role in developing and maintaining resilience, as it involves the ability to imagine and develop alternative scenarios.
- Building transcultural and social dialogue through the use of a variety of different linguistic and cultural elements beyond the clichés and stereotypes often associated with music.
- Strengthening the competences of adult educators by expanding their repertoire with music-based activities and tools. The learning materials and activities are designed for adult educators who are interested in engaging with the question how music pedagogy can be used to benefit learning processes. The material can be used by both trainers who are familiar with music pedagogy as well as by educators with no prior knowledge in this field.

In order to approach these objectives, we contacted trainers in Austria and Spain at the start of the project in order to incorporate their experiences with and perspectives on music education in different areas of adult education. The results of a survey in which 105 professionals took part are presented and analysed in this methodology. Building on this, we analysed research and music education findings in areas that may be relevant from the perspective of adult educators and trainers. This includes, for example, possible synergies between language acquisition and music education, the role of music in promoting resilience in adult learners, strengthening body awareness and relaxation through movement and dance, and transcultural exchange through listening to and sharing songs with each other. The summary, which was revised towards the end of the project, describes the conclusions we drew for the development of all further results, in particular for the development of the teaching ideas collected in the Music Box, which forms the centrepiece of the project.

2. Adult Educators' Perspectives on Music Education Approaches

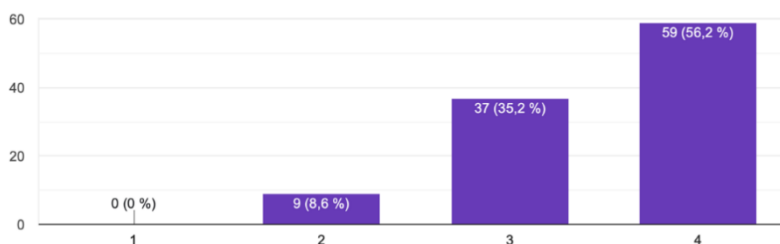
As a starting point for all further project activities, we conducted a survey among adult educators in the partner countries Austria and Spain in spring and summer 2022. We wanted to know to what extent trainers already use music and/or music pedagogy in their everyday course work and how they assess the receptiveness of the target group, the advantages but also the challenges of music-based approaches. On the following pages, we describe the results and conclusions drawn from the data. The survey reached a large number of trainers: A total of 105 adult educators took part in the survey using *Google Forms*.

Around 80% of respondents stated that they had been working in adult education for more than five years, with around 20% of them even looking back to more than two decades of experience. The trainers who took part in the survey work in various areas of formal and non-formal education: Basic education and literacy with adults, Spanish or German as a second language, other language programmes (e.g. English), vocational training offers, digital skills, memory training and leisure activities are among the most frequently mentioned areas.

The introductory question aimed to find out how important music is in the private and professional lives of the trainers. 91.4% stated that music was important or very important in their everyday lives. When analysing the results, the possibility that trainers with a high interest in music were more willing to participate in a survey on music pedagogical approaches in adult education must of course be taken into account.

HOW IMPORTANT IS
MUSIC FOR YOU IN
YOUR DAILY LIFE?

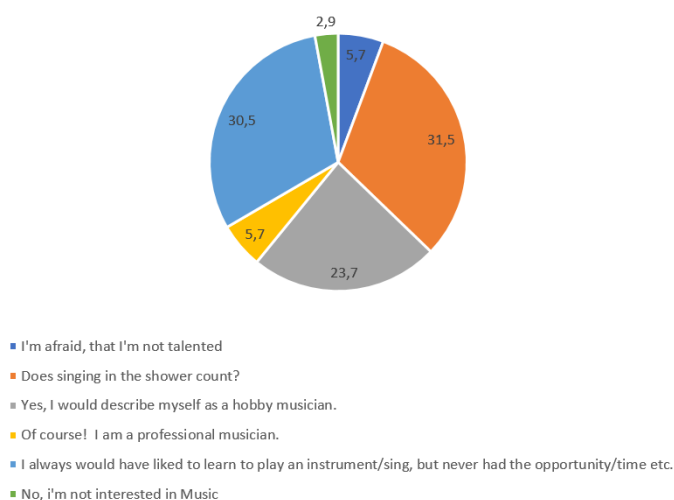
1. How important is music for you in your daily life? Please mark on the scale from 1 to 4 which statement fits you best.
105 respuestas



Participants were also asked whether they were musically active themselves. The answers here were very diverse: While only around 3% stated that this did not apply to them at all, 30% described themselves as hobby musicians or even professional musicians. A further third of respondents stated that they had always wanted to play a musical instrument or learn to sing, but never had the time or opportunity to do so.

