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**THE USAGE OF ITALIAN *SOLFEGGIOS* AND VOCALIZATIONS
IN THE CONTEMPORARY CZECH SINGING-EDUCATIONAL
PROCESS**

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Abstract

Solfeggios and vocalizations are didactic compositions, the practice of which builds muscular coordination, creating singing skills. Properly formed tone is the foundation of the correct singing technique and is indispensable in maintaining a healthy voice. From today's point of view, *solfeggios* and vocalizations are the traditional method of perfecting singing technique. Singing technique is closely linked to the process of vocal education, in which the Czech Republic has a rich tradition. At the primary level elementary art schools, children and young people have systematic and practical encounters with music and singing. Using a quantitative research design, this paper investigates the practical use of Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations in the current singing and teaching process in basic art schools in the Czech Republic. A total of 142 teachers participated in a questionnaire survey to find out whether the teachers implement Italian singing etudes in the teaching of solo singing and whether singing etudes facilitate the improvement of their pupils' singing skills. The results of the research refute the original hypothesis and prove that teachers use *solfeggio* and vocalizations, despite the general popularity of folk songs, which to some extent are represented by singing etudes in the Czech system of vocal education. The research provides answers to research questions related to this interesting issue, in which two phenomena intersect - the traditional Italian method of improving singing technique on the grounds of a unique system of basic art schools.

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1. Introduction

Interpretive singing practice is inseparably linked to singing technique, which should be continuously consolidated and developed during the course of education. Singing etudes are linked to vocal technical development. These are didactic compositions of varying degrees of difficulty, the proper, consistent and purposeful practice of which builds muscular coordination, creating singing skills that form the basis of a quality tone (Soukupová & Špaček, 2021b). Properly formed tone is a sign of proper voice training, is a prerequisite for tasteful, stylish interpretation and is indispensable in maintaining the health of the voice. Singing skills are the foundation of good singing technique, which Bickel defines as a learned process through which the pupil learns to coordinate elementary physiological systems including vocal breathing, phonation, resonance, and articulation (Bickel, 2017).

The singing etudes can be categorised into *solfegios* and vocalizations, whose common feature is the singing-didactic function. A singing etude contains a so-called singing pattern, a frequently repeated musical motif, which serves as a singing mnemonic device - it not only helps the pupils to practise and build singing skills, but also enables them to improve the quality and efficiency of the practice of the recital repertoire (Soukupová & Špaček, 2021a). A *solfeccio* consists of a melody or a melodic combination, in the interpretation of which the pupil uses solmization¹ syllables. In a historical context, *solfeccio* was of considerable importance in the context of the foreignization of singing technique and was intrinsically linked to the teaching of other musical disciplines taught in Italian conservatories during the 18th and 19th centuries - these included lessons in counterpoint, keyboard playing, composition and improvisation (Baragwanath, 2011). According to Baragwanath (2011), the pedagogical overlap of *solfeccio* is evidenced by written records in the statutes and regulations of educational institutions, such as the Conservatory of Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini in Naples. The *maestro di canto*, who acquired his singing skills by practising *solfegios* and then applied them in his own teaching practice, held the position of teacher of singing and that of teacher of counterpoint (Baragwanath, 2011). He further adds that many voice teachers and singers have focused their attention not only on teaching singing but also on composing operas (Baragwanath, 2011). Unlike *solfeccio*, vocalization² is sung to a vocal or symbolic text, melodically very often based on pre-existing *solfegios*, and has historically had only one main pedagogical role: it has functioned solely as a singing exercise (Baragwanath, 2020).

From today's point of view, *solfegios* and vocalizations can be considered a traditional method of improving singing technique, as their use during the educational process has been evident for centuries, as evidenced by the large number of these compositions stored in the archives and libraries of conservatories, since the inception of opera in the territory of Italian provenance. Singing etudes have been an integral part

¹ Solmization syllables are used to indicate the tones of the diatonic scale, which are derived from the first syllables of the verses of the Latin medieval chant *Ut queant laxis*. These syllables are indicated by the letters of the Latin alphabet and serve as a mnemonic in teaching and learning new compositions. The inventor of this teaching method was the music theorist and teacher of High Medieval music Guido d'Arezzo.

