

# Digital Technologies in Vocal Training of Chinese Students in Russian Higher Education Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This article considers possibilities of using digital technologies at teaching Chinese students vocal in Russian Higher Education Institutions. It provides grounds for significance of vocal development during all levels of education from infant preschool educational organizations to Higher Education Institutions, which may be implemented with the use of contemporary digital technologies. This article proves that at the Higher Education Institution’s level contemporary vocal pedagogics includes traditional approaches to education, based on Russian and Italian vocal schools, and contemporary methodologies, intended to form popular and jazz music technical mastery. The purpose of this article is to describe a set of exercises and tasks from contemporary vocal methodologies, including those using digital technologies, which favour effective process of Chinese students vocal mastery in the Russian Higher Education Institutions. The selection of exercises and tasks was conditioned by diagnostics results at the study initial stage and also by the particularity of foreign students training. The theoretical study of different areas, genres and styles history, and also practical learning through vocal works performance were offered for the students for development of musical culture through learning vocal works and performers of different nationalities. A set of exercises and tasks, developed on the grounds of contemporary vocal methodologies of both foreign and Russian authors, was offered to the student for forming vocal skills and estrade techniques. Konovalova, S.A. developed a complex of speech and vocal exercises for development of the level of vocal performance in Russian, namely, of the level of Russian-language articulation development of the students from China. In the results of inclusion of the complex of exercises and tasks, oriented to Chinese students’ vocal performance development through contemporary vocal methodologies, the vocal performance level has been significantly improved, which proves developed exercises perspectivity.

**Keywords:** *vocal methodologies, vocal performance, digital technologies, education of foreign students in the Russian Higher Education Institutions*

## 1. PREAMBLE

1.1. The vocal performance is one of the focal areas in musical education at different levels of education: from infant educational institutions to studying at the Higher Education Institutions. The variety of education process approaches and methodologies is vast. As of today, the vocal pedagogics bases upon the traditions, formed in Russian and Italian vocal schools, and it introduces voice training contemporary methodologies. Talking about traditions, it should be noted that in the process of voice training, estrade vocal teachers use approaches from vocal pedagogics of academic vocal, in particular, when forming vocal skills [4, 11]. Nowadays, there is a range of voice training contemporary methodologies, including the one using digital technologies [6, 10, 15, 16]. Such great variety offers to a teacher a possibility of using elements

of different methodologies of voice training with accountance of individual vocal and physiological particularities of a learner.

1.2. The foreign students studying at the Russian Higher Education Institutions became an everyday occurrence. A growing number of foreign citizens choose Russian Higher Education Institutions of both technical and humanities fields for their education [1, 7, 9]. The Soviet and Russian musical education has been of reference for other countries, the students always demonstrated high creative achievements. Many foreign Higher Education Institutions and music schools use the Russian system of musical education as a basis and engage teachers from Russia. The Russian vocal school has its traditions, and it is one of the leading vocal schools along with the Italian one. The foreign citizens vocal teaching at the Russian Higher Education Institutions is performed on the basis of both traditional and contemporary vocal methodologies. [13, 14].

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1. The vocal performance favours forming of the musical culture of the foreign citizens, who study at the Russian Higher Education Institutions. Getting to know musical culture of different countries in the light of vocal works is an effective mean for musical “bundle” development of the students from China. As it is noted by a number of studies, widening of musical ideas on musical areas, styles, genres together gives a possibility of forming musical culture of the students. [8, 12, 14, 19].

2.2. The teaching of Chinese students at vocal classes favours formation of vocal skills on the grounds of contemporary vocal methodologies, and also formation of estrade techniques and the competence to perform them in vocal works of their country and in the works of other nationalities.

2.3. The vocal classes are an effective mean of forming a skill of talking and performing vocal works in Russian in the Chinese students. As the vocal teachers and speech therapists notice, in the process of vocalization, the Russian-language articulation development is performed much faster and easier.

## 3. STUDY ITEMS

3.1. The efficiency of Chinese students’ musical culture development process will depend on inclusion of vocal works of different nationalities, which the students both perform and learn through auditory listening, to the educational process.

3.2. Chinese students’ vocal skills and estrade techniques development is available through inclusion of contemporary vocal methodologies, used in both academic and estrade vocal, to the educational process.

3.3. The improvement of the level of the Chinese students’ vocal performance in Russian is available through the inclusion of a set of exercises, oriented to the Russian-language articulation development.

## 4. STUDY METHODOLOGY

4.1. The purpose of study. To determine the most effective exercise from the contemporary vocal methodologies at teaching Chinese students’ vocal mastery in the Russian Higher Education Institutions.