ARE YOU MUSICALLY ACTIVE YOURSELF?

2. Are you musically active yourself? Please select the most appropriate answer.

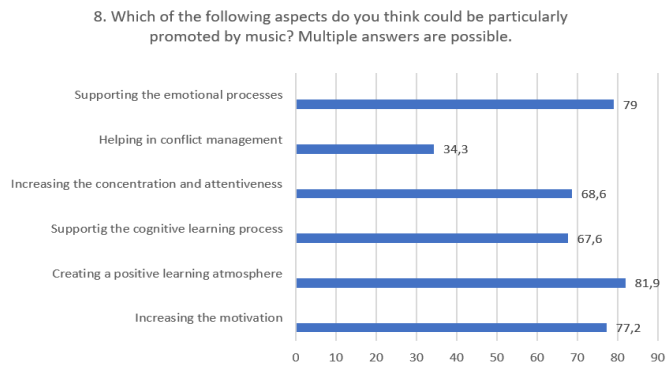


In a next step, the trainers were asked for their opinion on the possible benefits of music education in adult education. At 77.2%, a clear majority agreed that music education aspects can support learning processes.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT MUSIC LESSONS CAN OFFER ADULT LEARNERS SUPPORT IN THEIR LEARNING PROCESS?

Most course instructors clearly see the benefits of music in the fact that it supports emotional processes (79%), increases concentration and attention (68.6%), creates a positive learning environment (81.9%), fosters motivation (77.2%) and supports the cognitive learning process (67.6%). The following aspects were mentioned, among others: Self-esteem, creativity, knowledge about one's own body, motor skills, memorisation, relaxation and critical and logical thinking. It should be noted that multiple answers were possible in this section.

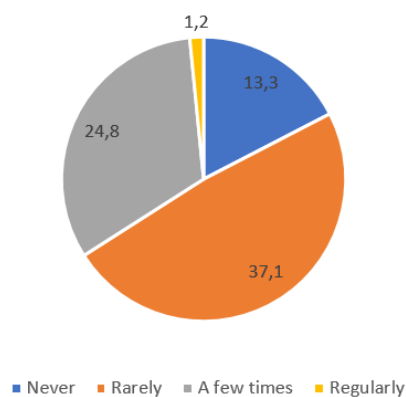
IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS COULD BE PARTICULARLY PROMOTED THROUGH MUSIC?



The survey highlights that a considerable proportion of trainers have at least some experience of using music in lessons - albeit to very different degrees: while only 1.2% use it regularly, the vast majority stated that they have at least some experience of using music in lessons. In contrast, 13.3% have never used any kind of musical activity in their course.

HAVE YOU EVER USED MUSIC (ANY KIND OF MUSIC OR MUSICAL ACTIVITY) IN ADULT EDUCATION?

9. Have you ever used music (any type of music or musical activity) in adult education?



The trainers mentioned the following reasons why they used music in the past: increasing learners' motivation, creating a positive learning environment, working on vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation when acquiring a second language, listening comprehension and phonetics, developing attention, concentration skills and relaxation, providing learners with resources that match their preferences and interests, increasing their knowledge for a better understanding and enjoyment of music, introducing historical events and their context, strengthening teamwork and promoting cultural knowledge.

IF YOU HAVE USED MUSIC, PLEASE EXPLAIN FOR WHAT PURPOSES YOU HAVE USED IT AND WHAT RESULTS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED.

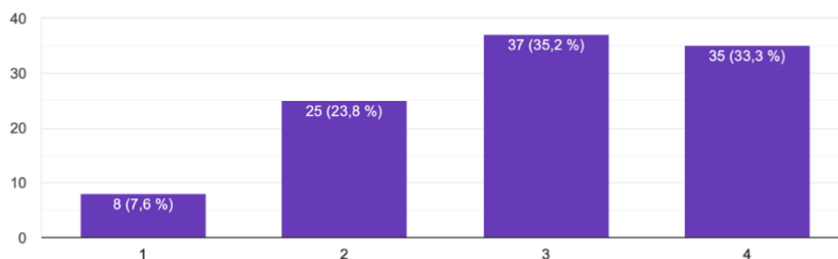
Many participants stated that they felt confident or very confident about using music in their lessons. However, 31.4% described themselves as unsure when it comes to music pedagogical

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN USING MUSIC IN YOUR LESSONS?

approaches in the classroom.

