

# **The Studying Erhu for Teaching Students in Jinan University for the Elderly in Shandong Province of China**

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## **Abstracts**

The objectives of this study were: (1) To popularize the education of Erhu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, so that everyone can better understand the Erhu; (2) To compile an erhu guidebook for teaching students in Jinan University for the elderly in Shandong Province in China. (3) To teach Erhu to the elderly by using the erhu guidebook, and (4) To evaluate the teaching of the erhu guidebook.

This research method was qualitative and quantitative mixed method: Qualitative research analyzes and studies erhu education for the elderly, while quantitative research is to teach the experimental group. The population is 10 students of Erhu Elementary Class of Jinan University for the Elderly. Due to the small class size, all the students participated in the experimental teaching. Therefore, the sample is also the 10 students of the Erhu elementary class of Jinan University for the Elderly.

Researcher findings:(1) Erhu education for the elderly is also a very important part of the popularization of erhu education. The elderly and other age groups have obvious advantages and disadvantages in erhu learning and need more care and attention. (2) According to the characteristics of the elderly, the compilation of " Erhu elementary teaching guidebook for the elderly "is divided into four parts, namely, basic knowledge of Erhu, basic playing methods of Erhu, essential exercises, and comprehensive exercises. (3) Ten elderly students were taught Erhu for 14 weeks. According to the characteristics of old age, the 90-minute course was divided into basic training, homework examination, music singing, work learning, and homework stages. (4) By comparing the scores, these elderly students have progressed in Erhu knowledge, music knowledge, performance, intonation, rhythm, and other aspects to varying degrees. The questionnaire survey shows that the satisfaction of these students with the Erhu guidebook and the course design is 100%. In addition, 70% of the students are very satisfied regarding the learning effect.

**Keywords:** Studying Erhu for Teaching Students; Jinan University; Elderly; Shandong Province; China

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## Introduction

The Erhu is one of the traditional Chinese stringed instruments that began during the Tang Dynasty and has been played for over 1000 years. Although the origin of the Erhu has a history of more than 1000 years, the development of the professional erhu art is only a century old. Modern erhu production improvement is discussed in three periods: the development period, the stabilization period, and the period of diversified exploration, in that order. The development period (1900-1948) saw a shift from "bamboo" to "wood," the emergence of the "three-handle" technique, and Zhou Shaomei's "Yu Shun." The emergence of the "Three Heads" technique and the birth of Zhou Shaomei's "Yu Shun Fen Feng Song" (the first Erhu solo piece) made the Erhu stand out from the accompaniment instruments as a solo instrument. The "Liu's Erhu" and the ten pieces of Erhu compositions by Liu Tianhua have consolidated the status of Erhu as a solo instrument and pushed the art of Erhu to a peak. Hua Yanjun's "Erquan Yingyue" was a soul-stirring Erhu piece that created a worldwide sensation and laid the foundation for Erhu's art to go global. During the period of stability (1949-1977), the Erhu was transformed from "silk strings" to "steel strings," which led to a breakthrough in terms of tone and volume, with bright, strong, and full tone and high volume. After the traditional erhu form was set, the period of diversified exploration (1978-2010) showed a diversified development in production materials, playing techniques, and music composition styles (Wei, 2013 : 8).

The Erhu underwent reform from bamboo to wooden Erhu and silk to steel wire strings. Using steel wire strings led to significant improvements in erhu tone and volume and also developed playing techniques, such as small skipping bows, plucked strings, large striking bows, double-string bows, flying bows, and knocking bows. These new playing techniques enriched the expressive power of the Erhu. The continuous improvement of Erhu's production has contributed to the development of playing techniques, and the continuous development of playing techniques has made Erhu's work more and more abundant, promoting the continuous development of Erhu's career. With its mellow, soft, beautiful, and expressive tone, it is one of the Chinese people's most important, charming, and representative national instruments and is highly appreciated by people. Some of its classic pieces, such as Bing's "Two Springs Reflecting the Moon," the popular "Horse Racing," and the inspiring "War Horse Running," can never be tired of hearing them (Li, 2004 : 34).

