

The Children's Songs Composition: A Contribution to Fill in The Absence of Children's Songs in Indonesian Preschool Education

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ABSTRACT

The song is one of the teaching media used by preschool teachers around the globe. Indonesian preschool teachers face a rising problem: the government regulates a standard curriculum where the educational song is compulsory. Yet, there is no concern to facilitate and fill in the absence of children's educational songs. This study aims to unveil the creative process of non-music education graduate teachers in composing educational songs as required by the curriculum. This study employs a qualitative design based on a case study of thirty-three teachers from eleven different preschools in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The researchers analyze the preschools' curriculum, teachers' interviews, field observations, and documentation. The findings show that teachers can use their creativity to create songs with educational messages projected in a collective poetry singing performance. Poetry singing allows students' aesthetic skills development through continuous song probe and response between teachers and students.

Keywords: song composition; creativity; educational messages; poetry

ABSTRAK

Komposisi Lagu Anak: Sebuah Kontribusi untuk Mengisi Absennya Lagu Anak dalam Pendidikan Prasekolah Indonesia. Lagu adalah salah satu media pengajaran yang digunakan oleh guru prasekolah di seluruh dunia. Guru prasekolah Indonesia menghadapi masalah yang makin meningkat, yaitu pemerintah mengatur standar kurikulum di mana lagu bermuatan pendidikan adalah wajib. Namun, tidak ada kepedulian untuk memfasilitasi dan mengisi kekosongan lagu-lagu pendidikan anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap proses kreatif guru lulusan pendidikan non musik dalam mengarang lagu edukatif sesuai dengan kurikulum. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif berdasarkan studi kasus terhadap tiga puluh tiga guru dari sebelas prasekolah yang berbeda di Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. Peneliti menganalisis kurikulum PAUD, wawancara guru, observasi lapangan, dan dokumentasi. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru dapat menggunakan kreativitas mereka untuk membuat lagu dengan pesan pendidikan yang diproyeksikan dalam pertunjukan nyanyian puisi kolektif. Puisi yang dinyanyikan membuat para siswa dapat mengembangkan kemampuan estesisnya melalui lagu yang dinyanyikan berulang-ulang dan bersahut-sahutan antara guru dan para siswa.

Kata kunci: komposisi lagu; kreativitas; pesan pendidikan; puisi

Introduction

People compose and use songs as their artistic expressions. However, not all expressions are covered in the published songs. In Indonesian context, there is a lack of songs which express educational message for pre-schoolers or kindergartens. Despite existing, the songs were still insufficient to fulfil the

pedagogical needs of all preschools in Indonesia. Ironically, for the preschool or kindergarten education in Indonesia, educational songs based on learning themes are compulsory as outlined in the curriculum.

Indonesian kindergarten education system aims to build students' behaviour as early as possible. There are some thematic behaviours stated in the

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curriculum to guide the teacher planning their lessons. Some of those themes are self-introduction, environment, self needs, animals, plants, fruits, recreation, occupation, communication, water, air, fire, universe, etc. To successfully teach these, teachers are required to integrate both life skills teaching and also aesthetic education to develop children's cognitive, motoric, and affective skill (KEMENDIKBUD, 2015; Wadiyo, 2015).

The teachers faced a problem due to the minimum available songs in accordance with the learning themes specified in the curriculum. The preschool teachers are not professional songwriters. Most of them even do not have any formal backgrounds in music. In Indonesia, the preschool teachers are graduated as graduates in early childhood education. They did not learn music comprehensively. This fact eventually become an issue to the teacher amid their incomprehensibility in creating a song. They can only be sing by imitating the limited existing songs. The pre-existing condition becomes acceptable where teachers cannot adjust a music tune. According to Anagnostopoulou et al. (2012), people with no musical background can engage in musical improvisation by focusing on other teaching aspects such as educational, psychological, and sociological theories, along with emphasizing on the process rather than the improvisation product.

Using songs in children's classes has flexible advantages. Songs can be used to help children develop their listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills. Songs can also become the aids in teaching vocabulary, sentence structure, and sentence patterns. The biggest advantage of using educational songs is to make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable (Millington, 2011; Murphey, 1992).