11. How confident are you using music in your classes? Please mark on the scale from 1 to 4 which statement fits you best.

105 respuestas

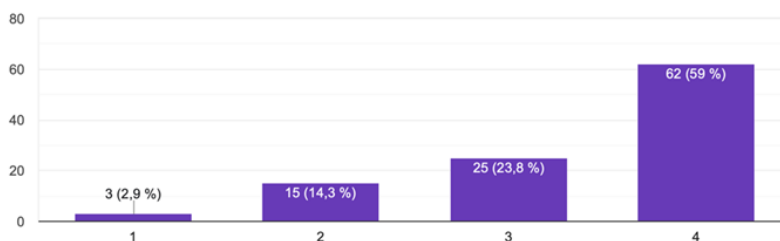


From the point of view of projects that want to promote music education in adult education, the great interest in target group-orientated music teaching material was particularly positive. 82.8% of respondents expressed a (high) level of interest in didactic suggestions.

AS A TRAINER, WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN MUSIC EDUCATION LEARNING MATERIALS/TEACHING IDEAS?

12. Would you, as a course instructor*, be interested in music pedagogical learning materials/teaching ideas and training for your teaching...e scale from 1 to 4 which statement fits you best.

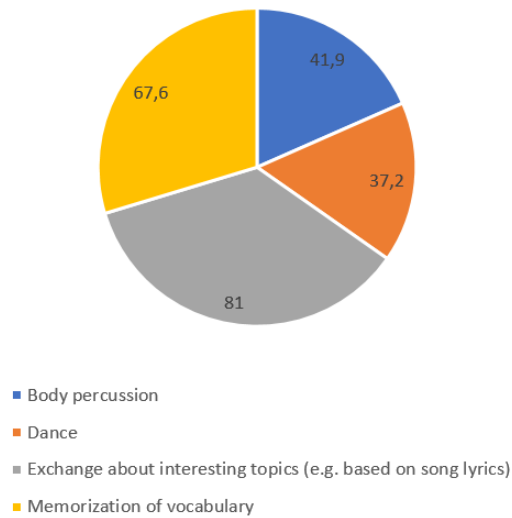
105 respuestas



For the further development of the project results, it was of course also crucial to find out which aspects of the music education spectrum the interviewees were particularly interested in.

WHAT ASPECTS OF MUSIC EDUCATION ARE YOU INTERESTED IN?

13. If so, which aspects are of particular interest to you? Multiple answers are possible



In addition to the predefined selection, respondents were also asked to formulate other topics that they would like to address:

- Work on the use and placement of the voice when speaking and singing
- Creativity and expression
- Getting to know world music
- Relaxation and concentration
- Play instruments
- Singing
- Emotional aspect of listening to music
- Games
- Soundtracks
- English
- Support for linguistic expression
- Work on the pronunciation
- Facilitation of individual work
- Development of personal and creative intellect
- Combination of music and text: Words are connected with emotions that are transported by the music
- Body percussion and dance in connection with language learning

Last but not least, the survey asked about the biggest obstacles that trainers have experienced or foresee when implementing music-related activities in their lessons. The following aspects can be summarised and highlighted:

- Emotional aspects: lack of self-confidence and insecurities
- Lack of musical knowledge of the trainers

IN YOUR OPINION,
WHAT ARE THE
BIGGEST OBSTACLES
TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF
MUSIC EDUCATION
ACTIVITIES IN ADULT

- Learners' perceptions of the benefits of learning through music
 - Structural obstacles: Current curricula do not include music education
 - The resistance to new methodological suggestions and tools as well as the trainers' lack of familiarity
 - The educational projects of the individual organisations
 - Scarce time resources
- AND BASIC
EDUCATION? (THESE
CAN BE AT THE LEVEL
OF THE PARTICIPANTS
OR THE TEACHERS, OR
OF A STRUCTURAL
NATURE)

Conclusions

Firstly, the high level of participation in the survey can be evaluated as very positive. With the information provided by 105 trainers from the field of adult education, existing experiences can certainly be reflected upon and included in the development of the project results. With 77.2% of respondents, the vast majority agreed that music education can support learning processes. The survey participants clearly pointed out the benefits of music in supporting emotional processes, increasing concentration and attention, creating a positive learning environment, increasing motivation and supporting the cognitive learning process. More than 80% of respondents expressed an interest in receiving music education materials and didactic suggestions. It will now be important to build on the suggestions emphasised by the participants as part of the development of the project results.