Erhu teaching system is an integration, internal logic that is associated with the actual operability of system construction, based on "HowNet" China academic data retrieval, involves the research and building "teaching system" music class academic literature about in five hundred or so, the mid-term with high music discipline construction, Orff teaching system research, Most of the research on the professional teaching system focuses on piano and vocal music, and there are only more than ten studies on the teaching system of ethnic instrumental music, such as Research on Liu Tianhua's teaching system (contribution of the establishment of Liu Tianhua's Erhu School to Erhu's Teaching System); Research on training method system (Assumptions of Pipa Teaching and Training System); Ma Yimin, Huang Zhong 1990-7-2 Journal of Zhejiang University of Media and Communication zhu Lixin, Journal of Zhejiang University of Media and Communication 2010-10-1. Through the academic journal, net retrieval can be found in the field of music research on the study of "teaching system" 95% of the study, published in 2000, illustrating the importance of systemic construction in recent years for teaching systems is more and more concern for everyone. However, for a national instrumental music teaching system, in which research could be stronger, it is almost a blank to conduct academic research on an instrumental music teaching system (Liang, 2017 : 196-196)

Erhu teaching songs constitute two most basic, divided into music and etudes. However, in the standardization, scientific and systematic forward into a big step, but in the early and middle degree of lack of teaching material system, most etudes are independent, the lack of relationship between each other, in the advanced level in the teaching material, monomial skill is reinforced, comprehensive skills but still to be in urgent need to strengthen practice. Although etude has built a macroscopic framework, its internal structure still needs to be scattered, complete, and compact (Yuan, 2006 : 1).

Research on erhu teaching can be found everywhere, but there are few materials on erhu learning for the elderly.

The university for the elderly is a new type of adult higher education that emerged in China in the early 1980s. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, adopted by the National People's Congress in August 1996, clearly stipulates that "the elderly have the right to continue their education. The state develops education for the elderly and encourages society to run various kinds of schools for the elderly." The status of school education for the elderly has been officially recognized in law.

In the face of an aging society, the Party, government, and school leaders attach great importance to the work of the elderly. Comrade Hu Jintao once profoundly pointed out that. To respect the elderly is to respect the laws of life, social development, and history. The Party and the government have emphasized for many years to improve the scientific and cultural quality of the nation. The 16th CPC National Congress Report has made "forming a learning society with lifelong learning for all people and promoting all-round development of people" one of the goals of building a moderately prosperous society, and the elderly should also continue to achieve the goal of all-round development. The university for the elderly is an important means to achieve this goal. It is the most appropriate embodiment of "lifelong learning."

In order to accelerate the construction of senior culture, according to the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of China's Aging Career" (Guo Fa [2011] No. 28) and the "National 'Twelfth Five-Year" period of cultural reform and development plan outline" (Zhong Bu Fa [2011] No. 40) The Ministry of Education has called for the vigorous development of education for the elderly. Older people have the right to continue to receive an education. The vigorous development of senior education is a requirement for implementing lifelong education, improving the quality of all people, and building a learning society, which is an important symbol of social development and progress. Culture and education departments should integrate senior education into the lifelong and community education system, strengthening leadership and unified planning. Make full use of community education resources to carry out knowledge-based, leisure-based, and health-care-based cultural education activities suitable for the characteristics of the elderly. Innovate elderly education courses and actively create good learning conditions and content for the elderly. Strengthen the construction of elderly education facilities and promote the healthy development of various types of elderly universities, elderly training centers, and elderly distance education institutions at all levels. The old cadres work in departments of party committees at all levels. Relevant government departments should further improve the quality and level of senior citizens' universities and old cadres' universities and encourage units and institutions with conditions to hold senior citizens' universities; grass-roots units and academic education institutions can provide learning opportunities and places for the elderly, making it convenient for them to attend studies nearby. Cultural authorities should do a good job

planning, approving, and managing various types of non-academic universities for the elderly at all levels, develop preferential policies and management methods, encourage social participation in the development of elderly education, and carry out a variety of forms of elderly education activities. Explore the content and mode of education of senior universities, adapt to the development of the times, adopt teaching methods that are popular among the elderly, popularize scientific and cultural knowledge, carry out health care, literature and art, and practical skills training, and improve the social adaptability and health quality of life of the elderly.