Children tend to be happy with music. Children are very happy to sing or listen to the songs due to the emotions or feelings inside them. Children's world is a world of feelings. Therefore, what naturally arises and initially develops in children's mind is their emotions or feelings. Following emotions, feelings, or age, the development of logical intelligence is propagated (Hallam, 2010; Sarkar & Biswas, 2015). Essentially,

music makes children carried away from their tone and rhythm, which harmonises in children's mind. That is to say, innate musicality benefits children in developing their musical abilities which can come from family, teachers, and or anyone who allows children's musicality to continue to develop (Niland, 2012; Young, 2006).

Children's attachment to music also originate their personal preference of music. Some of them love to sing or hum, while some others are happy to listen to music using any media. Whatever they do, the important thing is to help them channel their musicality or to express the art of music. Amongst the expression, children enjoy music or song by dancing or moving to the rhythm. They move rhythmically to respond to music with physical movements (Porter et al., 2017). In terms of preschool or kindergarten education, it is essential to integrate music into children's life so that they become sensitive and more creative.

Songs can be integrated into stories. Music can be played mixed with movements. Like the approach in other school learning areas, music does not need to be treated separately; instead, it is integrated with the learning subjects, such as social science, arts and linguistics, mathematics, and natural sciences.

Musical experience can be enhanced by experiences gained from, fine arts class, storytelling, poem, theatre, movements, and dancing. Here, teacher's role becomes very important (Gujjar & Choudhry, 2009; Xhemajli, 2016). Specifically, teachers have an important role in teaching students how to write, sing, play and make music. Children are more comfortable with their teachers compared to other musical demonstrations and non-musical illustrations (Ho, 2007). Further, music education can be used not only to develop musical skills, but also to develop social, individual abilities, problem solving abilities, cognitive abilities, critical thinking, and academic achievements (Topoğlu, 2014).

Previous studies show that song has been used by teachers to teach students and resulted inevitable benefits for students (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). In addition, wider research discussions find that students' moral and physical profile are developed after being exposed to music

(Pejić, 2016). Also, researches claimed that music should become a central part in children's education (Campbell, 2002; Hallam, 2010; Niland, 2012). Many researches regarding creativity had also done by other researchers come into conclusion that children's creativity is natural yet needs to be cultivated by their parents and teachers (Vygotsky, 2004; Dere, 2019; Kupers & van Dijk, 2020).

This study aims to see how creativity is used by the teachers who have no formal music education in preschool education to make song composition as they have problems with the absence of songs to teach educational messages to children. The gap in this research lie on the fact that there was no previous study mentioned about the ability of non-music graduate teachers to create songs to teach their students as the curriculum require them to deliver educational messages as the theme taught in the preschools. Answering the gap through this study is beneficial since all of the preschool teachers are not graduated from a formal music education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how creative process of non-music graduate teachers in creating songs to fill the absence of educational song as mandated by curriculum is.

Methods

This research was conducted at kindergartens in Semarang, Central Java province in Indonesia as it is in the level of preschool education. This study employs qualitative design based on a case study. This study has an objective to see the creative process of song composition by preschool or kindergarten teachers to deliver educational messages on the learning themes in the curriculum. There were 33 teachers from 11 different kindergarten schools as the participants of this research. Interviews were conducted in semi-structure format by asking questions related to the background of teacher education, curriculum understanding, the ability to read notation, and the ability to compose songs for students.

The documentation study conducted by researchers is to look at the curricula for preschool or kindergarten children and learning tools made by teachers. Observation is done by looking

at the learning process in the classroom with a concentration of how songs are performed by the teachers. In this context, researchers observed the learning process at kindergartens from the beginning till the closing part.

The researcher validated the data using data triangulation technique, mainly matching the data from the findings of interviews, documentation studies, and observations. Triangulation is chosen to check the consistency of the data found from various data collection techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The data analysis happened through the use of interactive model which began from data collection, data reduction, data presentation, to verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Context of The Song Creation Process

When the teacher escorted the students to enter the class, they played a tambourine, that is rhythmically sounded, to lead the children entering the class along with saying "let's go to the class, all". The action is not only because the teacher asked for the children to follow, yet it was done due to students' background, as children, who have tendency to play around with their peers.

