

## Conference Paper

# The Pedagogical Potential of Auditory Culture

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## Abstract

The article reveals the pedagogical potential of the auditory culture, gives definitions of the terms ‘auditory social culture’ and ‘auditory personal culture’, and explores the significance of the auditory culture in harmonizing the sound environment. The author outlines the structure and the content of pedagogical approach required to develop auditory culture of elementary students.

**Keywords:** sound environment, auditory culture, pedagogical potential of auditory culture, formation of auditory culture, teaching methodology, junior school children

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Received: 22 November 2018

Accepted: 29 November 2018

Published: 23 December 2018

Publishing services provided by  
**Knowledge E**

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the Facets of Culture in the Age of Social Transition Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary scholarship experiences global crisis caused by the entire history of its development: an overly differentiated knowledge field makes it impossible to develop a holistic world picture. Due to its specialized character, human knowledge seems particular and disjointed. The complexity of the modern world, its fragmented and mosaic character, creates a need for wholeness: “Suddenly we find that we passionately desire to experience things and people in their completeness. This new attitude may be seen as a marker of deep faith – a faith in an ultimate harmony of the entire being” [2, p. 7].

A characteristic trait of progressive society is an increasing value of coherent and positive world picture imbued and permeated with the integrative processes. Culture presents a holistic image of the world revealing itself through a diversity of interdependent and interconnected phenomena, processes and objects. An individual’s attitudes to the world develops through the absorption of historical cultural experience and through education. They play a leading part in the cognition of the world and in organizing this cognition, as well as in choosing a general strategy of behavior. Whether positive or negative, attitudes to the world condition either coherent or disjointed view of the world, either rational or irrational approach *to* the world, and either harmonious or disharmonious attitude to it.

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Value field of culture that creates awareness of the world around us, both as a whole and as a diverse reality, has several components: visual, plastic and auditory. They partly correspond with the human reference system (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and establish the dominant perceptions of the world (visual, auditory, bodily).

The researchers have proved that up to 80% of information about external world is transmitted and perceived by our eyes (M.M.Bezrukikh, T.G.Betelova, V.I.Tkachenko). Foundations of visual culture were researched by M.M.Bakhtin, M.S.Daniel, L.K. Veretennikov, W.Gibson, S.S.Zorin, T.J.Mitchell, D.Preziosi, V.M.Rozin, M.Shapiro, M.E.Holly. The researchers believe that visual information is perceived more easily and comprehensively than any other media (R.Arnhem, H.Wölfflin), and, therefore, that visual arts take the primary role in personal cultural development (M.Dikovitskaya, W.G.T.Mitchell). The development of sensory skills as a necessary condition to understand the world were explored (in the context of body studies) by Z.K.Boydulov, M.Merleau-Ponty, V.A.Podoroga. Auditory culture and its role in developing personal holistic worldview remains at the periphery of the scholarly attention and is mostly limited to the issue of developing more sophisticated listenership skills. Therefore, the goal of this research is to determine the core meaning of auditory culture and to explore the tools through which we can develop this culture in school students. By turning to auditory culture, individual encounters wider opportunities to develop a holistic worldview and to reach harmony with the world.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this research we use comparative approach allowing us to compare different types of culture – visual, body and auditory – and to correlate the terms ‘auditory culture’ and ‘sound environment. We also employ analytic method to help us understand the core meaning of the term ‘auditory culture’ and to separate its main components; and the modelling method used to design practical teaching approach to the development of auditory culture in students.

Auditory culture, as part of culture as a whole, may be understood either broadly (auditory culture of society) or narrowly (individual auditory culture). Auditory culture in its broad definition is a sum total of values acquired through the perception, reworking and transmission of auditory information. Auditory culture in its narrow definition is an integrative quality of an individual, which is based on the ability to perceive, evaluate, interpret, transmit and creatively transform information encoded in sounds, speech and music. Out of these three components (sounds, speech and

music) of auditory information underpinning individual auditory culture, spoken and musical sounds are the most important one – they serve as a universal generalizing medium. As a component of culture, auditory culture is wider than musical and speech cultures. It includes the perception and understanding of the entire sphere of sounds (natural, everyday, spoken and musical).

Describing the auditory environment of contemporary postindustrial (informational) society, such scholars as R.M.Schefer and G.Sh.Ordzhonikidze highlight its qualities: discontinuity, discord and overabundance [3, 4]. The auditory world of contemporary humans has very diverse psychological and emotional content. Sadly, this content is often far removed from naturally and culturally congruent models. A habitual loudness of sounds, repetitious melodies, aggressive rhythms and primitive texts impoverish the consciousness of contemporary humans. Despite the high status of classical music, we can unfortunately testify to the fact that the upcoming generation usually listens to a low-quality music transmitted by mass media. These young people do not encounter genuinely significant layers of musical culture, whose influence elevate inner life and make it more sophisticated and perceptive. We are facing an increasingly important challenge of differentiating our auditory space, developing more value-oriented approach to the surrounding sound culture and harmonizing our auditory world.