In the past fifty years, along with economic development and social progress, China's population structure has undergone a transformation from young to old, the average life expectancy of the population has been increasing, the total size of the population has expanded dramatically, and the speed of population aging has accelerated. In the future, the proportion of the elderly population in China's population structure will become larger and larger. Therefore, the country also attaches importance to the development of elderly education. Since the development history of the university for the elderly is relatively short, and the founding of elderly education in China is practice before theory. Scientific theory has a huge guiding effect on practice. It is necessary to study and explore some problems in elderly education.

Because of its mellow and soft tone, beautiful and expressive, Erhu is one of the Chinese people's most important, charming, and representative national musical instruments and is highly appreciated by people. When the older adults were young, they did not have the opportunity to learn to play the Erhu because of their forced life. So, when they hear some classical pieces such as Bing's popular "Horse Racing" and the inspiring "War Horse Running," not only do they never get tired of listening to them, but they also evoke their childhood memories and hope to make up for some of their regrets by learning now.

Secondly, because Erhu is easy to carry, can be played solo or in an ensemble, and can be purchased at a moderate price, it is favored by many older adults as their first choice for study and entertainment, as a way to cultivate their bodies and morals.

However, due to the age of the elderly, it is unlikely that they will be able to achieve immediate results in the actual learning process. The Erhu is an instrument with no visible sound and no string fingerboard. Its intonation is a challenging skill to master. The problem of intonation is a challenge for beginners to overcome. So, it is not easy for the elderly to learn Erhu, but everything has its positive and negative sides, there are problems and difficulties, and there are ways to solve them, depending on how we approach them. This requires the lecturer to clarify the goal and find out a set of scientific and effective teaching methods that meet the characteristics of the elderly in the beginner class to help them solve their problems, enhance their confidence in learning, and also lay a solid foundation for the later learning, which is why the researcher wants to study this problem.

## **Research Objectives**

- (1) To popularize the education of erhu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, so that everyone can better understand the erhu;
- (2) To compile an erhu guidebook for teaching students in Jinan University for the elderly in Shandong Province in China.
- (3) To teach erhu to the elderly by using the erhu guidebook.
- (4) To evaluate the teaching the erhu guidebook.

## Research Methodology

This research used a mixed research approach combining qualitative and quantitative.

- (1) Review the related literature;
- (2) Interview experts and sample students;
- (3) Drafting the erhu guidebook;
- (4) Erhu experts check the draft of the erhu guidebook;
- (5) Complete the teaching plan under the guidance of the expert;
- (6) The experimental group was taught with the erhu guidebook;

(7) The Erhu guide book and its teaching effect were evaluated by collecting relevant interviews, questionnaires and comparison of analysis results, and the effectiveness of the Erhu guide book was proved.

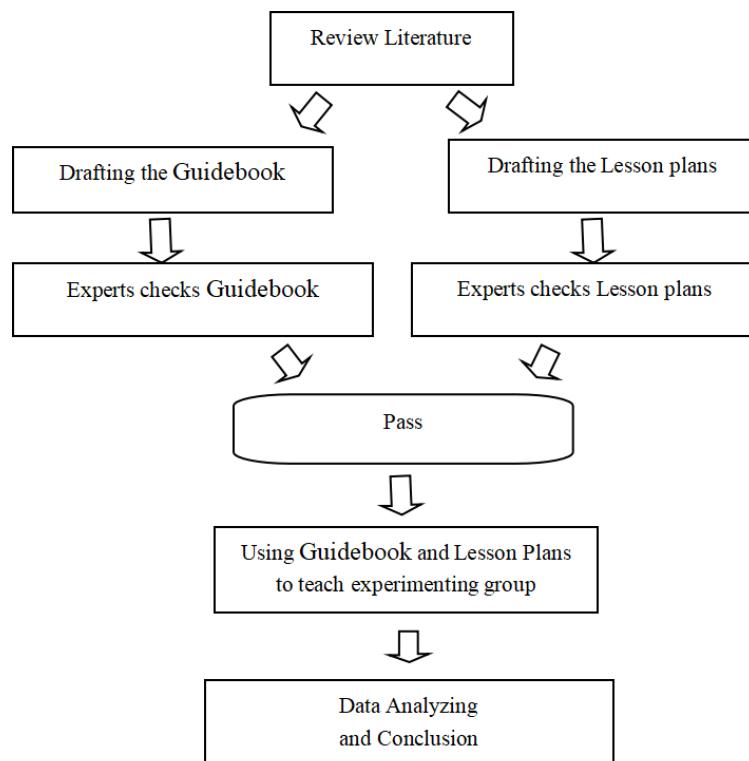
### Research Scope

**Area:** Jinan University for the Elderly is located at No. 11 Qianfo Mountain South Road, Jinan.

**People:** Erhu learners here refer to those aged 55-75 for females and 60-75 for males who are learning erhu at Jinan University for the Elderly. The population is 10 students in the elementary erhu class of Jinan University for the Elderly.