4.2. Study methods. To use the following study methods: studying and analysis of the literature on vocal pedagogy issues, analysis and generalization of pedagogical experience, pedagogical observation, methods of psychological and pedagogical diagnostics.

## 5. STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. For the purposes of solution of assigned tasks and giving answers to the questions, outlined in this article, we

have undertaken a study, in which the students of Baicheng Pedagogical Institute, the field of study: musical education, studying at the Musical and Artistic Education Institute of the Ural State Pedagogical University in the period of 2017-2019 academic year, took part.

The initial diagnostics of the students’ musical culture maturity included such methods as an interrogation, which gave a possibility to reveal Chinese students’ knowledge of particularities and distinctive features of vocal culture of different countries in the historical retrospective, knowledge of vocal performers of the past and of the present time. In the process of diagnostic tasks development, we referred to the theoretical base, which is studied at the music history disciplines. This discipline is included into the musical education curriculum of all Musical Higher Education Institutions in Russia and in foreign countries. And we also referred to the vitageneous experience of the students themselves at interrogating on vocal performers.

The performed diagnostics, related to this issue, allowed to state the following conclusions. The students’ knowledge of the musical system in whole and of its retrospective is developed, however, the students have partial knowledge of vocal performers of the past and present time. They couldn’t explain and substantiate the vocal works genre particularities and name the music areas.

While performing diagnostics on vocal skills and estrade techniques development at the study initial stage, we used the exercises, oriented to revelation of development of the students’ vocal skills, such as inhale, diction, sound generation, intoning. Along with the exercises we offered the tasks, which were oriented to revelation of the level of performance development and estrade techniques knowledge.

This issue diagnostics showed that at this stage such student’s vocal skills as sound generation and intoning are formed sufficiently well, but not all of the students can use speech and vocal inhale at the rest stroke, only few people managed to name estrade techniques, but at the same time they couldn’t perform them.

While performing diagnostics of the initial level of Russian-language works vocal performance, we offered the students to perform a number of exercises and vocal works. At the diagnostics we were analyzing the students’ skills of pronouncing syllables in the process of execution of both speech and vocal exercises. The initial diagnostics of the level of Russian-language works performance implied the performance of a Russian work, known to the students.

The executed diagnostics allowed to make the following conclusions: the Chinese students’ Russian-language articulation is formed very lightly. The major part of the students hardly managed to do speech and vocal exercises. Such syllables as “bra”, “ma”, “tsu”, “sta”, “scha” were especially difficult. However, the suggested Russian works, such as “Katyusha”, lyrics by M. Isakovsky, music by M. Blanter, “Podmoskovnyie Vechera”, lyrics by M. Matusovsky, music by V. Solovyev-Sedov, didn’t cause performance difficulties

notwithstanding the fact that not all of the words were pronounced correctly from the point of view of articulation. The Chinese students listened to this work performance through smartphones, and received, in this way, an example of correct performance with clear pronunciation of the words.

The achieved results gave a possibility to develop a set of exercises and tasks, favouring vocal skills and estrade techniques, and also development of Russian-language vocal performance level.

5.2. In relation to the initial diagnostics achieved results a set of exercises and tasks was developed for the students from China, and it was used at vocal and ensemble classes. All tasks and exercises were oriented to the formation of a specific skill or technique, but, herewith, they were supplementing each other. The following tasks were included into the program of Chinese students musical culture development. Thuswise, the students were offered to learn jazz music history and famous jazz performers biography. A group chat was created in the Internet, namely, in WeChat social network, for student and teacher communication and education material transfer. The links to the Internet sources, containing the following information in Chinese, have been provided there: on jazz history [5], on jazz vocal performers [2, 3]. The following audio recordings of famous vocal performers have been provided to the students for listening through the application: Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan, Miles Davis Quinte, etc. The students showed the interest in studying jazz music history and stylistics and to listening the supplementary musical material through. They personally suggested to make a comparative characterization of the Chinese, Russian and West-European contemporary popular vocal music. The attendance of the concerts of the students of the Musical and Artistic Education Institute of the Ural State Pedagogical University was organized for the Chinese students for the purposes of listening contemporary popular estrade and jazz music live performance through. In the process of vocal skills development we have used the exercises from different contemporary methodologies. Working at the correct sound generation, we used Seth Riggs methodology elements [10]. In his opinion, with which the article's authors agree, singing in the voice position is singing, when the voice operates freely, without any efforts. Making this methodology exercises, the students were noticing that if it is done correctly, the muscles, laying outside the throat, don't interfere the process of sound generation and in such way it is much easier to pronounce the words, and the articulation becomes clearer. I use the exercises from Lara Fabian's methodology, in particular, the vocal cords warming up [15]. In the students' view this exercise is very important, because you can't start signing without warming up. The exercises of her methodology are based on sonorant consonants, which give a boost at the correct Russian-language articulation formation.

