

Exploring Instruction Methods for the Resting Tone in Elementary School Music Classes

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore some instructional methods for the resting tone in music education, especially elementary general music education in Korea. Before exploring the instructional methods, the important role of the resting tone in the view of a western music history was investigated. Establishing the instructional methods, Music Learning Theory, a contemporary music education theory by Gordon was based upon and adapted to apply. Four integral applicable methods for elementary school music teachers to instruct the resting tone were introduced. First, through singing the last pitch of the patterns teacher uses, second, through singing the first pitch of the patterns teacher uses, third, through singing the resting tone of the patterns teacher uses, fourth, through singing the resting tone of a song teacher introduces. The four kinds of methods introduced in this study can be applied to any elementary music classes.

Keywords: Elementary music classes, resting tone, teaching methods.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The names of the scales, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, which were started to be used by the 11th century Italian musician and theorist Guido D'Arezzo, form the basis of the current scale (Grout, 1998). It is no exaggeration to say that the history of Western music is the history of the development of harmonic music. This also coincides with the establishment of tonal music. However, all these developments would not have been possible without the discovery and establishment of the system of musical scales (Sadie, 1986).

Schenker (1868–1935), who has studied classical music analytically, has presented an integrated perspective on the structure and composition of tonal music as a result. Schenker's analytic theory reveals that tonal music eventually results in the resting note (homing note) of the corresponding tonal scale (Randel, 1994). Each scale used has a resting note, and the tonality is named according to the resting note. It can be divided into a major key centered on "do," a minor key centered on "la," and each church mode scale centered on the remaining "re, mi, fa, sol, ti" notes.

These contents are naturally connected to music education, and Gordon (2007), a music education psychologist, in his music learning theory, formulated the Contents Learning Sequence of music education into two learning hierarchies: Tonal and Rhythm. It argues that learning should be divided into the two categories. Various music educational activities such as singing, instrumental music, appreciation, and creativity/improvisation can be conducted, but all of these activities must include the learning contents of *tonality* and *rhythm*, and only whereas these two things are firmly established, students will be able to build a house of music by themselves (Hong, 2021a).

Among the many musical elements that can be dealt with in the content of elementary school music curriculum, tonality and rhythm are by far the most important (Hong, 2021b). Nevertheless, it is a pity that the students become so engrossed in the activities within the music class that they are interested only in learning the songs rather than in the tonality and rhythm (meter), or in things outside of the music. Students who have participated in music classes for about 80 hours per semester should be able to discern the meter of the song, the tonality of the song, and where I and V chords in the song are used through the *Audiation*, whether it is a song or any song they hear for the first time.

But the reality is not so. The reality is that even pre-service teachers cannot easily answer if they are asked about the meter, tonality, and chord division of new songs through *Audiation*. This study started with this problem awareness.

II. METHODS

A. The Purpose and Method of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find a way to approach and teach the central tone of tonality in elementary school music classes.

As a research method, we first look at Gordon's Music Learning Theory, which seeks to expand students' musical vocabulary and complete the audience, centering on tonality and rhythm patterns. Next, we will focus on the Tonal Learning Sequence among the Contents Learning Sequences introduced in Music Learning Theory and use it in this study.

There are two problems with this study. First, how important is the resting tone in elementary music education? Second, what is the teaching and learning method for resting tone in elementary school music class?

B. Theoretical Background of the Study

1) Music learning theory by Gordon

Gordon's Music Learning Theory starts from the similarity between language acquisition or learning process and music learning process. Therefore, listening and echoing or imitating in Music Learning Theory is a very important starting point for music learning. Gordon hopes that through music learning, students will ultimately have a high level of audience to hear and understand music that does not exist physically (Gordon, 2007).

Audiation, as Gordon says, is difficult to define with just one word, but when a meaning is given to the sounds heard, it becomes music, and this is called an audition. To give meaning to the sounds you hear, you need to understand the musical syntax or grammar.