**Sample :** Since the class size was small, with only 10 students, the experts suggested that all 10 students participate in the experimental teaching. Therefore, the sample was 10 students from the beginner class of Erhu at Jinan University for the Elderly.

## Research Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework for research

## Research Results

The research procedures consisted of four steps. The specific summary is as follow.

### 1. The education of Erhu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument

To popularize the education of Erhu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, so everyone can better understand the Erhu. This is a qualitative study. The researcher studied the literature on concepts, principles, and theories, relevant studies on Erhu, erhu education, and erhu teaching materials, and in-depth interviews with older adults. The researchers conducted data collection, and all the collected data and information were analyzed, organized, summarized, and summarized through content analysis.

Chinese traditional music Erhu has a history of more than 1,000 years, but the development of Erhu education has only a history of more than 100 years. Erhu education for the elderly is also an essential part of Erhu education. In addition to extensive literature reading, the researchers invited three experts to give instructions before conducting the study. They all hold the title of associate professor or above, have rich teaching experience, and have been on the front line of teaching. In order to better understand erhu education and analyze the current situation of erhu education for the elderly, researchers interviewed experts with 11 questions. These questions mainly focus on the differences between erhu education for the elderly and Erhu education for other age groups, the problems worth noting in the teaching process, how to solve these problems, and suggestions and opinions on the Erhu guidebook.

The researchers summarized experts' suggestions that the elderly have obvious advantages and disadvantages compared with Erhu learners in other age groups and need more care and attention. Given the particularity of the elderly students, the researchers should stimulate the interest, curiosity, and curiosity of the elderly students and set relevant teaching content and teaching links according to the characteristics of the elderly students in the process of compiling the guidebook to arouse their learning enthusiasm.

### 2. Compile an erhu guidebook for teaching students at Jinan University for the elderly in Shandong Province in China

This erhu guidebook is designed to meet the needs of older adults who need a music foundation to learn Erhu. The researchers prepared an 11-question interview form with three experts. Through expert evaluation and research, it is found that this erhu guidebook must meet the needs of the elderly, with the following basic conditions:

1. The font must be large enough for the elderly to read music.
2. The arrangement of etudes must conform to the progressive law of the elderly learning piano.
3. The choice of etudes must improve the elderly's interest in learning.
4. A detailed bow method and finger marks must be convenient for the elderly to use.
5. A relevant explanation of music theory is needed to facilitate the elderly who do not have basic reading and use.

According to the expert's opinion, the Erhu guidebook was finally completed. This guidebook is divided into four parts: basic knowledge of Erhu, basic playing methods of Erhu, basic exercises, and comprehensive exercises. Based on the guide, the researchers developed a 14-lesson lesson plan and lesson plan. The teaching plan includes teaching purpose, content, activities, and assignments.

### **3. Teach erhu to the elderly by using the erhu guidebook**

Teach Erhu to the elderly by using the Erhu guidebook. It was quantitative research. The population used by the researcher was 10 students from a beginner erhu class at Jinan University for the Aged, all of whom participated in this experimental teaching as there were only 10 students in the class. The researcher conducted a pre-course test, an in-class test, and a final test to assess the scores. The scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics for their grades' percentages. This gave a clear picture of how well the participants were learning.

Under the guidance of experts, researchers apply guidebooks to teaching. Researchers should teach in strict accordance with the teaching plan and teaching plan. Through classroom observation and homework checks, the problems existing in the study and practice of the elderly students are reflected so that the students can have a clear and objective understanding of themselves, and the teacher can adjust the lesson's focus according to the feedback. Teachers' targeted practice methods have improved the practice efficiency of the elderly.

