

Assignment 5: Evaluate the effectiveness of the specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities.

Advanced Learning Activities

I define advanced learning activities as female only kinesthetic activities, which encourage female learners to take leadership positions, which develop assertive and experimental, and risk taking approaches to working with electronic music. Michael Gurian defines risk taking as an area that is deficient in female educational participation, but tends to be dominant with male learners. My activities were defined as advanced as they are pitched at adult learners in the 20-50 age group, I assumed many women in the group had obtained university level qualifications and re-enforced the advanced learning activities through a higher education lecture style format (drawing from cultural theory). Many learners took notes during the presentation that demonstrated an appropriate (and sensitive) conditioned response.

The Golden Triangle Girls WI took place in the back room of The Unthank Arms pub in Norwich. The informal setting helped relax my learners (especially when excessive wine was consumed!), which made some of the controversial subject matter more digestible. It also made it easier for my learners to take risks and experiment when taking part in electronic music making/advanced learning activities. The informal atmosphere encouraged comradere and female learners were able to turn to their friends (and other WI members) for support. The downside of the pub environment was the extraneous background noise I had to compete with to get heard. There was a fair amount of movement back and forth to the bar (this made it harder for me to engage my learners).

All of my advanced learning activities involved an element of discovery learning. I wanted my learners to take ownership of the idea themselves (rather than be dictated to by a controlling male tutor).

My re-enactment of Pauline Oliveros's Sound fishes was problematic. The 'Deep Listening' piece takes the form of a 'chance music aleatoric' score. I projected the instructions on the wall via PowerPoint and explained the ethos of the piece. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

The instructions are as follows:

"For an orchestra of any instruments.

Considerations

Listening is the basis of sound fishing

Listening for what has not yet sounded- like a fisherman waiting for a bite.

Pull the sound out of the air like a fisherman catching a fish, sensing it's size and energy- when you hear the sound, - play it.

Move to another location if there are no nibbles or bites.

There are sounds in the air like sounds in the water.

When the water is clear you might see the fish.

When the air is clear you might see the fish.

When the air is clear, you might hear the sounds.”¹

I distributed two rocks to everyone's tables before members arrived (to save time distributing rocks to learners during the presentation). The piece was supposed to be about waiting for a suitable point to enter the sound texture and listening. Because I focused purely on sound rather than rhythm, the result was a cluttered and unordered mess. The piece in no way resembled Oliveros's call for non-ego based co-operative music making. If I had taken a more rhythmic call and response approach, patterns and music may have emerged in a more structured and harmonious fashion. The sheer amount of participants meant that a more structured leadership approach was needed, rather than the anarchistic free for all, which the activity became!

After the piece I got various learners to explain how they made their sounds. I asked for a show of hands to gauge the usefulness of the piece and was satisfied by the positive response.

For the voice manipulation workshop I slowed down the voice of a female participant using a pitch shifter and microphone attached to an amp (in reference to Laurie Anderson's signature “male voice of authority” persona). See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

This workshop also suffered from a lack of structure. In future sessions I shall aim to explore voice manipulation in a more coherent fashion through recreating Laurie Anderson's ‘O superman’ note-for-note (through live looping).

The workshops could be improved by getting women after performing advanced learning activities to verbalize what they have learnt to other women. This would make the activities more inclusive and give participants an opportunity to share a greater sense of achievement.

Specialist Delivery Techniques

The specialist delivery techniques I used at Golden Girls WI encouraged exclusively female learners to engage with music technology and electronic music through using:

- Feminist theory to explore musicological concerns and gender biases in the field.

- Positive discrimination to present female pioneers of electronic musicians as motivational female role models.

My talk effectively engaged my learners due to the diverse array of multi-media elements such as video, picture diagrams and audio. These elements helped showcase the talents of important female electronic pioneers as well as illustrate cultural theories. The incorporation of advanced learning activities (involving live female electronic music making) gave the presentation a good balance of theory and live demonstration. I referred to the handouts during the conclusion to provide:

- Further links to support groups.
- Creative inspiration for learners who wanted to take things a step further.

I felt the Specialist Delivery Techniques/Advanced Learning Activities to be effective under the circumstances it was created, which was far from ideal. The conception was undoubtedly well intentioned, but was hard to pitch as I had never attended an WI before (due to being excluded on grounds of my gender) and had only a theoretical grasp of what to expect provided by the (very helpful) WI president

Due to only having a short set up time (and limitations of the seating arrangement) the projection was slightly lop-sided and at smaller dimensions than I had hoped. Under more favorable circumstances a bigger projection area would have made it easier for learners (at the back) to read the text. The text in the presentation could be improved in future sessions by more bullet points and further condensing of information. Projecting my voice will help me reach learners towards the back of the room (the space where most learners gathered, perhaps because of timidity).

Plugs in the venue were placed unfavorably, there were a few trailing wires which could have been potential trip hazards. Close attention was paid to informing my learners of the hazards, but more vigilant attention to health and safety is needed in future sessions.

The volume of the audio and video clips carried well considering the limitation of the home hi-fi system I provided. The abilities of the female pioneers could have been showcased more favorably on a PA (but sadly resources and transport rendered this option unfeasible). The sound of the advanced learning activities showcased the efforts of the female electronic musicians effectively, but could have been improved through using a higher quality amplifier. A smaller amp did allow portability (as I was travelling on public transport), but a more powerful amp with a larger speaker cone would have been more flattering.