In order for students to understand musical phrases or phrases, it is important that music learning contents and teaching methods are systematically presented. For this, Gordon presented the Contents Learning Sequence and the Skill Learning Sequence.

Above all, Gordon argues that as a musical vocabulary, tonal patterns and rhythm patterns should be taught so that students can learn as much as possible. This tonal pattern and rhythm pattern are learned by Skill Learning Sequence, and this method is similar to the method of learning a language. That is, it is like a child who listens, imitates, thinks, utters improvised phrases or sentences, gradually engages in conversation, and finally becomes able to read and write, and theoretically learn grammar.

The Skill Learning Sequence consists of Discrimination Learning and Inference Learning, and the lower Discrimination Learning is designed for music learning by dividing it into 5 stages: Aural/Oral, Verbal Association, Partial Synthesis, Symbolic Association, and Composite Synthesis. In addition to this Discrimination Learning, Inference Learning explains the stages of music learning as the Generalization process, Creativity/Improvisation process, and Theoretical Understanding stage where students can generalize what they have learned in the learning process (Gordon, 2003).

In this study, we focus on the Tonal Learning Sequence in the Contents Learning Theory part, and in this part, we try to apply the central tone guidance method of composition to the situation of elementary music education in Korea.

2) Tonal learning sequence

Formation of the sense of tonality is essential for students to understand musical phrases or sentences of heard notes. Hearing the notes individually is the same as having no meaning as a single letter in a language. It should be possible to listen to multiple notes as a group or to give meaning to them in a specific tonality, rather than as fragments.

The tonality Gordon refers to includes major, minor, and even Church modes. Gordon describes the sense of tonality as an auditory concept. Regardless of C major and D major, aurally the resting tone of every major tonality is "Do," the resting tone of all of the minor tonality is "La," and the resting tone of every Dorian tonality is "Re."

On the other hand, Gordon uses the term "Keyality," which has a similar meaning to tonality, which can be understood only by looking at the score as a visual concept. All keys

using the same resting tone are considered to belong to the same keyality. For example, D major, d minor, and D dorian are all considered to be in D keyality.

Gordon uses the tonal pattern as a way to develop the sense of tonality. This tonal pattern is classified according to the major chord functions (tonic, dominant, sub-dominant chords) of major, minor and church modes.

It is designed to have students learn the tonal patterns of familiar major and harmonic minor tonality first, and then gradually learn the unfamiliar mixolydian, dorian in order.

3) Research limitations

In this study, tonality and resting tone were examined with a focus on how to teach in the classroom. Therefore, other parts of tonality and rhythm-related teaching and learning methods were excluded from the contents of this study. In addition, this study is a guidance method for teaching and learning of 3rd and 4th grade elementary school students in Korea, and its application to elementary schools in all countries is limited. In tonal music such as major and minor, or church mode, chords such as tonic, sub-tonic, dominant, and sub-dominant are formed around this resting tone, and it is a very essential element in making music together with the melody.

III. TEACHING METHODS FOR RESTING TONE

A. Resting Tone in General Music Education

As mentioned earlier, there is a central "note" for each musical scale. This "tone" is called in various ways such as resting tone, homing note, tonic note, or center note. However, the resting tone is not treated as an important learning factor in general music education in schools. Even if it deals with it, it is just a guide on the position of the resting tone on the score. Among the methods for students to understand music, Gordon (2007) says that there are four basic vocabulary in music: listening, performing, reading, and writing. No learning will occur, especially if the student listens to music without thinking.

Listening to music means being able to recognize the melody and rhythm of the music, as well as at least the tone and tempo of the song. To do this, it starts with recognizing the resting tone of the song you are listening to. McDonel (2010) emphasized the importance of "listening" in guiding school ensembles, and when students listen to music: 1) Resting tone, 2) Tonality, 3) Harmonic functions, 4) Harmonic progressions, 5) Macrobeats, 6) Ask to recognize or identify Meter, 7) Rhythm functions, 8) The key melodies, etc.