² A vocalization is a concert composition or singing exercise with the accompaniment of an instrument, which is most often interpreted by the singer using one or more vowels (or a symbolic text), according to the vocal-technical needs of the singer basing his or her singing skills in order to improve the sung tone.

of teaching and have formed the basis of the didactic repertoire. However, this paper aims to uncover how the use of *solfeggios* and vocalizations are viewed in the contemporary singing-education process in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic is a country where singing and music education has a significant tradition. The period of the 18th century was characterised by the work of artistically gifted cantors and the birth of town music schools, which in the following century crystallised into organised music education, and which were gradually supervised by a school inspectorate (Bořek, 2010). The transformation of these schools took place in the 20th century. The schools began to be called 'folk art schools' and offered future pupils the study of not only music but also art, dance and literature and drama (Bořek, 2010). After the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, these Czech institutions were restored to the school status that had been removed during the normalisation period, and became part of the system of continuing arts education bearing the current name of Basic Art School (Bořek, 2010).

Basic art schools are a unique phenomenon. They have an irreplaceable place in the field of Czech artistic education of children and youth. A new system of curriculum documents created at the state and school level has been implemented into the educational system of these institutions (Bořek, 2010). The national level is represented by the National Programme of Education and the Framework Educational Programmes defining the binding frameworks of school education (Bořek, 2010). The school level of these documents is represented by school curricula, according to which education is implemented in individual schools. Basic art schools create their school curriculum completely independently, taking into account the profile of their school, the needs of their pupils and the national Framework Education Programme (Bořek, 2010). The preamble of the Framework Curriculum for Basic Arts Education states that the wide range of these schools and their interdependence is unique not only in the Czech environment, but also in the European and global context (Bořek, 2010). These schools provide pupils with live contact with music, prepare them professionally and systematically for active artistic activity and future studies at higher types of art schools, especially at secondary education institutions, conservatories and universities - meaning studies at music departments of pedagogical faculties and academies of performing arts (Grobár et al., 2018).

The following discussion focuses on the above-mentioned issue in more detail and presents research on the connection of two musical phenomena simultaneously - singing etudes (*solfeggios* and vocalizations) and elementary art school. The paper presents the current research results investigating the practical application of the traditional method of improving singing technique by means of Italian singing etudes in the teaching of solo singing in the contemporary singing-educational process in basic art schools in the Czech Republic.

2. Problem Statement

The intention of the vocal education process at the basic art school is primarily to maintain the health of the child's voices, which would be capable of systematic and progressive development. The main parameters of the quality of the child's expression are a healthy voice and the quality of the sung tone. These two aspects of solo singing are ideally practised and maintained through didactic pieces - singing etudes that have been composed for this purpose. By practising the singing etudes with the help of the teacher's

communicative methodological instructions, the pupil becomes familiar with classical singing technique and learns to work properly with his voice, since the voice is the inner musical instrument of every adept singer (Lehmann, 2005). Since the pupils use solmization syllables, vocal or symbolic text when practicing singing etudes, they can fully concentrate on building and developing their singing skills, which require not only adequate pedagogical guidance from the teacher, but also a high level of concentration.