After lining up, the students entered the class and became manageable. The teacher kept asking students on if they had taken a bath or not, whether they had had breakfast or not, what did they have for breakfast, whether they washed their hand after having breakfast or not, whether they eat by themselves or being fed, whether they drank milk or not, who drove them to school, whether they were a naughty student or not, whether they had a brother or sister, whether they were invited for vacation by their father and mother not, who had travelled to the village, who had travelled to the city, whether they saw animals, what animals they knew, whether they are happy to go to schools with many friends, and so on.

Initially, teachers asked a lot of questions and try to respond to what were answered by students. The teacher's questions were followed by the theme of the materials that the teacher would teach afterwards. If the theme is about the school environment or my neighbourhood, the teacher

continues to talk about the school environment, followed by asking what students know and feel about it. The teacher based their teaching on fun learning; hence, every educational message delivered by the teacher are always fun. The teacher reads the verse poem in line and asks the students to repeat after him. The poems were made prior to the class together by teachers in one regional association which is called as *Gugus*. Here is the example of the verse poem created by the teacher under the theme of Go to School (see Figure 1).

After that, the teacher started to chant randomly while students imitated randomly too. In this step, the teacher only focuses on giving the material to the student verbally. Sometimes, the material was presented like reading a poem, while at the other time, the teacher presented with a song. The spontaneous rhythm came from the students that happily repeated and imitated the teacher; they then helped the teacher in building songs. However, the child's song had a more striking tone or flowy melody than what is sung by the teacher for sometimes. What is done by the teacher and supported by the students' imitating shout gradually became a song. That is what happened in the learning process.

There is a tendency that the teacher does not aware if the chant has been composed into a song. At some point, the teacher groped and did not memorize the flow of the song. The teacher did these actions repeatedly. Students also were also busy singing together randomly. What is sung by the students is based on each of their imagination following the theme set by the teacher.

Eventually, a song is formed even though the teacher did not intend to fit the pitch. Songs which did not come from the teacher's memorization then continued to be manifested by the teacher as a song. Finally, the song had come to its final composition

Aku berani sekolah sendiri	(I am a brave kid, I am not afraid of going to school by my self)
Aku sudah besar dan pintar	(I am mature and smart)
Aku berani sekolah sendiri	(I am a brave kid, I am not afraid of going to school by my self)
Aku tidak mau ditunggu lagi	(I don't want my parents to wait for me at school)
Ayah ibu biar bekerja	(I will let my parents to work)
Aku berani sekolah sendiri	(I am a brave kid, I am not afraid of going to school by my self)
Aku sudah besar berani sendiri	(I am mature and I am not afraid to be independent)

Figure 1: Example of the verse poem created by the teacher under the theme of Go to School.

due to interaction between the teacher and the students. Figure 2 shows a song which was initially formed from the teacher's poem and being finalized in the learning process.

Despite changes and inconsistency of tune, flow, and melody by both the teacher and students, the song covers the teaching materials in accordance with the curriculum demand. Other teachers use different theme, such as animals. Presumably, the teachers have the same method to teach the student in this particular way, which is through short poem (modification). The teacher read the poem each line and asked the students to respond. The teacher always responded back to whatever response the students made. The teacher tried to explain many things related to the student's response, so that learning interactions become livelier.

While performing the song, the teacher presented the students with knowledge and or tried to reinforce their response. The teacher tried to deliver their teaching materials according to

BERANI SEKOLAH SENDIRI

Do = C. 4/4

Moderato

1 1 2 | 3 5 . 1 1 1 7 2 | 1 . 5 5 5 |
A - ku be - ra - ni se - ko - lah sen - di - ri a - ku su -

6 6 5 4 6 | 5 . 5 5 . 5 | 6 6 5 4 6 |
dah be - sar dan pin - tar a - ku bra - ni sko - lah sen - di

5 . 1 1 1 2 | 3 5 1 1 7 2 | 1 . 6 6 |
ri a - ku ti - dak ma - u di - tung - gu la - gi a - yah

6 6 6 5 4 6 | 5 . 6 6 | 6 6 6 5 4 6 |
i - bu bi - ar be - ker - ja a - ku bra - ni sko - lah sen - di

5 . 1 1 1 2 | 3 5 1 1 7 2 | 1 . ||
ri a - ku su - dah be - sar bra - ni sen - di - ri

Figure 2: Example of song formed from the learning process.

the prepared theme. After being familiar with the theme, such as animal, in a face-to-face session, the teacher threw a question to the students by asking who has ever seen a butterfly. Students then answered it directly together.