It is not easy for elementary school students to recognize or identify resting tones in new or familiar music. It can be nurtured by practicing and repeating it under the systematic guidance of an experienced teacher. By applying various central tone instruction methods to songs learned in each music class, we expect students to know that each music has a resting tone and to have the ability to distinguish this resting tone. In the case of a student who has the ability to discriminate resting tones, even if they hear some new and long music in the future, they will be able to anticipate the development of the music. The following resting tone instruction plan is for the 3rd and 4th graders of elementary

school, and it is possible to devote about 5 minutes to each music class.

B. Teaching Methods for Resting Tone

1) Instruction 1. Sing the last pitch

The teacher makes three chord patterns using the main triad of the key according to the composition of the song and conducts preliminary activities with the students before teaching the central note. At this time, the chord pattern is prepared by dividing it into three categories: easy, normal, and difficult.

T1. For a song in D major, chord patterns such as “do-me” (easy), “sol-mi-do” (normal), and “sol-do-mi” (difficult) are sung to students as a neutral syllable “bum.”

S1. Students listen attentively.

T2. Then, ask the class (all students) to listen carefully to the teacher’s chord pattern and to sing only the last pitch of the patterns as “night,” again the teacher sings each chord pattern, and asks the class to sing the last pitch of each pattern.

S2. Students sing the last pitch of each pattern.

T3. After all students have followed the pitch to some extent, sing the pattern to individual students.

S3. Each student sings the last pitch. (At this point, the teacher should practice the gestures for two occasions: when she sings and when she has her student(s) sing. If she sings, she puts her right hand on her right chest with her right hand and makes the students sing. If you have them sing, extend their hands toward the student(s) and give them a breath gesture.)

2) Instruction 2. Sing the first pitch

The teacher makes three chord patterns using the main triad of the key according to the composition of the song and conducts preliminary activities with the students before teaching the central note. At this time, the chord pattern is prepared by dividing it into three categories: easy, normal, and difficult.

T1. For songs in d harmonic minor, chord patterns such as “do-la” (easy), “si-ti” (normal), and “fa-re-la” (difficult) are sung to students as a neutral syllable “bum.”

S1. Students listen attentively.

T2. Then, ask the class (all students) to listen carefully to the teacher’s chord pattern and sing only the first pitch of the patterns as “bum,” and then the teacher sings each chord pattern again and asks the class to sing the first pitch of each pattern.

S2. Students sing the first pitch of each pattern.

T3. After all students have followed the pitch to some extent, sing the pattern to individual students.

S3. Each student sings the first pitch.

3) Instruction 3. Sing the resting tone

The teacher makes three chord patterns using the main triad of the key according to the composition of the song and conducts preliminary activities with the students before teaching the central note. At this time, the chord pattern is prepared by dividing it into three categories: easy, normal, and difficult.

T1. For Mixolydian songs, chord patterns such as “re-ti-sol,” “do-la-fa,” “mi-do-sol,” and “fa-la” are sung to students as a neutral syllable “bum.”

S1. Students listen attentively.

T2. Then, by asking the class (all students) to listen to the teacher’s chord pattern and sing only the Mixolydian’s resting tone, “Sol” pitch, with “bum,” the teacher sings each chord pattern again, resting tone, “sol” pitch. Make it sing.

S2. Students sing the resting tone of each pattern, “sol” pitch.

T3. After all students have followed the pitch to some extent, sing the pattern to individual students.

S3. Each student sings a resting tone, “sol” pitch.

4) Instruction 4. Sing the resting tone 2

This is a process that helps students to recognize or identify the resting tone in the song in the process of learning the song to learn. The teacher analyzes the song to be studied in advance, divides it by phrase such as 2 measure or 3 measure, and prepares a place for a short pause. Among the methods to apply Gordon’s Music Learning Theory, step 5 of 8 steps of the rote song teaching procedure was used. Here, we take Mozart’s “Twinkle little star” song as an example.

