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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF MALE TEACHER VOCAL DEMONSTRATION ON MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SINGING CLASSES—FACTORS AND STRATEGIES

Xinyu Yang^{1,2*}

¹School of Music, Northeast Normal University, Changchun 130024, China

²Xiangyangqiao Primary School, Chengdu 610199, China

*Corresponding Author E-mail: yangxinyu@nenu.edu.cn

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ABSTRACT

Vocal demonstration (hereinafter referred to as vocal demo) is a crucial teaching method for cultivating students' musical expressiveness in singing classes. For elementary school students, male musical teachers tend to exert various influences on the cultivation of students' musical expressiveness due to the factors such as physiological structure. This paper aims to elaborate on both male teachers' vocal demonstrations and students' musical expressiveness. It adopts classroom observation and literature research methods to explore the influencing factors of male teachers' vocal demo on students' musical expressiveness, as well as the corresponding coping strategies.

KEYWORDS

Elementary School Singing Class, Male Teacher's Vocal Demonstrations, Musical Expressiveness

1. OVERVIEW OF VOCAL DEMONSTRATIONS AND MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS

1.1 Vocal Demonstration

Vocal demonstration is a teaching method in which the teacher demonstrates through singing. It is defined as "purposely using the teacher's demonstration skills as an effective stimulus to elicit corresponding actions from students, enabling them to effectively master necessary skills through imitation." Thus, it can be concluded that vocal demo is a teaching method where the teacher uses singing demonstration as an effective stimulus to evoke students' perception and imitation, thereby helping them developing singing skills. Based on the method of presentation, vocal demos can be categorized into direct vocal demos and indirect vocal demos. Direct vocal demo includes: complete appreciation-based vocal demos and segment-teaching-based vocal demos. Indirect vocal demo includes: situational performance-based vocal demos, solitary game-based vocal demos, and comparative error-correction-based vocal demos.

High-quality vocal demo by the teacher enables students to form a relatively comprehensive and accurate impression of the musical elements and articulation of a song. This impression serves as the auditory representation formed by students during the initial stage of skill acquisition and a reference standard during practical performance. Its formation relies on students' identification and observation of the teacher's vocal sound and expression during vocal demonstration. Therefore, when conducting vocal demos, teachers must ensure accurate pitch and rhythm, full emotional engagement, and clear

articulation. Only in this way can students form a relatively accurate auditory representation of the song through teachers' vocal demos and then conduct appropriate singing performance.

1.2 Musical Expressiveness

The concept of musical expressiveness is elaborated clearly in Mr. Gao Fuxiao's book "On the Art of Music Performance". It states that "Musical expressiveness refers to the appeal possessed by music performances, and it is also a direct reflection of the performer's music accomplishment and skills, playing an indispensable role in musical performances. Musical expressiveness mainly includes universal expressiveness, individual expressiveness, and multi-dimensional expressiveness." Among them, universal expressiveness refers to the performer's ability to express the universal characteristics existing in music; individual expressiveness refers to the performer's ability to conduct personal interpretation and secondary creation of the music based on its common characteristics; multi-dimensional expressiveness refers to a diversified aesthetic expression form presented in musical performances.

Based on the elaboration what has been mentioned above, musical expressiveness may be defined as the ability of students which is predicated on an accurate perception of the universal attributes of music—including musical expressive elements and emotional connotations—and is materialized primarily through artistic expression such as singing and instrumental performance, with supplementary support from external media like body movements and props to convey personalized musical meanings. This process can be described as "perception-internalization-expression."

1.3 Vocal Demonstration as an Important Approach to Cultivate Musical Expressiveness

Musical expressiveness shows obvious manifestations in early childhood. Studies have indicated that “children around the age of 1 can spontaneously engage in ‘babble’ singing; children aged 2-3 can simply imitate short song fragments; and children aged 3-4 can perceive melodies initially and gradually develop the ability to discriminate rhythm and pitch, expressing themselves through singing.” Consequently, it can be found easily that children’s innate musical expressiveness is based on singing, using listening and imitation as means to express music. This shows that the listening-and-singing method is the most direct approach to cultivating children’s musical expressiveness.

The listening-and-singing method, also known as the imitation method, refers to “a teaching approach in singing instruction where students learn a song by listening to and imitating the teacher’s vocal demonstration.”