Although my presentation held the attention of the room and (was not marred by any chatting etc.) the one and half hour presentation could have been edited further. The usual slot for a WI speaker is 45 minutes to an hour. The scope of my project was admirable, but perhaps a little too wide. I could have

focused on a couple of core pioneering electronic women in more detail (rather than covering the 1950's to the present day). Focusing on fewer key artists would have allowed me to cover the work of individual artists in more detail. I felt a pressure to only play small extracts from sound clips and video due to time constraints. A more relaxed and fluid presentational style could have been explored with a tighter focus. Because the WI is as much about socializing as it is about learning, the higher educational format could have been relaxed further in this speaking context.

I felt it necessary to read straight from the projector due to confidence issues. This sadly became a barrier to communicating to my learners. It was only during Q&A that I really felt a true connection with my audience. In the future I would like to encourage more debate.

My presentation incorporated directed questioning to draw out artistic meaning. One advanced learning activity involved the audience identifying how Delia Derbyshire communicates the experience of aging in the piece 'Time on our hands'. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

Audience members correctly noticed how the piece references the human body through the heartbeat. Learners also noticed that the piece referenced the sentiment of the text that 'time seems to pass quicker as you get older'. This piece was designed to appeal to the more mature members of the WI who may have experienced similar phenomena. The questioning was successful because its aims were simple and achievable.

The more abstract interpretative questioning in the analysis of the Laurie Anderson 'O Superman' piece was less successful. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

Despite giving the audience the background information about the piece referencing the Iran/Contra war. No audience members were able to make the symbolic link of Superman symbolizing America in the piece. This activity largely fell flat because the delivery was rushed, some members might not have been able to read the text from where they were sitting (text was quite small) and the piece was pitched at too advanced a level for the group (many may have not analyzed a poem, or lyrics since English GCSE's). In future I shall provide more background information, make text bigger and provide handouts that learners can read at their own level. By getting learners to read the lyrics together (in pairs), more active discussion could be encouraged. More time allotted to activity would ensure greater success!

The use of questioning encouraged critical non-passive learning and helped women take ownership of feminist ideas (rather than have a male dictate what he defines as feminism). Many studies have suggested that women excel in communicative verbalizing skills. Incorporating such devices into my presentation was a way of boosting learner confidence and playing to gendered strengths. Questioning helped cement the inclusive agenda and ethos of the WI (because the WI was originally conceived as an arena for

women to debate and discuss the issues of the day). The use of questioning did give the talk a sense of classroom formality, which perhaps was slightly inappropriate in this less formal environment.

Effectiveness of feminist agenda of Specialist Delivery Techniques

My project was effective as it addressed the feminist ethos of the WI, but also raised wider questions about:

- What constitutes male and female expression.
- The way gender is expressed in institutions.
- The potential of the speaker to short circuit gender.

As a male, I found the prospect of talking to 50-60 potentially hostile feminist women quite a daunting and nerve-wracking experience. I felt conscious of invading a secret territory in which my needs were secondary and silenced in favor of the entitled opposite sex. This had negative affects on my delivery and ability to command the room.

As my talk touched on some potentially controversial topics (misogyny in Japanese noise music, male approaches to electronic music that have embraced a military aesthetic) I felt internal pressure to keep my talk more politically correct than I would to a male or mixed sex audience. I felt a pressure to conform to the ethos of the organization that could potentially limit my freedom of speech. I felt that toning down problematic issues would ultimately make the audience more comfortable. This would make my learners open to what I had to say, and the empowering agenda of the talk.

The presentation suffered from conflicting agendas. The focus on contentious feminist issues and injustices was likely to rile my learners; whilst I ironically maintained that the purpose of the advanced learning activities was to help female learners make electronic music in a relaxed environment.

Ironically throughout the delivery of this project, I have felt a contradiction between desired effect and outcome. Through revealing the motivations of why I was doing the presentation I simultaneously re-enforced the negative stereotypes that make women avoid music technology in the first place. In this sense my learners became one step removed. An immersive film score can be naturally powerful and affecting without conscious identification. Effective learning can take place through the deconstruction method (I have trialed in the project), but truly effective learning is often subliminal in spite of conscious manipulation tactics used by teachers.

Whilst championing the accomplishments of the other sex, I felt the ironic feeling of reliving the experiences of marginalization from an alternative male perspective.

Rosemary Bruce (Bruce and Kemp 1993) did some experimental research to find out whether such choices could be affected by the sex of a live role model playing the instrument². She organized concert-demonstrations of woodwind,

brass and stringed orchestral instruments, played by men and women to mixed groups of primary school children³. Each concert was given twice, to a different audience, switching round the sex of the players⁴. At the end of each demonstration the children were asked to choose one instrument to look at⁵. The researcher counted how many pupils of each sex moved towards which instrument. She found that the sex of the player appeared to have a striking effect on the sex of the children who went towards the instrument⁶. For examples 23.5% of girls looked at the trombone when a women demonstrated it, but only 1.5% did so when the player was male⁷.

Sexes often feel more comfortable interacting with there own kind. I felt that if a woman were to have delivered this feminist polemic, the audience would have been more forgiving. She would have had cultural permission to do so; her argument would have been given gravitas by her gender. When a man makes a feminist statement, the audience can't help being suspicious.

The researcher Carol Adams discusses political correctness in schools and the danger of "lip service responses from men"⁸. She says:

"There is the danger that equal opportunities could simply be used by some men to their own advantage- for example, by their insisting that they share control of what happens in education"⁹

My presentation felt disingenuous because it demonstrates that feminism can be just an empty tool like any other. Feminism has the potential to be exploited by people with vain educational ambitions as well as genuine philanthropists. Ironically, the talk demonstrated to me personally, that there is a thin line between feminism and reverse sexism. It is hard be an ambassador for inclusivity of the opposite sex. Especially when your audience does little to critically foster inclusivity of the opposite sex themselves! We reach a double bind, and hit our heads against a brick wall whilst doing so.

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