T1. Teacher establishes major tonal sequence on neutral syllable. Ask students to flow in a seated position.

S1. Flow their shoulders gently.

T2. Sing “Twinkle twinkle little star...”

S2. Listen to the song teacher singing with flowing.

T3. Teacher re-establishes major tonal sequence on neutral syllable. Ask students to sing the resting tone.

S3. Sing the resting tone when teacher gives them breath gesture.

T4. Teacher tell them to sing the resting tone, no matter where the teacher stops. Start singing “Twinkle twinkle little...” and stop. Give the students breath gesture.

S4. Sing the resting tone.

T5. Teacher continues the next phrase, “How I wonder what you are?” and stop. Give the students breath gesture.

S5. Sing the resting tone.

T6. Teacher continues the next phrase, “Up above the world so high?” and stop. Give the students breath gesture.

S6. Sing the resting tone.

T7. Teacher continues the next phrase, “Like a diamond in the sky?” and stop. Give the students breath gesture.

S7. Sing the resting tone.

T8. Teacher continues the next phrase, “Twinkle ~ what you are?” and stop. Give the students breath gesture.

S8. Sing the resting tone.

IV. DISCUSSION

When asked if teaching the resting tone in music classes should only be done in Korea, the researcher asserts that this is not the case. The reason is that the resting tone is the same as the basic +, -, ÷, and × symbols for arithmetic operations. If music is taught as a subject, resting tone is the most basic and important starting point that should be dealt with from elementary school. Of course, along with the resting tone, tonality, musical scale, chords, and harmony are also important factors.

If music literacy is the ability to read and write music, what teachers can do to increase the level of music literacy of students in general music education in elementary school should be considered.

Students must be able to hear and understand music before they read it, students must have a musical vocabulary in order to listen and understand music, and provide opportunities for students to constantly and repeatedly listen to basic musical vocabulary in order to build up their musical vocabulary.

The basic music vocabulary is each pitch of the music scale, and each pitch is a semantic unit made up of a chord pattern. It is essential for the teacher to continuously sing the basic music vocabulary of this semantic unit and for the students to listen and follow.

If general music education was received in elementary school, students should be able to basically listen to and understand simple music. If a student who has studied music at school for several years, he or she should be able to distinguish about the composition of the song, what music scale is used, what pitch the resting tone is, what time signature it is, what macro beats and micro beats are, and how rhythm syllables are used. Otherwise, it is the responsibility of both teachers and music education practitioners.

V. CONCLUSION

One of the fundamentals of tonal music is the musical scale. Each musical scale has a resting tone, and it is divided into major, minor, and church modes according to this resting tone. Without recognizing or identifying the resting tone of a song, of course the tonality of the song cannot be known. Therefore, it is inevitable to treat resting tone as an important learning element in music education. For some reason, it is unknown, but there is not enough guidance or guidance on this resting tone in elementary school general music education.

This study was intended to clarify why resting tone is important in general music education and to introduce a way to teach it. The researcher suggested the following four methods in this study.

First, an activity in which the teacher asks students to sing the last pitch of these patterns using chord patterns.

Second, the teacher asks students to sing the first pitch of these patterns using chord patterns.

Third, the teacher asks students to sing the resting tones of these patterns using chord patterns.

Fourth, an activity in which the teacher sings a resting tone when the teacher stops in the middle of a song using a song.

If this activity is repeated for every music class, students will not only increase their sensitivity to the notes they listen to, but will also be able to recognize or identify the resting tone of the music.

After completing general music education, it is expected that students will understand the tonality of music by listening to long music such as symphony, concerto, or sonata.

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Professor Hong is interested in Music Learning Theory by Gordon and his recent study has been from it, and "Comparison of creative and improvisational class activities in Korean and American elementary music textbooks" is one of his recent papers out of 29 articles.

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