Based on this teaching method, teachers can introduce the repetitive process of “listening-singing” in singing instruction. During the “listening” phase, students complete their perception of the common characteristics of the music by being stimulated their sensory emotional extension, while in the “singing” phase, they achieve individualized expression of these common characteristics through vocal performance combined with facial expressions and movements. Since students’ “listening” usually comes from the teacher’s “singing,” accurate vocal demos by teachers are of great importance to students. It is through the teacher’s demonstration that students establish their perception of the

music’s common characteristics, and it is also through this demonstration that they gradually enhance their musical expressiveness. Therefore, vocal demonstration has become a vital approach to cultivate students’ musical expressiveness.

2. ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCING FACTORS OF MALE TEACHERS’ VOCAL DEMONSTRATIONS ON STUDENTS’ MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS

2.1 Analysis of Influencing Factors on Students’ Timbre Expression Based on Timbre Characteristics

Timbre, one of the expressive elements of music, refers to the different sound colors produced by varying sound-producing materials. Due to differences in vocal structure of sound producers, timbre is often different among different people. Generally speaking, the timbre of female voices is similar to that of children’s voice, which is delicate and loud; whereas the timbre of male voices is typically mellow and more powerful. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the timbre characteristics of male teachers and that of children.

Expressing the correct timbre in singing classes is a particularly important teaching goal. The vocal demos of female teachers, due to the similarity between female teachers and that of students, can easily blend with the students’ timbre, creating a harmonious sonic effect, and students can also better express after perceiving the teacher’s vocal demos. However, vocal demos singing by male teachers, due to the

Table 1 Comparative Observation Table of Vocal Demonstrations between Male and Female Teachers

Presentation Method	Male Teacher	Female Teacher	Teaching Methods	Male Teacher	Female Teacher
Teaching Process	Direct Vocal Demo Presentation	Using	Complete Appreciative Vocal Demo Singing	Not using	Using
			Segmented Instructional Vocal Demo Singing	Using	Using
	Indirect Vocal Demo Presentation	Using	Situational Performance Vocal Demo Singing	Not using	Using
			Relay Game-style Vocal Demo Singing	Using	Using
			Comparative Error-correction Vocal Demo Singing	Using	Not using

great difference between male teachers and students, which is hard to blend as easily with the child’s voice. After perceiving the male teachers’ timbre, students might blindly imitate their deeper voice, leading to a series of problems in their vocal cords and make them lose the ability to sing such as sounding “dull” or exhibiting “vocal forcing.”

From the perspective of the timbre characteristics of male teachers, students’ blind perception and imitation of the timbre in male teachers’ vocal demos, which may make it impossible for them to express their timbre forever. In more severe cases, this could potentially damage their vocal cords and lead to a loss of singing ability.

2.2 Analysis of Influencing Factors on Students’ Intonation Based

on Vocal Range Characteristics

The term “intonation” is defined in dictionaries as “the degree of accuracy of pitch.” Pitch, one of the expressive elements of music, is also a standard for measuring students’ musical expressiveness when singing. The intonation abilities of elementary school students vary individually—some students demonstrate good intonation, while others have relatively poor intonation performance.

A large number of vocal demos and help by teachers are the best way to improve students’ intonation. However, in practical teaching, when students sing after listening to the vocal demos of male teachers, problems often arise in their intonation performance, such low intonation

and even inability to find the correct pitch often occur. Conversely, when teachers used piano directly without vocal demos, students can quickly find the correct pitch. Similarly, when female teachers conduct vocal demos in classes, students can accurately perceive and express the pitch.

The occurrence of this problem is caused by the vocal range difference resulting from gender difference. The singing vocal range a person is generally about ten to twelve degrees, but the vocal range also varies on different periods. In childhood, there is no difference in the vocal range between boys and girls, their singing range can reach A4 to E6. After the voice changed period, significant differences exist between male and female vocal ranges: "Generally, a soprano's range is C4 to F6; an alto's range is G3 to C6; a tenor's range is C4 to C6; and a baritone's range is approximately G2 to A4." Furthermore, after the voice change, the vocal frequency of the male voice is about an octave lower than that of the female and child's voice.