Here, the teacher then tried to arrange a poem so that the students can respond. Then, the teacher did it repeatedly. When the student got the point of the poem, the teacher sang the line of the poem randomly afterwards. The students continued to sing the song that they have heard previously that were presented randomly by the teacher. In this part, the teacher was confident to perform the song despite being out of tune. Finally, the song can be realized even though it was very short. Below is the example of a song created by another teacher themed animal. Figure 3 displays the lyrics while Figure 5 shows the notation.

Aku punya dua kelinci	(I have two rabbits)
Telinganya panjang sekali	(The ears are so long)
Warnanya putih dan coklat	(The colours are white and brown)
Kalau berjalan, Hai, melompat-lompat	(If they are walking, Hei, they are jumping)

Figure 3: Example of the verse poem created by the teacher under the theme of 'Animal'.

Aku suka minum susu	(I like to drink milk)
Badanku sehat selalu	(It makes my body always healthy)
Kuminum setiap hari	(I drink it every day)
Badanku segar sekali	(It makes my body fresh)

Figure 4: Example of song created by the teacher under the theme of 'My Needs'.

PUNYA KELINCI

A = Do. 2/4

Andante

5 3 . 4 | 5 6 5 | 4 3 | 2 . |
 A - ku pu - nya du - a ke - lin - ci

4 2 . 3 | 4 6 6 | 5 4 | 3 . |
 te - li - nga - nya pan - jang se - ka - li

5 3 . 4 | 5 i | i 7 | 6 . |
 war - na - nya pu - tih dan co - klat

6 6 6 6 | 5 i | 4 4 3 2 | 1 . ||
 ka - lau ber - ja - lan hai me - lom - pat lom - pat

Figure 5: Example of song created by the teacher under the theme of 'Animal'.

The educational messages were mostly delivered in various way. Most of them are performed with a signing activity based on the teacher 's capability. The teacher composed the song spontaneously following the students' spontaneous rhythm.

When the teachers taught the students regarding "my needs", they worked together with the other teachers in the same group. The poem then became a learning materials or topics for students' questions and answers sessions. The learning process is the same with the previous theme. The students were repeating the teacher when the teacher cited each line of the poem. After chanting the verse of 'drinking milk', the teacher randomly sang while the students were playing with their aesthetic response. Finally, another song was made regardless its simplicity.

SUKA MINUM SUSU

C = Do. 4/4

Moderato

5 | 3 . 3 3 3 5 5 | 3 . . |
 A - ku su - ka mi - num su - su

4 3 | 2 2 2 5 4 | 3 . . |
 ba - dan - ku se - hat se - la - lu

1 1 | 1 1 1 3 . 1 | 2 . . |
 ku - mi - num se - ti - ap ha - ri

2 2 | 2 2 2 4 3 | 1 . 0 ||
 ba - dan - ku se - gar se - ka - li

Figure 6: Example of song created by the teacher under the theme of 'My Needs'.

Findings and Discussion

The three written songs are quite short and simple. However, the songs cover the required educational messages outlined by the curriculum. The songs are simple based on the aspects of the melody, the rhythm, and harmonization. The most important thing of the song is it is easy for students to imitate.

There, the teacher and student create the song together when the student randomly responds to the flow of the song delivered by the teacher. The teachers projected their creativity when they told the students about the educational messages implied from the poem. The teacher directly sang which was welcomed by students.

Initially when the teacher sings, they always used a note with a melodic flow or simply performed a random song; yet, over time, the song were innovated with motives, phrases, and sentences. The students' response towards the melody of the teachers' songs reflected their aesthetic views. Students are not fully aware of the songs' educational relevance since they got distracted by their friends. However, students' responses helped the teacher in determining the tune of the songs.