3. Promoting Resilience through Music-based Learning Processes

The benefits of music for the mental health and cognitive development of children and young people are widely recognised. Numerous studies have shown how music strengthens young learners in various aspects of their development. Based on analyses of the brain physiological processes that become active when experiencing and creating music, a growing number of studies in recent years have also focused on the positive effects of musical activity in adults.

Strengthening memory strategies and cognitive performance is an important prerequisite for successful learning processes, especially in basic education. In addition to educational disadvantage, traumatic experiences such as war, violence and discrimination often drastically restrict memory performance. Such experiences can impair the control of attention, impulses and emotions as well as the ability to organise and plan; they can promote withdrawal, avoidance of certain situations, mistrust of new (learning) environments, aversion or even fear of learning. The strong connection between traumatic experiences and memory difficulties can be explained by the fact that communicative processes between different areas of the brain are inhibited in dangerous situations. In order for people to be able to react quickly to imminent danger, decision-making processes must be prevented by the cerebrum (Hantke/Görges 2019, 30). If such experiences accumulate and persist, the result can be permanent nervousness, sleep disorders, irritability, withdrawal, chronic illness and much more. Above all, learning also becomes harder (Siebert/Pollheimer-Pühringer 2016, 17), as those affected find it difficult to stay in the present moment, concentrate and go through the cognitive processes necessary for learning (Hantke/Görges 2019, 29).

It is precisely here that the playful loosening up of traditional learning environments potentially represent added value. Nevertheless, from a trauma-sensitive approach to music in particular, it must be emphasised that voluntariness must be a key guiding principle. Against this background, a critical examination of the connection between resilience and music education seems essential, which is discussed below.

Studies have shown that music can positively influence the development of motivation, self-awareness, self-confidence, personal development and expressiveness (Hallam 2010). Susan Hallam (2010) from the Institute of Education at the University of London, for example, argues that music is an

effective tool for promoting (non-verbal) communication and strengthening the development and well-being of individuals and groups. At the same time, the effects are very individual and can vary greatly from person to person. At its best, music supports relaxation and helps to reduce stress by regulating the heartbeat. Levitin (2015) argues that many people are very aware of what type of music has what effect on them. This empowers them to choose the right music for certain situations in order to create the desired mood.

In a recent research paper, Bensimon (2022) examines the effect of music therapy on the integration of traumatic experiences and concludes that music can have a positive effect in that it offers a sensory stimulus that does not require linguistic or logical mediation and can therefore support the physical dimension of trauma processing. In the words of Sarah Pearson, a music therapist, psychotherapist and expert in social work, "making music can have the same physiological effect on stress as moderate exercise by bringing us back into the (ventral-vagal) 'flow state' of the nervous system" (Pearson 2021). When music-making takes place in a group or interactive form, she adds, it can be likened to a 'hug'.

At the same time, it is important to note that research to date has mainly focussed on those who find music a rewarding and positive experience, rather than those who do not share this view (Hallam 2010). Pearson also points out that making music together can also lead to a negative perceived pressure to perform for some people. Learners may potentially experience stress as soon as they pick up an instrument because they are afraid of being judged, or physical injuries or limitations may prevent them from playing an instrument, singing or dancing (Pearson 2021). In addition, certain text content can evoke traumatic memories if there are experiences of discrimination (e.g. racism or sexism) in the group. With this in mind, we would like to conclude this chapter by emphasising that the principle of voluntariness, which should guide educational work in general, must be adhered to, especially with regard to music education activities. There are learners for whom (for whatever reason) it is not desirable to engage actively and in depth with music, to sing or even dance in a group - in these cases, nothing should be forced.

4. Language Learning and Music

Research suggests that music strengthens neurocognitive and mental functions (Pantev and Herholz, 2011; Peretz 2006). It promotes various cognitive and emotional processes that are crucial for learning processes, such as attention, concentration, verbal and numerical reasoning, motivation, etc. Among other things, positive effects on memory performance have been demonstrated (Justel and Diaz Abrahan 2019).

As many music educators have argued (Dalby 2005), music-based learning can be particularly beneficial in the acquisition of a second or foreign language. Toscano Fuentes and Fonseca Mora (2012) argue that "the inclusion of instrumental and vocal music supports the development of linguistic levels (phonetic, phonological, morphosyntactic, semantic and lexical), affective factors (reduction of anxiety, increase in motivation) and sociolinguistic factors (contact with the varieties and registers of the language) in the learning process" (Fuentes, Mora 2012, 199). In other words, melody and rhythm facilitate the memorisation of vocabulary, the association of phonemes with writing and the assignment of meanings to new concepts as well as the memorisation of linguistic structures. Vocabulary is internalised and absorbed through listening or singing. The level of meaning of words is enriched when they are accompanied by rhythm and melody, and the process responsible for this integration transforms words and music into a continuous flow of communication (Bengoechea 2008).