These are the sounds "m", "n". Using the basis of this exercise from Lara Fabian's methodology, we have

developed the exercise for chest and head registering phonation, namely, making exercises on "nyam" syllable. Herewith, this exercise performance is followed by hand movements, which show the movements of a man, who eats from large and small plates.

As many methodology authors and teachers consider, one of the main vocal performance skills is the inhale. At working with this skill at the vocal classes we use the exercises from Strelnikova's, A.N. and Tsukanova, I.'s [16, 17] methodologies. Each lesson starts with the breathing gymnastics, which has been developed by one of this article authors on the basis of different methodologies. The breathing gymnastics, suggested by Konovalova, S.A., is differed by the exercises and musical material from a lesson to a lesson.

In the students' opinion, the most beloved and effective breathing gymnastics exercise is "the Music Breath". The essence of this exercise is that we breath in accordance with the music, telling a phrase with the use of different breath types. This exercise is performed both statically and in movement in accordance with the music.

When performing contemporary compositions, the rhythmic base is an especially important aspect. Thus, swinging, emphasis on down beat, syncopation and triplet feel are distinctive for jazz compositions. That is why the exercises, oriented to develop the sense of beat under Karyagina, A.'s [6] methodology and the scat improvisation rhythmic etudes under Bob Stoloff's [18] methodology have been offered to the students. These exercises were complicate for performance for the students. A great complication arose because of the performance of scat syllables improvisation. However, many students gained the interest in improvisation, and they tried to make improvisations in Chinese.

Diction, namely, Russian-language articulation, development exercises were the most difficult ones for the students. The exercises of different methodologies [6, 16] and the exercises and tasks, developed by Konovalova, S.A. for the Chinese students with accountance of specific characteristics and individual particularities, were provided to them. One of the students' beloved exercise, oriented to Russian-language articulation was "Tonguelet Gymnastics". The students themselves called this exercise in such a warm way. The essence of this exercise involves pronunciation and signing the syllables, containing vowels and all consonant sounds of the alphabet, through, namely: "a", "o", "u", "e", "i". Like this, there resulted the following syllables: "ba-bo-bu-be-bi", "va-vo-vu-ve-vi" or "ab-ob-ub-eb-ib", "av-ov-uv-ev-iv" and so on. At the beginning, this exercise was pronounced, and then the students were offered to sing this exercise through gradually in mediant range to legato and staccato. Then, this exercise was complicated and the students were offered to perform three-sound syllables "bra-bro-bru-bre-bri", "vra-vro-vru-vre-vri" and so on. The set of exercises, developed by Konovalova, S.A., included exercises, referred to different particularities of the Russian-language articulation. In the process of education, the students were offered to learn and perform Russian folk songs, romances and

contemporary popular songs. It should be noted, that even though singing in Russian was difficult for many students, all of them were heartily learning the songs and performing them. The elements of Konovalova, S.A. methodology, developed for teaching vocal performance to the foreign students, and also the exercises, referred to the development of vocal skills and Russian-language articulation, are provided in the video lesson on the topic of "Formation of Russian-language articulation skills and Russian-language musical and poetic text pronunciation skills" with the students from China, which is posted at the [video hosting web-site](#)

## 6. CONCLUSION

The positive results, obtained in the course of the undertaken research, analysis of diagnostic tasks and exercises execution at different stages of the research gave the possibility to reveal existent problems of Chinese students training at vocal classes. The most difficult thing for the students was to study and demonstrate the Russian-language articulation at doing exercises, and of course, at performing vocal works. The Chinese students showed different results. Thus, the level of vocal skills formedness of many of them has significantly improved, but the vocal

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=7&v=wpOM4Rg2adE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=wpOM4Rg2adE).

5.3. According to the results of overall diagnostics we can make a conclusion of improvement of the following: musical culture level development through enrichment of students' knowledge on variety of genres and styles of the vocal music, on broadening their auditory bundle of different folks vocal works; the level of formedness of vocal skills and estrade techniques through inclusion of the contemporary vocal methodologies into the educational process; the level of vocal performance in Russian through inclusion of a set of exercises, oriented to the Russian-language articulation development.

estrade techniques mastery of the most part of the students hasn't changed or has changed insignificantly. In terms of widening musical knowledge of different styles, genres and particularities of different folks, which we have presented to the students through getting to know vocal works, we should note, that a great interest in vocal works was demonstrated. The outlined problems are prospective for their further solution in the process of Chinese students musical training at the Russian Higher Education Institutions.

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