

Developing meaningful learning in instrumental lessons: a study on the role of teaching and learning cues

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Meaningful learning is a process in which new information is related to previously learned ideas. This process is a fundamental pillar in education and it is based on the negotiation of common meanings between teachers and students. Although its importance has been recognized in different fields, in instrumental teaching meaningful learning is still not widely explored. Literature in this field suggests that teachers spend great part of time talking, employing a linear discourse, while students assume a passive attitude in the lessons. Despite some authors started to claim a change in this paradigm, there is still room to understand how meaningful learning might be promoted in instrumental lessons. The purpose of this study was to understand the role of teaching and learning cues, i.e., summarized information used to decrease the overload of information, in one-to-one instrumental lessons. In order to achieve this aim, two cases studies embedded in an action-research project were conducted. The participants were the author, who taught violin through a social project and two students; i.e., one boy and one girl, aged respectively 4 and 7 years old. They were violin beginners who had the first contact with the instrument in this project. A total of 9 one-to-one violin lessons per case study were led and video recorded. An interview was conducted with each participant and their parents before the first lesson to map the students profile. Selected parts of the lessons where teaching and learning cues were used were transcribed and analysed, The preliminary results shows that teaching and learning cues have been acting to enhance: (i) individual constructions: students' self-constructions of concepts and meanings. This was observed through a spontaneous creation of their own vocabulary or throughout teacher' support by questioning in order to understand how the student realize a concept; and (ii) shared constructions: teacher and student shared and negotiated construction of meanings and vocabularies. Such aspects were observed through of how the student realizes the content.

Although this study is limited to number of students and lessons, it is possible to recognize that the conscious use of teaching cues and specially learning cues, can foster a student-centered approach, supporting the development of meaningful learning during the lesson.