In addition, music offers a range of opportunities for dialogue, for example through the exchange of listening habits, impressions that songs leave behind or the joint development of lyrics. It brings variety into common learning situations, creates a relaxed and playful atmosphere, improves listening comprehension, promotes creativity and enriches vocabulary as well as oral and written expression skills. As pieces of music and songs can be listened to repeatedly outside the classroom situation, this also contributes to autonomous learning. In addition, audio-visual resources can be utilised through the use of music; a wide range of music videos are available for this purpose, which can be shared via the easily accessible YouTube platform, for example.

In this way, all four basic skills of language acquisition can be promoted by incorporating music education teaching ideas into basic education and language lessons:

- **Listening:** Songs are listened to together and individually. Various exercises follow this up: For example, text elements can be put in the different order, certain word types or grammar structures can be deduced, etc.
- **Talking:** Before or after listening to music, learners can work in pairs or groups to discuss when they like to listen to which music, what impressions certain pieces leave on them, what they think about the socio-political content, etc. In addition, lines of a song text can be spoken rhythmically (in a choir) with certain forms of expression; and finally, learners can also sing together.
- **Reading:** After listening, song lyrics or parts of them can be read together or individually; additional information on artists and pieces of music or genres can be processed. With the help of this authentic text corpus, vocabulary can be deepened and grammatical or semantic structures clarified using proven language acquisition methods.
- **Writing:** Finally, these reading texts can also be brought back into the classroom in the form of cloze texts in order to introduce a written aspect. In addition, associations of songs can of course also be written down and collected. Last but not least, writing (short) song lyrics independently is also a great (but challenging) possibility.

5. Transcultural Exchange through Music Education

A further potential of music education is seen in the possibility of culturally embedding content in the learning process. Adult learners prefer learning opportunities in which they can make connections to their everyday lives and the world they live in or to the people they associate with. Against this background, the link between culture, music and learning (Randall, 2003) can be a further motivation for integrating music into adult education. In our understanding, however, this is not about a "one-sided" transfer of cultural information (e.g. in the second language), but also about a transcultural exchange between the course participants and with the course instructors that takes into account the multilingual realities of the learners in the group.

At the centre of the considerations is the idea that in a transcultural learning environment, as basic and language courses often are, it means added value if the participants have the opportunity to act as experts for their respective context. In the teaching units, they have the opportunity to choose songs and use them to convey their own cultural biography to other course participants. Through their multilingualism, they become transcultural mediators and thus have the opportunity to promote their self-efficacy.

Hence while the previous chapter focussed on teaching songs in the second language, Ham'avaaz aims to include a diverse spectrum of musical genres from different cultural backgrounds. However, a culturalist tendency should be avoided: Whilst it can be enriching to learn about music from different regions, this should not lead to the expectation that people are necessarily interested in musical styles and pieces from their country of origin and want to bring them into the classroom. In her famous speech ["The Danger of a Single Story"](#), the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shares an anecdote that illustrates this misunderstanding and its negative effects. In it, she recounts the disappointment of her American college roommate when she expressed a desire to listen to "tribal music" and was instead confronted with Adichie's Mariah Carey cassette.

Integrating music education into basic education and second language acquisition from a transcultural perspective means incorporating a broad spectrum of linguistic and cultural elements, establishing connections, finding similarities and differences, and achieving a new result through combination and reorganisation. At the same time, it is essential not to reproduce stereotypes and clichés that are so often associated with music.

6. Movement and Body Awareness

There are many terms we use to describe our emotions when we move or experience music, e.g. "bouncy", "upbeat", etc. The perception of the beat created by both music and movement is also linked to emotional and biological responses. This explains, for example, why we perceive consonant and slow music as relaxing and harmonious, in contrast to faster and dissonant music. We hold our breath and feel the tension in our body when the music intensifies in certain passages and reaches a higher pitch via the lower and middle registers. As the melody moves towards its root note and the beat slows down, we feel our muscles begin to relax and we exhale. We also tap our feet, nod our heads and synchronise our bodies with the rhythmic structure of the music as we experience music. These are all examples of how music appeals to our bodies. Making music goes one step further and actively involves our body, allowing us to perceive it more consciously.

