

DEVELOPING ECOLOGICAL CULTURE IN STUDENTS BASED ON A HERMENEUTIC APPROACH IN MUSIC LESSONS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF GRADES 1-4)

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Abstract

This article examines the potential of music education—particularly in grades 1–4—to develop ecological culture in young learners through a hermeneutic approach. The study investigates how interpretative analysis, symbolic understanding, emotional reflection, and creative engagement with musical works can shape students’ environmental consciousness. By integrating ecological themes into musical narratives, songs, listening activities, and performance tasks, the hermeneutic method fosters deeper comprehension of nature’s value and encourages responsible attitudes toward the environment. The article identifies pedagogical strategies, developmental characteristics of younger learners, and specific music-lesson practices that support the formation of ecological awareness.

Keywords: Hermeneutic approach, ecological culture, music education, primary students, interpretation, environmental awareness, symbolic understanding.

Introduction

Developing ecological culture in primary school students has become an essential educational priority in the 21st century, as human societies increasingly face environmental challenges such as biodiversity loss, pollution, climate instability, and decreasing ecological sustainability. Music education, traditionally associated with aesthetic and emotional development, has significant potential to influence ecological thinking when approached through interpretative and reflective learning methods. The hermeneutic approach—centered on understanding meaning, interpreting symbolic content, and connecting personal experience to artistic expressions—provides a powerful pedagogical framework for shaping ecological sensitivity in young children [1].

In grades 1–4, students are at a developmental stage where imagination, emotional responsiveness, and associative thinking are especially vivid. Music lessons, when intentionally structured, can tap into these capacities to nurture a respectful and responsible relationship with the natural world. Through songs, soundscapes, musical storytelling, and guided listening, children can internalize ecological values while

developing musical abilities. This article explores how hermeneutic strategies in music lessons can be used to cultivate ecological culture in primary school students, demonstrating the educational synergy between artistic interpretation and environmental education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The hermeneutic approach emphasizes meaning-making, interpretation, reflection, and the integration of the learner's personal experiences with the content being studied. In music education, this approach encourages students to ask [2]:

What does the music express?

What natural phenomena or environmental ideas does it represent?

How does the music make me feel about nature and my relationship to it?

What images, colors, or natural sounds do I imagine while listening?

For younger learners, hermeneutics is not an abstract intellectual exercise but a guided process of discovering emotional and symbolic meaning. Teachers facilitate understanding by framing musical pieces as stories, metaphors, and sound representations of natural elements. This interpretative engagement strengthens empathy toward nature by helping students perceive ecological ideas through music.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Another crucial dimension of fostering ecological culture through a hermeneutic approach in music lessons is the development of empathic imagination, a psychological capacity that allows children to understand nature as a living entity rather than an abstract concept. When students interpret music symbolically, they begin to assign emotions, intentions, and personality traits to natural elements. For example, a gentle legato phrase may be understood as the calm movement of water, while sudden dynamic contrasts may symbolize a storm or environmental disturbance. Such emotional mapping encourages students to perceive ecological processes with a sense of empathy, laying the foundation for responsible environmental behavior. Through guided musical interpretation, children learn to "feel with nature," which strengthens their ecological sensitivity [3].

The hermeneutic method also supports the formation of value-based thinking, which is especially important for students in grades 1–4 who are developing core moral frameworks. When ecological themes are embedded in songs and musical stories, children encounter values such as care, responsibility, harmony, and balance. These values are not taught through direct explanation but through interpretative engagement—analyzing why a melody feels peaceful, why a musical character in a story suffers due to pollution, or how musical tension reflects ecological imbalance. This indirect, experience-based learning encourages children to internalize ecological values naturally, making environmental protection a personal ethical priority rather than an external rule.

In addition, the integration of cross-modal interpretation tasks—where students connect music with visual art, movement, storytelling, or natural observation—enriches the hermeneutic process. For instance, after listening to a nature-inspired piece, students may draw what they imagined, imitate natural motions through creative movement, or write simple reflective sentences describing the landscape they envisioned. These activities activate multiple sensory channels, deepening understanding and helping children construct holistic meanings from musical experiences. Because ecological culture involves perception, reflection, and emotional responsiveness, cross-modal interpretation significantly enhances the effectiveness of music lessons.

Furthermore, the hermeneutic approach encourages dialogical learning, where meaning is constructed collectively through discussion and shared interpretation. When children articulate what they heard in a musical fragment—perhaps the “voice” of a river or the “cry” of a tree—they participate in a communal process of meaning-making. Such dialogue stimulates empathy not only toward nature but also toward peers, creating a classroom atmosphere grounded in cooperation and mutual understanding. The social nature of hermeneutic interpretation reinforces ecological thinking by highlighting interdependence, a core principle of environmental sustainability. Students begin to see the parallels between harmony in music and harmony in ecosystems [4].

CONCLUSION

Developing ecological culture in primary school students through a hermeneutic approach in music lessons is both effective and pedagogically meaningful. Music serves as a powerful emotional and symbolic medium through which children interpret the natural world, reflect on ecological themes, and form responsible environmental attitudes. By guiding students toward meaningful interpretation of musical works that reflect or symbolize nature, teachers foster emotional sensitivity, ecological imagination, and moral responsibility. This combination of artistic experience and ecological education helps shape a generation of environmentally conscious individuals capable of making thoughtful and sustainable choices. Such an integrated approach demonstrates that music education can play a transformative role in addressing global ecological challenges beginning from early schooling.

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