Based on the distinct characteristics of male and children's vocal ranges, the pitch produced by male teachers when singing is an octave lower than that produced by children when singing in terms of hearing. Thus, vocal demonstration by male teachers has certain adverse effects on students' pitch accuracy.

2.3 Analysis of Influencing Factors on Students' Musical Emotion Expression Based on Singing Expressiveness

The concept of "musical emotion" emerged (Krumhansl, 1997). The academic definition of musical emotion involves two approaches: emotivism and cognitivism. When musical emotion serves as a measure of musical expressiveness, it can be understood as "the ability of an individual to internalize the emotions expressed by the music after perceiving them and then express them appropriately through artistic forms like singing or playing. Students are innately equipped with the ability to express music, but the subsequent expression of musical emotion is influenced by the teacher's behavior in class."

Male teachers are stronger in rational thinking and logical abilities, and their classrooms often proceed in a question-and-answer format, always with more knowledge transmission. While female teachers typically excel in emotional sensitivity and intuitive thinking, and their classes often conducted in a more performative style, emphasizing teaching activities. There are many differences between male and female teachers in thinking and behaviors in class, which also bring different impacts on the feeling of students in class. I observed the vocal demo methods of one male and one female teacher in an elementary school during the same lesson (Table 1). It was found that in terms of thinking mode and vocal demo methods, the male teacher paid more attention to knowledge transmission, and his vocal demos also paid more attention to aspects like pitch accuracy, rhythm, and vocal state, easily overlooking the fact that singing itself is a performative process requiring physical involvement, resulting in weaker singing expressiveness. For students, although the rigid vocal demos of male teachers are correct in terms of musical expression elements such as rhythm and dynamics, students struggle to perceive the emotional expression well. Consequently, students' expression of musical emotion may also be adversely affected.

3. STRATEGIES FOR MALE TEACHERS' VOCAL DEMONSTRATION TO CULTIVATE STUDENTS' MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS

3.1 Utilizing Falsetto Vocal Demonstration to Promote Students' Expression of Timbre and Intonation

Due to the characteristics of timbre and vocal range, male teachers have consistently an impact on the expression of the timbre and intonation of elementary school students. As a male elementary music teacher personally, I have been troubled by this problem and almost at the same time I have also been exploring methods to improve the quality of vocal demos and strengthen students' expression of timbre and intonation. Given the huge gap between the voice of male teachers and that of students, using a falsetto technique for vocal demos can bridge this vocal gap, making the demonstration more perceptible and comprehensible to

students in the elementary school. Specifically, the following aspects can improve students' musical expressiveness.

3.1.1 Consistent Timbre is Conducive to Students' Expression of Timbre

Students primarily develop their timbre always through imitation, especially through imitating from their teachers. However, the natural timbre of a male teacher is not conducive to this imitation of students. However, if the male teacher, in turn, uses falsetto to approximate the students' timbre instead, the timbre difference between teachers and students can be minimized effectively. When a male teacher employs falsetto for vocal demos, their timbre is more clear and, more soft, with more head resonance. This better aligns with the predominant use of head resonance in elementary students' singing and the requirement for soft and high-pitched voice, which is more beneficial for students to listen, imitate, and subsequently produce the correct timbre.

In the actual teaching process, male teachers do not need to use falsetto to mimic student timbre throughout the entire lesson. It is more effectively used during specific vocal adjustment exercises to guide students toward finding the correct timbre when singing.

For example, in the vocal warm-up segment of the first-grade singing lesson "The Happy Little Flute" (Figure 1) in the People's Music Edition, the teacher can adopt engaging interesting warm-up activities, incorporating game mechanics or scenario creation to solve the singing difficulties and the voice requirements of the song in this lesson. During singing, the teacher can use falsetto to conduct solitary singing with students. And when singing, teacher's part is sung in falsetto, which students then perceive and imitate. When students sing, the teacher can provide appropriate demonstration or sing along with them based on their performance.

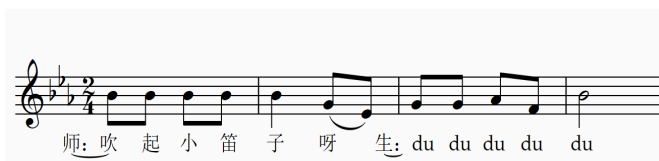


Figure 1 Excerpt from the Grade 1 Children's Song "The Happy Little Flute" (Caption: Teacher Sings: Play my little flute, students Sing: Toot-toot-toot-toot-toot!)