Sound environment is both objective and subjective; it depends on human activity. Action-oriented approach in social sciences and humanities reveals a complex system of multi-faceted and multi-layered object-based interactions between individuals and their environment. This process facilitates the development of material and non-material values. Applied to auditory culture, action-oriented approach helps to discover how auditory information is created, preserved and transmitted, and to what extent it is determined by social and personal value attitudes.

Sound environment surrounds every person since birth and influences the development of the growing child's personality. This means that we have seriously take this environment into account when fostering the cultural tastes of the new generation; it also shows the need to develop value-attitude to the sounds around us. Therefore, it seems important to facilitate the development of auditory culture in children as a culture of auditory perception, which would subsequently not only provide an individual with an ability to adapt to contemporary sound environment, but also empower them to consciously organize their auditory space.

### 3. Results

Auditory culture development is a complex, multi-layered and long process of instilling cultural values that are absorbed through perception, transformation and transmission of auditory information.

T.V.Tsvinyan believes that at the first stage individuals 'have to find themselves in a chaos of sounds perceived as some undifferentiated sound' ('something like the sounds of a tuning orchestra – although here already a trained ear would be able to hear different "voices").' By exploring the world and mastering it, an individual imbues this undifferentiated sound with the symbolic meaning, thus proceeding to meaningfully interpret it (each sound is placed in its own time and space and connected to a particular object; sound becomes an indicative signal decoding the situation). In this way, "instead of being a passive observer" who only classifies and determines who/what/where/when/how makes a sound, an individual becomes "an active actor" capable of eliciting, both accidentally and deliberately, the sounds from the other, using the same scheme who/what/where/when/how [5].

The development of auditory culture is based on the exploration of the auditory world in two dimensions: as a world of human habitation and as a world of art. Therefore, the logic of this exploration develops from the discord in outside environment through the understanding and mastering its diversity represented in musical images, finally allowing us to reach the harmony.

The potential of auditory culture to harmonise the surrounding sound environment may be realized in the process of education aimed to develop phonetic and musical ear of the students, facilitate the development of students' speech and musical culture, their aesthetic taste; foster value attitude to the general sound environment and sound as such, which may facilitate the development of the holistic world-picture.

There are several approaches to harmonize auditory space. We may use our knowledge about positive and negative impact of sounds to try and surround ourselves only with the sounds that are not harmful either somatically or psychologically; we may try to use our expressive means of speech so as not to provoke any conflicts when talking to other people and to promote positive communicative environment; we may learn to perform musical pieces; we may strive to surround ourselves with high quality artworks, learn to feel and understand them and to appreciate their beauty; we may teach ourselves to adopt an elevated mindset when perceiving music, literature or painting and to experience aesthetic pleasure; we may try to create our own artworks that would harmonize our environment.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

To realize the goal of harmonization sound environment, we have developed a systematic teaching approach to the development of auditory culture in junior school students. This method is based on a meta-disciplinary approach used to overcome disconnect between different subjects and to develop a holistic world-view in children, including auditory world-view.

Our teaching system has three levels: macro-level (includes all educational courses facilitating the development of the students' auditory culture; this level is implemented within the school system); meso-level (a system of coordinated connections between various art and aesthetic-oriented classes; this level facilitates the development of value attitude to the sound environment); and micro-level (realises the integrative principle on the level of content within a specialized class fostering student's ability to perceive, assess, interpret, transmit and creatively transform auditory information).

Qualitative characteristics of teaching system to develop auditory culture are as follows: 1) integration and autonomy of all constituting course subjects – a single strategy in teaching all subjects (development of the students' conscious auditory attitude towards the external sounds: natural, everyday, spoken, musical; development of the ability to determine their positive or negative impact; development of the ability to assess surrounding sounds and their combinations describing their significance and their artistic value; facilitating students' participation in creative activities as part of the harmonizing influence on environment). This integrative approach facilitates the development of the students' auditory culture while preserving specific tasks and goals of every course. 2) the unity of the general (education methods, technologies, general didactic methods, approaches and forms) and the particular (particular methods used in different classes) as a condition underpinning practical implementation of meta-disciplinary approach fostering the development of auditory culture; 3) a specialized course combining in-class and extracurricular activities. This course helps students to accumulate their knowledge about sound environment that they have previously received in other general curriculum classes; it facilitates the development of a holistic auditory world picture.

As we have seen, auditory culture has a potential to play an important role in exploration and transformation of sound environment, as well as in harmonization of auditory space. We believe that our systematic teaching approach for the development of auditory culture in elementary school allows to efficiently answer this challenge.

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