Over the centuries, singing etudes have penetrated the Czech educational process, so they should be part of the vocal education of future voice professionals. In the Czech school environment, however, this methodological role has, to some extent, been represented by Czech and Moravian folk songs (Soukupová & Špaček, 2021a). Due to the extensive use and popularity of these folk songs, it can be hypothesized that *solfeggios* and vocalizations could not sufficiently penetrate the educational process in basic art schools, and thus, folk songs took over the methodological function, while, at the same time, remaining a legitimate part of the performance repertoire (Soukupová & Špaček, 2021a). The purpose of this article is not to examine the status of the function of folk songs, but to clarify the role of singing etudes in teaching and their practical application in the course of vocal education. In light of the above literature, this study has the following objectives, which were reflected in the final design of the questionnaire:

- to focus attention on the objective confirmation or refutation of hypotheses and answering research questions based on reflection on data obtained through questionnaires
- to objectively evaluate whether and to what extent solo singing teachers implement singing etudes in their pedagogical practice
- to map the overall approach of teachers to Italian singing etudes
- to reveal the attitudes and opinions of teachers with regard to the practical use of Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations in the course of teaching solo singing

3. Research Questions

The present study aims to present the results of a questionnaire survey evaluating the responses of teachers which will confirm or refute the following hypotheses:

H1: "Less than 50% of the surveyed teachers use singing etudes (regularly or occasionally with selected pupils)."

- H1 was created generated based on the premise of the general use of folk songs in Czech elementary art schools (see explanation in the Problem Statement section)

H2: "More than 50% of the surveyed teachers agree with the statement that singing etudes are a suitable didactic means to build and improve singing skills."

H3: "More than 50% of the surveyed teachers agree with the statement that, based on correct practice of singing etudes, it is possible to accelerate the acquisition of singing skills and thus positively influence the quality of the sung tone."

- H2 and H3 were generated based on the premise that teachers are theoretically familiar with singing etudes from the time of their artistic studies, as these were, to some extent, part of their initial vocal training

This study will also deal with the following research questions:

Q1: Which singing criteria are most important for a teacher to consider when choosing a singing etude for a pupil?

Q2: What type of singing etudes do teachers prefer?

Q3: Which composers of Italian singing etudes have been used or are being used in teaching solo singing?

Q4: Which singing skills can be improved by practicing singing etudes?

Q5: Do teachers replace singing etudes with folk songs?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the above issue in greater detail and to find out whether the traditional method of improving singing technique through the practice of Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations is used in basic art schools. Additionally, the study aims to find out whether the practice of Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations helps solo singing teachers improve the singing skills of their pupils. The study focused on an examination of basic art school solo singing teachers' attitudes with regard to the actual use of Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations in their pedagogical practice.

5. Research Methods

The research was conducted on the basis of the Specific Research Project of the Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, as part of the author's doctoral studies. The research method was selected with regard to the procedures and techniques of music-pedagogical research (Váňová & Skopal, 2017). In particular, the method of theoretical research analysis - questionnaire form - was chosen. Therefore, the research was conducted using a quantitative empirical questionnaire survey method focused on real data collection in practice and their subsequent analysis. The questionnaire was prepared by the author of this research work. The author generated her own questionnaire including new and individually prepared questions based on vast analysis of professional literature and information resources. These questions were validated by experts from the Music Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hradec Králové. At the initial stage of questionnaire development, the subject, aim and object of the research were determined. Then, a semi-structured questionnaire was created consisting of structured questions with given answers and open questions that allowed more comprehensive answers. Some questions were multiple choice ones. The survey included a "pre-survey" testing of the validity, relevance and clarity of each question. A small number of respondents participated in the pilot testing. Their answers were not included in the results of the survey as these only served to amend the questions for the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire gleaned demographic details of the sample such as the gender and age of the respondents, the length of their teaching experience, the specific courses taught at the basic art school and the highest level of education attained in the field. The second part of the questionnaire survey, which is explained in more detail in the following chapter, aimed at establishing facts key to answering the research questions and was directed towards the use of singing etudes in teaching and the important selection criteria that influence the selection of singing etudes. We considered it important to find out what

type of singing etudes teachers prefer, which authors of Italian singing etudes they have worked or are working with in their teaching, and whether they consider etudes as an essential part of teaching suitable for improving singing skills. Last but not least, the respondents were asked about their overview in the field of this didactic repertoire, whether the selection of available etudes was sufficient for them or whether they would welcome the addition of new singing etudes to their repertoire portfolio. The final questions concentrated on indicating the most common reasons leading teachers not to use singing etudes and whether they substitute singing etudes with other didactic pieces.