3.1.2 Consistent Vocal Range is Conducive to Students' Intonation Expression

Students' expression of intonation comes from their perception of pitch. Conducting vocal demo within a consistent vocal range serves as a crucial teaching method for students to accurately perceive pitch. When a male teacher uses falsetto for vocal demo, his vocal range increases by approximately an octave compared to his chest voice, aligning it with the students' vocal range. This enables students to better perceive and establish the concept of pitch, and his intonation expression of the song can be more accurate.

In practical teaching, male teachers mainly use falsetto demonstration to help students' pitch perception when students need to sing a cappella, two-part chorus sections, or when solving challenging musical phrases. This is particularly relevant in lower elementary grades when students' pitch concepts are not yet fully established; falsetto demonstration can be applied to model difficult phrases. In upper elementary grades, male teachers can also utilize falsetto demonstration to assist students with pitch accuracy during the learning of two-part choruses.

For example, during the teaching and performance in the two-part chorus of the third-grade song "Jingle Bells" (Figure 2) in the People's Music Edition, the teacher can use falsetto to guide students in singing the second part.



Figure 2 Third-Grade Children's Song: "Jingle Bells" (Caption: Jingle bells, jingle bells)

After students learn the melody of the first part and sing it along with the accompaniment audio, the teacher can sing the second part in falsetto, forming a chorus with the students singing the first part. While singing their own part, students can perceive the pitch of the teacher's demonstrated second part at the same time. When students practice singing the two-part chorus, the teacher may also appropriately use falsetto to help students express the intonation.

In this session, as third-grade students are initially exposed to two-part singing, their intonation and musical expressiveness are still developing and are not very strong. So under the help of the male teacher's use of falsetto for demonstration, due to the aligned vocal range, effectively helps students in perceiving and reproducing pitch accurately. Simultaneously, the male teacher's falsetto is more likely to blend with the children's voices, achieving a harmonious atmosphere in singing and preventing disruption to the parts of harmony or reduction in students' musical expressiveness.

3.2 Using Situational Performance-Based Vocal Demonstration to Promote Students' Expression of Musical Emotions

Liao Jiahua mentioned in his book *Music Aesthetic Education* that "Music teaching should focus on the emotional engagement, requiring sincere emotional investment and fully using the affective power of emotions in teaching materials and methods such as the vocal demos with full of emotions...." How then can one sing with rich emotion? It is inseparable from the combination of internal and external factors. In addition, beyond accurately delivering the fundamental musical elements, the body language, facial expressions, modern educational technology, and a variety of teaching aids are also should be adopted to construct a musical context. Through this situational performance-based vocal demos enhances the expression of musical emotion.

Due to the self weakness of male teachers in their own expressiveness and classroom vitality, they have problems such as inefficient singing expressiveness and inadequate expression of musical emotions. In addition to adjusting their internal factors, male teachers can also enhance their expression of musical emotions in a musical situation with the help of the external factors. This approach enables students to better perceive the beauty of the lyrical meaning and emotional content through situational demonstration, ultimately achieving emotion-driven vocal production and enhanced the expression of musical emotions.

For example, in the third-grade singing lesson "The Herdboy's Mountain Song" (Figure 3) in the People's Music Edition, a Chinese folk song from Sichuan province, the teacher can create a contextualized scenario integrating the stylistic features of mountain songs and Sichuan's unique topography, conducting vocal demos in the context of the folk songs.

In the introduction session, the teacher inquires about Sichuan's



Figure 3 Excerpt from the Grade 3 Children's Song "The Herdboy's Mountain Song" (Caption: O, sing, lad, hey! O, sing, lay, hey!)



Figure 4 Grade 1 Children's Song: "Singing the Same Song" (Caption: Little Dongmu, little Zhuoma, little Guli, little Lianhua, singing the same song since we were young, our dear motherland is just like a mother.)

geographical characteristics while using props like straw hats and bamboo baskets for contextual demonstration. "Look, a young cattle herder is coming from the mountains of Sichuan. What might he be singing?" The teacher then demonstrates with the stylistic characteristics of the folk song and sing the two long notes "Wei." Students can perceive and learn to sing the folk music in this specific situation.