According to Mang (2005), children songs have special characteristics, such as simple and fun. Simplicity refer to melody, rhythm, harmony, and messages that are easily understood by children. The melody is also very simple. The notes do not jump far and the frasing is short. The rhythm is easy to follow with one or two rhythm patterns. The harmonization only uses tonics, sub-dominant and dominant. This can be simplified with tonics and dominant.

According to Shen (2009), a pleasant song is a joyful song when it is sung. Through songs, apart from making the children happy, the educational messages will be delivered more easily (Millington, 2011). The activity also enhances students' creativity based on the responses of the messages which were sung together with the teacher in the classroom.

From the learning process until its realization, the song does not only display the teacher's creativity, but also the students through spontaneous follow up to the sound that they heard.

Aesthetic spontaneously responses emerge when students do not really use their thought, but rather their feeling. The teachers and the students were in the unexpected form of collaboration despite not singing in the right tune. This is because the students' aesthetic potentials are different one to the other. The finding is in line with the research by Malloch & Trevarthen (2009) using song in learning is advantageous.

In relevance to that, Parker (2005) mentions that schools are places with rich and varied contents determined by the diversity of the students. As individuals, students have different types of intelligence. The key to successful learning process is appreciation of various intelligences and how to demonstrate this through planning and subsequent delivery of appropriate work. The flexibility from learning art or using art as a medium can be a good stimulant to invigorate the correlation between creativity and intelligence (Batey & Furnham, 2006).

Creativity arises from the stimulation of the right brain while logical intelligence is more dominant over the stimulation of the left brain. In a learning process, everything between the right and left brain must be enhanced well during the learning process. In general, Arts, including music, is in the same box with creativity. Therefore, this statement supports Campbell (2002), Hallam (2010), and Niland (2012) who find that music has to be included as the centre of children education. Parker (2005) refers to Graham Wallas's theory of creativity in Graham Wallas's book written in the 1931 in the title 'The Art of Thought' that the intellectual work process that leads to creative results is formed from four stages. i.e. preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification.

The teacher's creativity in realizing songs to convey the message of education to students certainly cannot be separated from the preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification as stated by Graham Wallas in Kozbelt (2008). Even though the creative processes result very simple and random product, but the product came after reasonable and thoughtful process. Despite not having a musical background and being forced to produce educational songs, the teacher thoughtfully

produces songs in whatever flow and poem to teach students the materials.

The incubation process is observable in how they made choices on the type of poem which fits the learning time in a particular meeting. Meanwhile, illumination is a form of awareness to get a solution. The teacher solves their problems by probing the students' question in rhythm to reinforce students' aesthetic response in the class. Verification seems to be evident in the learning process. In this case, the students actually received the flow of the song thrown by the teacher, which was obviously also continued in the form of the next song flow by the students. In fact, the song was finalised even though the teacher themselves repeated every song differently.

Orkibi (2011) explains that the ground of understanding for the creative process reflect Atkins et al's intermodal theory. This theory refers to the integration of art with other disciplines. The integration aims to (1) focus on the process; (2) provide emotional clarity, containment, and intensification; (3) increase the playroom or distance of imagination; and (4) increase the crystallization of emotion that might arise in the artsy process. The sensitivity of arts is another issue to deal with in intermodal theory. Theoretically, art is available to anyone and no artistic skills is needed in using art for other non-artistic purposes and/ or in the effort to integrate the use of art with other fields. In this research, the teacher, in order to preach the educational message, uses their ability of creativity by aligning to the curriculum and composing a song regardless their absence of musical skills.

Davis et al. (2013) mentions that students' learning environment should support, stimulate, and encourage students to gain knowledge. Individuals' creative abilities are often very dependent on education. In relation to it, educators must provide a creative climate and develop attitudes and abilities that will make students able to overcome various problems creatively. In this study, the teacher is not only interested in being able to deliver their message using a song that does not yet exist or is not owned, but the teacher also asks the students to do something that the teacher wants. The teacher acts as a facilitator and activator

who can bring out the students' creativity at the same time. In line with this, according to Vygotsky (2004), Dere (2019), and Kupers and van Dijk (2020), teachers must cultivate students' creativity in a proper way.