The questionnaire which fully respected the anonymity of all respondents was distributed via email using the online questionnaire creation platform Survio to the sample. The collected data were evaluated and analysed using relevant and appropriate statistical comparison methods. Therefore, the research focused on the absolute frequency of responses, the frequency of which is expressed numerically and determines how often a particular response appears in the survey. The research questions also aim to determine the relative frequency of responses, which are expressed as percentages. These data are presented in the provided tables.

The questionnaire was completed by 142 singing teachers from various basic art schools in the Czech Republic during December 2022 and January 2023. Initially, as many teachers as possible were approached. Nevertheless, the target group is represented by the subset of the teaching population that voluntarily decided to participate in this research activity (i.e. not all solo singing teachers from all primary art schools).

6. Findings

The following subchapters discuss the research findings. These are divided to the demographic information and the findings connected with the research questions.

6.1. Demographic information

The target group of respondents comprised teachers of basic art schools teaching solo singing. 127 (89.4%) women and 15 (10.6%) men participated in the study. In terms of age: the largest group of teachers was between 26-45 years old (45.8%) followed by 46-65 years old (38%); 18-25 years (8.5%); and over 66 years (7.7%). In terms of the composition of courses taught at the art school, 43% teach choral and chamber singing in addition to classical solo singing at the basic art school, while 21.1% reported that they also teach singing of popular genres in addition to classical solo singing; 13.4% teach only classical solo singing; 8.5% also teach instrumental singing; and 14.1% chose the option "other". If a respondent selected this response, it means that they teach solo singing in combination with a course not listed among the survey response choices. The response choices included the most common combinations of the courses that teachers teach. These were determined based on the researcher's practical experience and professional sources of information. In terms of the length of experience in teaching solo singing, Table 1 shows that most of the teachers have been teaching for sixteen years or more.

Table 1. Length of practice

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
16 and over	69	48.6 %
2-5	28	19.7 %
6-10	25	17.6 %
11-15	19	13.4 %
Less than 1 year	1	0.7 %

In terms of the teachers' highest educational attainment in the field of solo singing. Table 2 shows that the majority (47.9%) obtained their highest education at the conservatory and graduated with a diploma (this course of study lasts six years); 20.4% achieved their highest education at the Academy of Performing Arts by completing a Master's degree; 14.8% reached the Master's degree at any Faculty of Education in the Czech Republic. The remaining teachers (11.2%) obtained their highest qualifications from the Conservatory (matriculation), Academy of Performing Arts (bachelor's) and Primary Art (I. and II. Degree).

Table 2. Highest education attained

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
Conservatory (discharge)	68	47.9 %
Academy of Performing Arts (MgA.)	29	20.4 %
Faculty of Education (Mgr.)	21	14.8 %
Faculty of Education (Bc.)	8	5.6 %
Conservatory (matriculation)	7	4.9 %
Academy of Performing Arts (Bc.)	5	3.5 %
Primary Art (I. and II. degree)	4	2.8 %

6.2. Findings related to the research questions

The second part of the questionnaire survey aimed at establishing facts key to answering the research questions and was directed towards the use of singing etudes in teaching and the important selection criteria that influence the selection of singing etudes. It was deemed important to investigate the types of singing etudes teachers preferred, which authors of Italian singing etudes they have worked or are working with in their teaching, and whether they considered etudes an essential part of teaching suitable for improving singing skills. Last but not least, the respondents were asked about their overview in the field of this didactic repertoire, whether the selection of available etudes was sufficient for them or whether they would welcome the addition of new singing etudes to their repertoire portfolio. The final questions concentrated on indicating the most common reasons for teachers not to use singing etudes and whether they substitute singing etudes with other didactic pieces.