In this session, the teacher creates a specific based on the background of Sichuan, the genre of the song, and uses props to help the accomplishment of the class and conduct teacher's vocal demo to help students to perceive the feeling which the folk music want to bring to us. Within this specific setting, the teacher performs a vocal demo with emotions. This approach helps students establish a deep understanding of the folk song genre while enable them to express the musical emotions.

3.3 Utilizing Diverse Forms of Vocal Demonstration to Further Enhance Students' Musical Expressiveness

According to the learning activity suggestions in the Compulsory Education Arts Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) issued by China's Ministry of Education: "Enrich students' singing performance forms, stimulate their interest in singing, and enhance their performance level." Diverse vocal demonstration by teachers can stimulate student interest and better improve their perception and expression of music. Therefore, teachers need to select different forms of vocal demonstration based on teaching requirements to achieve the goal of enhancing students' musical expressiveness. For example:

3.3.1 Emotionally Rich Complete Appreciative Vocal Demonstration

Complete appreciation-based on vocal demos refer to the situation where teacher demonstrate the entire song completely while students listen and appreciate. When conducting vocal demos, teacher fully presents the song through their own understanding of the song and the emotional grasping of the song to students, thereby stimulating students' interest of singing and facilitating their comprehensive understanding of the song. At the same time male teachers can also further incorporate contextual performance during their vocal demos to highlight the song's emotional expression. It is this way that motivates students to engage in music class, making them immerse themselves in the singing situation, and their emotions fluctuate with the male teachers' vocal demos.

Complete appreciative vocal demonstration is more suitable when the song structure is relatively simple and students primarily need to learn the song through listening and imitation, such as with lower elementary graders. It is also appropriate for middle and upper elementary students during initial listening perception or when consolidating the song after mastery. Teachers should also note that vocal demonstration primarily serves to strengthen students' perception of the song and promote the enhancement of their musical expressiveness.

For example: In the first-grade singing lesson “Singing the Same Song” (Figure 4), this piece, being a first-grade song with a simple four-phrase structure, allows the teacher to employ complete appreciative vocal demonstration to guide students in listening, perceiving, and imitating.

During the new teaching segment, the teacher asks: “Please listen carefully to my singing and think about what characteristics this song has?” The teacher performs the entire “Singing the Same Song” with added body movements, while students listen and answer the question. The teacher then guides the students to sing the entire song softly along with them.

In this session, the teacher helps students establish a perception of the song through complete appreciation based on vocal demos, enabling students to form an initial understanding of music. In view of the characteristics of imitative learning in the first grade students, the teacher’s emotional and vivid complete appreciation can also form a standard for students’ imitation, which is conducive for students to imitate the vocal demos given by male teachers.

3.3.2 Segmented-Teaching-Based on Vocal Demos Focusing on Challenging Passages

Segment-teaching-based on vocal demos refer to the situation where

teachers conduct vocal demos on the difficult music phrases and parts of a song. The specific determination of difficulty of a song needs to be adjusted by students’ musical performance. So when conducting vocal demos, teachers should stress and highlight the important parts based on the basis of the complete appreciation. Then teachers can adopt it to strengthen students’ learning of difficult music phrases and sections and help solve teaching difficulties, When male teachers conducting vocal demos, teachers should notice the huge difference between their vocal range and that of students.

Segment-teaching-based on vocal demos specifically highlights difficult phrases or sections in a song. In singing classes of all grades in elementary school, segment-teaching based on vocal demos should be implemented across all elementary grade levels based on students’ actual musical performance to improve their musical learning and comprehension. And when implementing segment-teaching based on vocal demos, various music activities can be integrated during segmented vocal demonstration to strengthen students’ ability to overcome difficulties.

For example: In the fourth-grade song lesson “The Little Paper Boat’s Dream” (Figure 5) in the People’s Music Edition, the teacher identifies a difficult music phrase and instructs: “Please pay attention, boys and girls. When singing this phrase, we can add some body language to help us to control the understanding of the music.” The teacher conducts a



Figure 5 Excerpt from the Grade 4 Children’s Song “The Little Paper Boat’s Dream” (Caption: Onward to where sight ends, to the great beyond.)