Wong & Siu (2012) also argue, it is important to not only look at creativity from its product, but also from its process. By presenting the development of creativity as a process, there is a room to make mistakes and go back to the previous steps to justify a mistake made. In fact, the mistake does not only happen to the student, but also to the teachers. The teacher makes the mistake repeatedly when probing a verse of the song based on their mind. The action induces the students to chant as if coming out of the students themselves. Basically, the teacher is the original source of the vocal. The harmony of the student's voices forms a nuanced chord that the teacher could compile it as a song which tone and rhythm are relatively constant. One of the songs does not even have the right tone, melody, and rhythm.

According to Hattie & Timperley (2007), making mistakes means developing individual's skills and trust. Public schools sometimes focus too much on the final product or product, not the process or a trip. In fact, a product that fails does not show that the process is defective. In fact, a failed product means an important step on the way to find something people are looking for or something people want to find. This process relates to the creation of songs by teachers who do not have a musical background. Creative education through art education is important. Mendecka (1996) quotes Read (1976) and Wojnar (1966) by stating that art answers students' needs and solves all indifferences that may exist. Students are sinked into their fantasy world where life is simpler. That is why the school curriculum for pre-schoolers or kindergartens provides a space for students to sing that are guided and or facilitated by the teacher even though the teacher is able to facilitate them.

Art enables the understanding of cause and effect and makes it easier for humans to express their emotions. Through aesthetic feelings, a person's education reaches their peak. Mendecka (1996) quotes Popek that in analysing art, it is very impor-

tant to realize that humans develop as connoisseurs and creators. Many psychologists emphasize that people have different creativity. When producing things, people use their imagination, thoughts, and expression. It is a natural impulse for human to communicate thoughts and feelings to others. In sum, the communication is reflected from the way the teacher teaches their students.

As an educational place designed specifically for children, kindergarten should not hinder children's creative development in art. For teachers who do not have a musical background, it is important for them to become the facilitator and activator to the students. In fact, the teacher can stimulate the children's creativity through their educational songs. According to Wright (1990), when creativity becomes a slogan and the fulcrum of art education, it simultaneously embraces a definition of creativity that is closely related to newness and "spontaneity". In this case, kindergarten curriculum is designed to promote spontaneous thinking and different attitudes so that creative learning is believed. These concepts are relevant with the dominant non-representational beauty, an uncomfortable feeling when copying other people's work, and of course in the non-directive philosophy for education in general and art education in particular. Art education focuses on spontaneous and partially unstructured actions because of a belief that adults should not interfere with children's ideas or children's creativity. In the context of the delivery, the singing activities must be in accordance with the learning theme. Then, the song should be available for teaching. In this context, the message should exist and the song will follow afterwards.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) states that art education emphasizes the effect of a process experienced by an individual. It is not the task of adults to guide children to get answers, but the process of children to get answers to formulate a solution. This is the correct process since the children can think critically. It is very important to maximize children's creativity to their utmost potential since creativity cannot be learned easily when the child is growing up. Torrance (1984) analyses and defines creativity into four main

functions, namely: fluency, flexibility, authenticity, and openness.

This research argues that creativity is the essence of true learning. This applies to all subjects and it is very important to create, see, and understand art. However, the notion that creativity is seen as spontaneous is a big mistake and a misunderstanding in the creative process (Wright, 1990). Creating or creativity is an incremental, evolutionary, continuous process, and certainly a learning process. Artwork is evolutionary. Therefore, teacher who does not have a music background can also produce an educational song for children according to the learning theme that must be delivered by the teacher to students.

Conclusion

Every people have a nature to show an aesthetical expression through songs. From this study, we learned that even preschool teachers who do not have a formal musical background could create songs to convey educational messages as outlined in the curriculum. The teachers' creative way to do this is to use poems which had been created together in a regional teacher association which is known as Gugus. The poems were read in front of the students by teacher in a simultaneous way and imitated or responded by students. After that, each line in the poem was probed by the teacher to students. Thus, the students responded by chanting them. It was continuously done by the teacher until the teacher feels that the poem had turned into a song with a certain melody. Even though the teacher and the students sometimes did not sing the tone well, a song was basically made. The integration of learning materials through songs as mandated by curriculum can also be implemented through this teaching method. There was an aesthetic response established during the process of probing and responding songs between teachers and students.

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