As part of the research process, questions and hypotheses were formulated that the questionnaire survey was designed to answer and confirm or refute. The process of analysing the collected data yielded the following results:

- ✘ H1: "Italian singing etudes are used (regularly or occasionally with selected pupils) by less than 50% of the teachers surveyed."

Hypothesis 1 was disproved. A total of 107 teachers stated that they use Italian singing etudes regularly or irregularly with some pupils. More specifically, 84 respondents reported using these pieces irregularly with some pupils (59.2%) and 27 respondents expressed that they use singing etudes regularly (16.2%). The irregularity is due to a completely objective fact; since the teacher very often teaches pupils of different ages, and Italian *solfeggios* and vocalizations can only be included when the pupil has reached sufficient mental, physical and vocal technical maturity. Further results are documented in Table 3:

Table 3. Use of Italian singing etudes

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
Yes. Irregularly with some pupils.	84	59.2 %
Yes. Regularly.	23	16.2 %
No. I do not use them at all.	27	19 %
No. I use singing etudes by authors other than Italian.	8	5.6 %

- ✓ H2: "More than 50% of the surveyed teachers agree with the statement that singing etudes are a suitable didactic means to build and improve singing skills."

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed. A total of 78.2% of teachers consider singing etudes as a suitable didactic tool for building singing skills, while only 3.5% do not consider singing etudes as suitable for improving singing skills. The following Table 4 illustrates the findings:

Table 4. Singing etudes as a suitable didactic tool

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
Yes.	111	78.2 %
Do not know.	26	18.3 %
No.	5	3.5 %

- ✓ H3: "More than 50% of the surveyed teachers agree with the statement that, based on correct practice of singing etudes, it is possible to accelerate the acquisition of singing skills and thus positively influence the quality of the sung tone."

Hypothesis 3 was confirmed. Out of 142 teachers surveyed, 114 (80.3%) teachers agreed with the above statement while only 3.5% disagreed with this statement. 16.2% chose the option Do not know. The details are in Table 5.

Table 5. Progress in the acquisition of singing skills

Answer	By replying to	Share
Yes.	114	80.3 %
Do not know.	23	16.2 %
No.	5	3.5 %

Another research question was aimed at identifying whether teachers consider singing etudes to be an important part of teaching solo singing to pupils, which can contribute not only to faster progress in singing technique, but also to its improvement (see Table 6). A total of 100 respondents (70.4%) responded positively while 23 respondents (16.2%) opted for Do not know. 19 respondents (13.4%) responded negatively.

Table 6. Singing etudes as a mean to improve singing technique and its progression

Answer	By replying to	Share
Yes.	100	70.4 %
Do not know.	23	16.2 %
No.	19	13.4 %

Question 2 was in the form of a closed-ended question, so its results are expressed in Table 7. What type of singing etudes do teachers prefer? The largest proportion of teachers surveyed (81 respondents in total (57%)) preferred singing etudes sung to an instructional Italian text, 58 (40.8%) respondents preferred singing etudes sung to vocals and 39 (27.5%) respondents preferred etudes sung to solmization syllables. The percentages are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Preferences of most selected type of singing etudes

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
Singing etudes sung to text.	81	57 %
Vocal etudes sung on vocal.	58	40.8 %
Singing etudes sung on solmization syllables.	39	27.5 %

In order to obtain data to answer research questions 1, 3, 4, and 5, open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to give teachers ample room for their own personal expression of their attitudes towards the issues. Therefore, the data of these questions are expressed in verbal descriptions. These reflect respondent responses from the most frequent to the least frequent. Due to the fact that these were open-ended types of questions, the data are not expressed in tables. Question 2 is an exception as it was presented to respondents as a close question. Its data are therefore expressed in the table.