Sitting for hours on end not only reduces concentration, but also has a negative effect on posture and muscles. In contrast, music offers the opportunity to incorporate more movement into the learning process. In the literature, the connection between musical experience and the strengthening of body awareness and positive self-perception is emphasised. According to the pedagogue Edgar Willems, music education focuses on finding the connection between being, doing, knowing and creating with and through music (cited in Valencia Mendoza, 2015). Music education activities in adult education aim to create a space where participants can explore their expressiveness and body awareness through movement to music, body percussion or even dancing.

Music education approaches in adult education can promote body awareness in various ways: Relaxation and movement exercises are accompanied by pieces of music. Simple body percussion choreographies can be developed to songs in the participants' second language or first language and vocabulary is deepened. Finally, it is also possible to exchange the basic steps of favourite dances or simply move or dance freely!

7. Summary: Putting Theory into Practice

As we describe in this methodology, we first approached the topic of music education through the perspectives of adult educators from Spain and Austria. In a survey among 105 trainers, we wanted to find out what added value they recognise in music education activities in the classroom. We were eager to know to what extent music is already part of different learning environments and, on the other hand, what concrete interests exist with regard to the materials to be developed in order to be able to offer trainers teaching and learning materials that they can really use. It was important for us to include trainers with and without prior knowledge of music education or music.

The vast majority of respondents (77.2%) agreed that music pedagogy can support learning processes. The respondents clearly pointed out the benefits of music when it comes to supporting emotional processes, increasing concentration and attention, creating a positive learning environment, increasing motivation and supporting the cognitive learning process. More than 80% of respondents expressed an interest in receiving music education materials and didactic suggestions.

The next step was to try out different activities and exercises with learners from our centres. We invited them to take part in music education workshops: In May and June 2022, adult educators in the CFPA Jordi de Sant Jordi combined topics related to Spanish as a second language, memory training and basic education with music, focussing on dance and body percussion. In October and November 2022, Orient Express offered music workshops in Vienna, which also involved singing, lyric writing and playing music together. A key aspect of the activities carried out by both organisations was the collection of multilingual songs presented by the learners, which were later incorporated into the development of the Music Box.

While we tried things out (and laughed) in these joint lessons, we also wanted to get a more comprehensive idea of which approaches and methods work and which are better left out of the development of the Music Box before piloting the activities. The first positive thing we noticed was that many learners were very interested in sharing, listening to and even dancing to music together in a safe environment. However, there was also a great deal of interest in being involved in selecting the songs themselves. For this reason, we took up the creation of joint playlists, which are shared

in the group and provide a starting point for the didactic suggestions, right at the beginning.

Out of demand, we started to produce simple videos, such as how to create (joint) playlists on YouTube. And because some music-based exercises are simply easier to demonstrate than to describe, we also used the project's [YouTube channel](#) to upload videos showing us trying out certain warm-up exercises or building DIY instruments.

In September 2023, we finally presented the developed techniques and exercises at a transnational workshop with trainers in Teruel, Spain, and incorporated their feedback before finalising the Music Box. It was also important to us to promote a sustainable exchange between trainers on music education issues and topics. At our final presentation, we introduced ways to stay in contact with each other via [Discord](#) and to share our experiences, song suggestions and teaching ideas.

We would appreciate getting in touch with you via this channel (registration is required). Please also find all materials on our website: <https://hamavaaz.eu/>.

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Orient Express - Beratungs-, Bildungs- und Kulturinitiative für Frauen (Vienna, Austria)

Orient Express -Beratungs-, Bildungs- und Kulturinitiative für Frauen is an association based in Vienna that operates a counselling and learning centre for women with migration biography, two anonymous shelters, and a nationwide coordination centre against forced marriage and kin-based violence.

www.orientexpress-wien.com

Centro de Profesorado Territorial Angel Sanz Briz, Teruel (Teruel, Spain)



The Teachers Training Center of Teruel Ángel Sanz Briz, belonging to the Department of Education of Aragón, offers permanent training for teachers and trainers of all educational levels.

<http://formacionteruel.es/>

CFPA Jordi de Sant Jordi (Jordi, Spain)



CFPA Jordi de Sant Jordi is an Adult Education Centre from the Conselleria of Education in Comunidad Valenciana, located in la Vall d'Uixó. The institution's target groups are adults at risk of social exclusion, learners with migration biography and non-graduate learners. CFP Jordi also offers programmes such as ICT courses, English courses and other activities that allow social inclusion and enhance intergenerational experiences.

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