#### **(1) Strengthening of teacher demonstration**

During the class, increase the number of teacher demonstrations, and help exercise the student's eyesight and ear. See more, let the students observe the teacher's performance. Listen a lot and let the students remember the tunes. It can be compared when playing by oneself, which is more conducive to self-correction and improves learning efficiency.

#### **(2) Collective training of basic skills**

10-20 minutes of collective basic training before each class makes up for the problem that the elderly does not like to practice basic skills at home. At the same time, teachers can also use this time to find and point out their existing problems.

#### **(3) Training in singing**

Chant training, about 10 minutes per session, is important for older students with no musical background. Such chanting training can imperceptibly cultivate their musical quality, strengthen their cognition of intonation and rhythm, and effectively improve their learning efficiency. Meanwhile, through chanting training, they can also improve their musical performance.

#### **(4) Scientific after-class practice**

In order to make the after-class exercises of the elderly more efficient, the researchers suggest that the training methods of the elderly trainees be summarized as follows according to their characteristics:

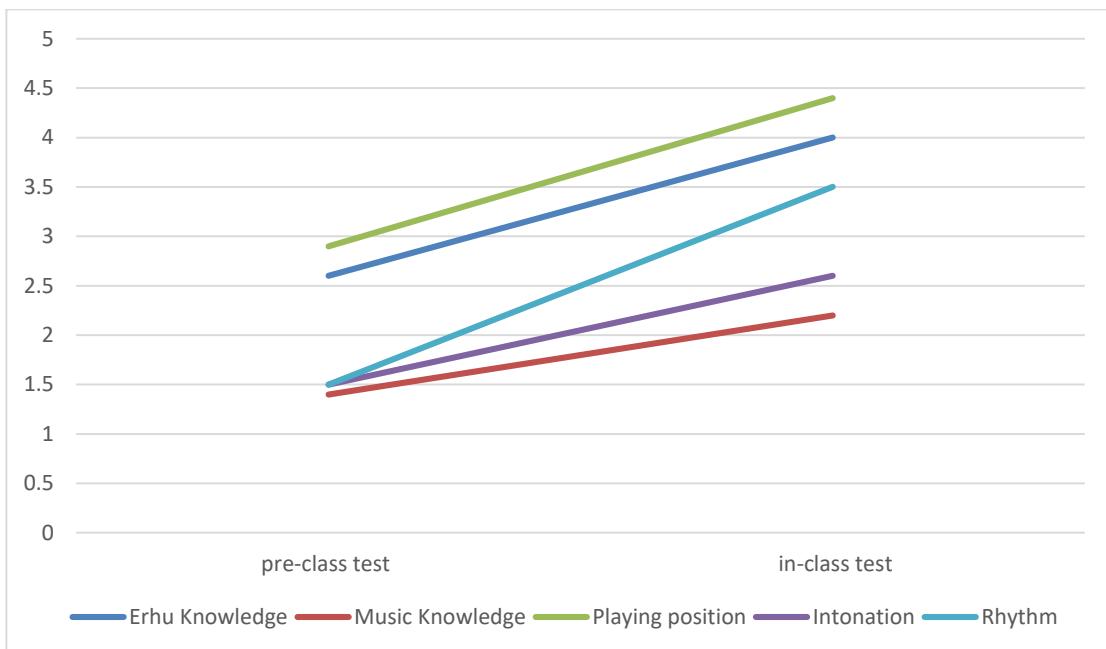
Intonation exercise: Students can make artificial phoneme marks on the piano stick and strictly follow the phoneme marks based on holding the piano correctly. At the same time, we can use a tuner or mobile phone APP to calibrate and adjust its pitch. After repeated practice, auditory and hand muscles have certain recognition and memory of intonation. Repeated practice can improve our ability to accurately identify pitches and our muscle control to play notes.