RQ1: Which singing criteria are most important for a teacher to consider when choosing a singing etude for a pupil?

Respondents answered this question in two ways. They reflected on the pupil's individual needs and also stated the criteria they followed in the score of each singing etude. The most common responses included the pupil's technical maturity and overall ability to sing the vocal etudes, the pupil's voice range and tonal range of the piece, the pupil's age and the current vocal technical problems the pupil is currently dealing with. They considered it important to observe the cantabile (singability) and virtuosity of the etude, the types of intervals in the singing part, the continuity with the repertoire currently studied in the form of songs or arias, the instrumental accompaniment, and the pupil's willingness to sing the etude.

RQ3: Which singing etudes by Italian composers have been or are being used by teachers in teaching solo singing? The majority of respondents (106 respondents in total) mentioned the composer Nicola Vaccai, while 45 respondents mentioned the name Giuseppe Concone. One respondent each mentioned the

following names: Enrico Caruso and his vocal exercises, Gioacchino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Scarlatti. Respondents also mentioned some non-Italian composers, were not included in these results as they are not the subject of this research.

RQ4: Which singing skills do teachers improve by practicing singing etudes? The fourth research question reveals the most common singing skills mentioned by teachers in their open-ended responses. Table 8 presents the most frequently mentioned singing skills that are improved by practising singing etudes.

Table 8. Singing skills

No.	Singing skill	Frequency
1	Appoggio della voce	38
2	Legato	33
3	Pure intonation	32
4	Voice agility	20
5	Singing intervals	17
6	Phrasing	17
7	Balanced vocal registers	13
8	Resonance and pitch shift	12
9	Voice range	11
10	Cantilena	10

The table shows that the most frequently mentioned skill is *appoggio della voce*, meant as the breath support of the voice, which is formed by the diaphragm (diaphragm). From a singing point of view, it is very important, as it allows pupils to make a controlled exhalation and thus to work economically with it (Vydrová, 2017). The breath support of the voice is active under the cooperation of several muscle groups allowing to achieve several phases of breathing, in particular a short breath hold before the beginning of the sung phrase and then a slow exhalation of air that vibrates the vocal cords without exerting any pressure on the larynx and vocal cords (Vydrová, 2017). *Legato* can be defined as a continuous and uninterrupted smooth flow of tone that is dependent on the proper support of the voice. In the third place, the respondents mentioned the ability of pure intonation, followed by vocal agility (mobility) and singing intervals. Respondents also reported resonance and pitch shift. Thoracic and head resonance reshape the primary tone produced in the larynx, giving the voice its characteristic timbre and quality (Morávková, 2013). In the course of studying at a basic art school, the pupil gradually becomes familiar with the concepts of resonance, tone setting, and head tone and learns to implement them practically in the phonation process. The effort to build correct and constant habits in the field of resonance in order to reach the sonority tone requires automating the elementary processes of phonation, singing breathing and articulation (Soukupová, 2022). These cooperations' of the pupils are directed towards the gradual experience of new sensations, which the singing adept independently creates and consolidates as a result of the practice of singing etudes. Last but not least, the respondents mentioned the vocal range that can be extended upwards or downwards in the tonal range by practicing the singing etudes and the ability to sing the *cantilena*.

RQ5: Do teachers replace singing etudes with folk songs? The analysis of the questionnaire responses showed that singing teachers replaced singing etudes most often other vocal exercises (43), either

adopted or created by the teachers themselves, or as a more complicated type of singing, which is performed at the beginning of each singing lesson as a so-called warm up. 29 respondents mentioned folk songs as a substitute for singing etudes. A smaller group of respondents mentioned the use of etudes other than Italian etudes, mentioning the use of pre-recorded songs (artificial songs or arias) which they sing with the pupils first on vocal or solmization syllables, thus replacing the presence of Italian singing etudes during the singing lesson.