Figure 6 Grade 4 Children’s Song: “I Am the Young Afanti” (Caption: I ride my dear little donkey, happy and gay. The sun is smiling at me, the birds sing all day. If you shoot the birds, or the frogs you catch, or break the lovely flowers, I’ll be your match. La-la-la... Lai-lai-lai... I am Mother’s good child, a young Afanti, oh! I am young Afanti!)

vocal demo of this music phrase while clapping along to the rhythm. Students then listen and imitate the teacher's clapping and singing.

By adopting segment-teaching based on vocal demos for difficult music phrases of the song and adding the rhythmic movement of clapping hands, the teacher enables students to better master difficult song sections and achieve the goal of accurately improving musical expression. Throughout the whole process, students' musical expressiveness can be gradually improved.

3.3.3 Comparative Error-Correction-Based Vocal Demos for Strengthening Teaching

Comparative error-correction-based vocal demos refer to the situation where teachers conduct vocal demos of students' correct singing and incorrect singing respectively, allowing students understand and analyze differences. Finally, students can correct the errors by themselves. In elementary school singing classes, students often sing without critical reflection, making them hard to distinguish whether their singing is correct or not. If the teachers only take measure to let students practice repeatedly, the effect will be very limited. Therefore, using comparative demonstration where the teacher contrasts incorrect and correct singing enables clearer identification of errors and targeted improvement. When male teachers conduct such demonstrations, they can deepen students' perception of musical elements according to their timbre characteristics. For instance, by contrasting chest voice with falsetto, or demonstrating different vocal resonances. Through these differences in musical elements brought by comparative vocal demos, male teachers can effectively cultivate students' critical thinking, prevent mindless imitation, and enhance musical expressiveness.

Comparative error-correction-based vocal demos are particularly suitable for songs with changes in musical style, such as key changes or tempo shifts. They are also applicable to various songs to highlight specific musical elements or correcting performance aspects across various song types. At all elementary levels, regardless of whether students demonstrate errors, teachers can incorporate comparative demonstrations based on learning needs. This method strengthens teaching effectiveness, progressively develops students' analytical skills, and improves musical expression.

Example: In the fourth-grade singing lesson "I Am Young Afanti" (Figure 6) in the People's Music Edition, when explaining accidentals, the teacher demonstrates both versions-with and without the sharp sign-asking students to identify differences. The teacher summarizes: "This sharp raises the 'sol' by a semitone, creating a slight upward tendency when singing." When addressing incorrect vocal production, the teacher says: "Listen to two ways of singing this 'la' syllable. Which sounds more appropriate and why?" After student response, the teacher concludes: "For this 'la', we shouldn't spread our mouths wide like the first example, but keep lips slightly rounded as in the second version for a mellower sound." Students then imitate the second demonstration.

The teacher adopts comparative error-correction-based vocal demos twice. The first time focused on distinguishing between the presence and absence of the sharp sign in the song, strengthening students' musical understanding and expression of accidentals signs. The second time is to address the mispronounced word "la" in the students' singing, guiding them to actively discover the correct singing voice and improve their musical expressiveness.

4. CONCLUSION

Now, among the group of music teachers in elementary schools in China, the proportion of male teachers is relatively small, and research on the influence of male teachers' vocal demonstration on students' musical expressiveness is also insufficient. Therefore, the deficiency of this study lies in its restricted observation and investigation of the current research situation. I primarily gathered insights through personal experience and interviews with some male music teachers in elementary schools, confirming that the issue of how male teachers' vocal demonstration affects students' musical expressiveness persists and impacts their

teaching, particularly severely affecting younger male teachers with less teaching experience.

Faced with this problem, I analyzed and discussed the adverse impact of male teachers' own physiological characteristics on the musical expressiveness of elementary school students. And based on the teaching theories related to vocal music, innovative approaches were proposed and applied to elementary school singing classes, suggesting countermeasures such as falsetto vocal demonstration, situational performance-based vocal demonstration, and diversified vocal demonstration methods. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can provide a little reference value for male teachers in elementary singing classes to compensate for their weaknesses and better leverage their strengths. For future research, I want to maintain a focused investigation on how improvements in male teachers' demonstration methods affect students' musical expressiveness, actively exploring more effective vocal demonstration teaching strategies.

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