Rhythmic exercises: Practice against a metronome

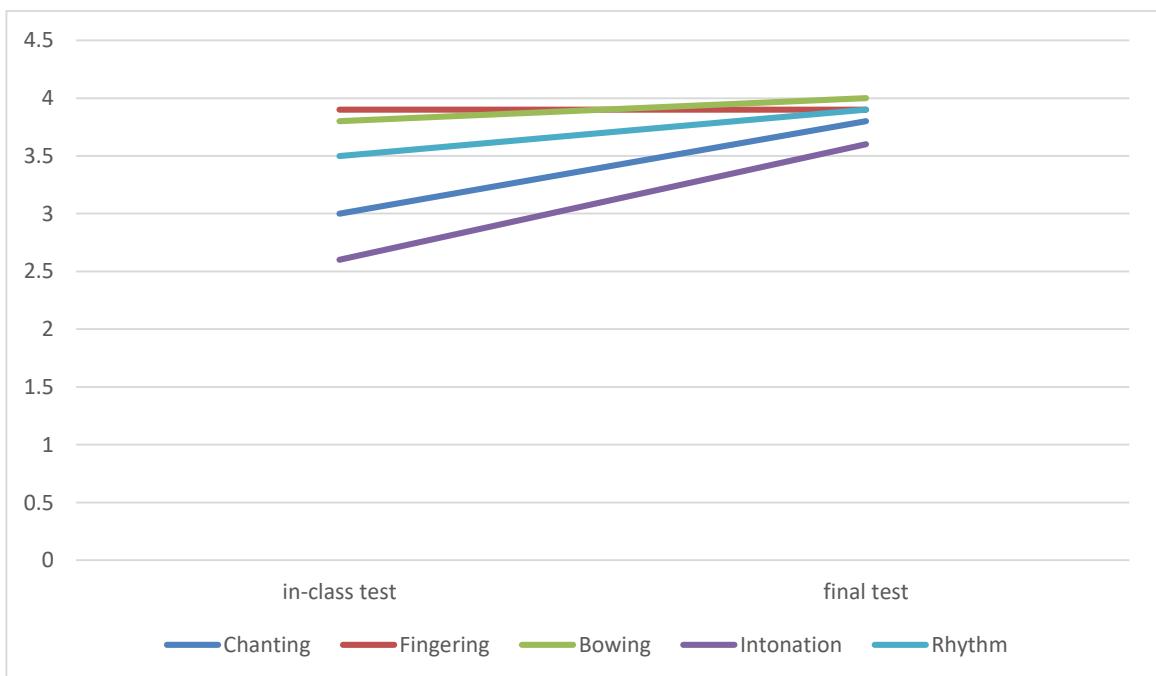
Work practice: practice in sections and focus on the difficult parts.

### **4. Evaluate the teaching the erhu guidebook**

The researchers analyzed the learning status of Erhu class in Jinan University for the Elderly. Under the guidance of experts, the researchers applied the Erhu guidebook to an Erhu beginner class at Jinan University for the Elderly. Through daily observation, record the learning process of the elderly trainees; Through the questionnaire survey, the Erhu guide book, teaching content and teachers' teaching situation were evaluated.



**Figure 2** Comparison of results of pre-class and in-class test



**Figure 3** Comparison of results of in-class and final test

The researchers also recorded the changes in the scores of the elderly participants by comparing the scores of the pre-class, in-class, and final tests. Comparing the results, it can be seen from Chart 4-1 and Chart 4-2 that these elderly students have made different progress in Erhu knowledge, music knowledge, playing themselves, intonation, and rhythm.

Through interviews, questionnaires, and comparison of students' learning results, experts also praised the Erhu guidebook: the Erhu guidebook has a clear structure and is divided into four parts. This Erhu guidebook is very methodical in solving the confusion of the elderly beginner Erhu. In terms of the content arrangement, familiar songs are arranged according to the growth experience of the elderly to stimulate their enthusiasm for learning. Songs are used instead of etudes to narrow the distance between Erhu and the elderly and make the learning process more entertaining for the elderly. The researchers increased the font size and marked the bow and fingering in detail, which improved the learning efficiency of the elderly. In addition, the researchers added some playing prompts to help the elderly avoid detours during practice. All in all, this is a very good guidebook for elementary erhu teaching for the elderly.

According to the questionnaire survey, all the 10 Erhu beginners at Jinan University have 100% satisfaction with the guidebook and course design, which fully confirms the researchers' design of the Erhu guidebook and teaching content design. First and foremost, the larger font size in this book solves the problem of their inability to read the music. The etudes in the guidebook are all familiar songs that are easy to understand and play, which the students also recognize. The detailed bow and fingering instructions in the guidebook save much time for these seniors. In addition, the increase in music knowledge and playing tips also solved the confusion of many elderly students in learning.

In addition, 70% of the students are very satisfied with their learning outcomes, 20% are fairly satisfied with their learning outcomes, and only 10% have an average evaluation of their learning outcomes.

## Discussion

Researchers believe that with the aging of the population, there are still many deficiencies in erhu education for the elderly, such as the shortage of teachers, non-standard and unsystematic teaching materials, and improper practice content. Erhu education for the elderly is a long and complicated process. There are the following problems in adult Erhu teaching: first, textbooks are not standardized enough, and the number of textbooks suitable for adult teaching is small; Second, due to the lack of professional education, adults tend to be mechanical and tense in practice due to the lack of control over intonation and rhythm. Third, improper arrangement of practice content and eagerness to succeed. We should follow the characteristics and rules of adult education and sum up and perfect the scientific training methods of adult erhu teaching step by step (Wang, 2020 : 142-143).

In the teaching process, the researchers asked the elderly students to conduct intonation training by "looking" at phonological markers, "listening" and using the tuner or mobile phone APP to adjust the finger position, and then through continuous practice to strengthen the "feeling" of finger falling string. This is very consistent with Liang Wei's point of view. Liang Wei (2017 : 196-196) states that Erhu learning is a long-term systematic training process for every professional learner. Practicing efficiently during the introductory stage of erhu learning is very important. In short, how you use your "brain," your "eyes," and your "heart" all boil down to the subtle movements of your "hands." It all boils down to the subtle movements of the "hand." In the learning process, the cycle of "seeing, hearing, and feeling" is an important process to establish good practice patterns, in which students learn the correct muscle movements of the right and left hands under the guidance of the teacher and confirm the accuracy of the external movements by "seeing" them. With the help of the teacher, the students establish their awareness of tone and intonation, and through "listening,"

they confirm that the music they play meets their internal expectations, and through "feeling," they internalize the correct muscular coordination of the right and left hands, arms, shoulders, and the whole body. Through the practice process from the "hands" into the "brain" to the performance from the "heart" into the "hands," in order to truly "feel" and "unite" in the musical performance, to "enter the room" and find the true meaning of art in the vast ocean of music. This is the only way to achieve "feeling" and "unity of the instrument and the person" in music performance, to "enter the hall" and find the true meaning of art in the vast ocean of music ) Chang, 2019 : 195).

Researchers pay attention to chanting training before the performance in the teaching process. This is in line with Wang Feifei's view. Wang Feifei (2019 : 171-172) Learning erhu requires certain musical literacy. Music literacy mainly refers to the basic skills and conditions related to music learning, including intonation, rhythm, understanding of music, memory, perception, expression, and other factors. Solfeggio ear training is a comprehensive music training course. Its goal is to improve the student's musical aesthetic feeling and artistic accomplishment through learning and to give play to the student's musical ability. In the teaching of erhu playing, only the sight-singing practice ear training content and erhu art practice organic integration can the students' learning initiative and enthusiasm of the erhu mobilize, greatly improve the students' intonation, rhythm and breath, and music memory, and emotional experience, fundamentally improve the level of student performance.

## **Recommendation**

### **Theoretical Recommendation**

Although the Erhu guidebook is relatively successful, it still has certain limitations. Due to time constraints, the learning progress of the elderly is relatively slow, so the researchers only edited the primary Erhu textbooks for the elderly, suggesting that middle and senior Erhu textbooks should be compiled according to the characteristics of the elderly in the future. Although many older adults are not good at using mobile phones and other smart products, it is suggested that researchers add video guides to the guidebook for the convenience of after-class learning.

### **Practical Recommendations**

Due to time constraints, researchers have not conducted any research on the effect of learning Erhu on brain aging in the elderly. The Erhu can be played with the coordination of the right and left hands, and the division of labor between the right and left hands is completely different. Generally, the elderly who learn to play the Erhu or learn music are not susceptible to Alzheimer's disease and other symptoms. However, due to time constraints, researchers have yet to study and confirm the Erhu, hoping to make relevant future studies so that more older adults can learn Erhu. It can enrich their retirement life and delay the aging speed of the elderly brain.

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