The questionnaire survey also included questions that were not part of the predefined hypotheses or research questions. Among other things, the teachers were asked whether the portfolio and the overall choice of repertoire was sufficient for them, or whether they would welcome additional authors and their singing etudes. A total of 87 respondents would welcome more repertoire choices (61.3%) and 55 respondents (38.7%) perceived the repertoire choices in the Czech Republic as sufficient. A total of 105 respondents indicated that they would use a comprehensive collection of Italian singing etudes in solo singing lessons for the needs of a basic art school, while 15 respondents indicated that they would not use this collection. Details are illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9. A comprehensive collection of Italian singing etudes

Answer	Number of Respondents	Share
Yes.	105	73.9 %
Do not know.	22	15.5 %
No.	15	10.6 %

The respondents also stated that the most frequent reasons for not using singing etudes were the excessive vocal-technical difficulty of the compositions, insufficient vocal-technical maturity of the pupil, or his/her young age or inclination to other types of compositions. They also mentioned the lack of time for practicing these etudes due to the short time allocation (45 minutes per week), the lack of time for finding adequate singing etudes for the pupil, the insufficient amount of sheet music, as well as the teacher's personal negative experience with singing etudes from the time of his/her studies.

7. Conclusion

The results of the quantitative research among basic art school teachers in the Czech Republic has revealed interesting findings. More than 50% of the teachers surveyed use Italian singing etudes in teaching solo singing, thus refuting the first hypothesis. A total of 78.2% of the teachers consider singing etudes as a suitable didactic tool for improving singing skills. 80.3% of the teachers believe that, based on the correct practice of singing etudes, it is possible to accelerate the gaining of singing skills and thus positively influence the quality of the sung tone, thus confirming the second and third hypotheses. 70.4% of the teachers consider singing etudes as an important part of teaching solo singing. When choosing a singing etude, teachers consider the following aspects: the individual vocal needs of the pupil and the scores of each etude. These areas are reflected in the selection criteria. These include the vocal maturity of the pupil, the range of the voice, the age of the pupil, and the pupil's willingness to rehearse these pieces and the pupil's current vocal technical issues.

With regard to the selection of a singing etude, teachers observe the tonal range of the composition, its cantabile, virtuosity, the types of intervals used, the vocal-technical continuity with the currently studied recital repertoire and the instrumental accompaniment. 57% of the teachers prefer singing of singing etudes to an instructional text in Italian, 40.8% percent prefer singing of singing etudes to vocals, and the lowest percentage of teachers use singing etudes sung to solmization syllables, 27.5% in total. In the Czech educational space, the etudes of Nicola Vaccaie and Giuseppe Concone are the most used. Singing etudes most often improve *appoggio della voce*, singing in *legato* and the ability of pure intonation. They refine vocal agility, singing intervals, phrasing, help to balance vocal registers, improve singing in resonance and overall correct pitch setting, the pupil's vocal range and cantilena. If teachers substitute any other option for the singing etudes, it is most often voice exercises taken or created by the teacher. The results also pointed to the fact that teachers replace Italian singing etudes with folk songs or use etudes by composers other than Italian. They temporarily transform the pre-recital compositions into etudes sung on vocal or solmization syllables at the beginning of the rehearsal.

Most teachers would welcome a broader portfolio of these didactic compositions and would use a comprehensive collection of Italian singing etudes specifically created for basic art school pupils, which is still missing for the needs of Czech teachers. The most frequent reasons for not using singing etudes in teaching solo singing to basic art school pupils were given by teachers as too much vocal technical difficulty, insufficient vocal technical maturity of the pupil, low interest in practising these compositions or inclination towards other types of compositions, which to some extent reflects the increasing prevalence of the so-called "Italian etudes". This may result in a decreasing quality of pupils' singing expression. This phenomenon is very interesting and would certainly be worthy of further investigation. The research project has met its objectives: it confirmed and refuted the predefined hypotheses and answered the research questions. The study has provided empirical evidence whether teachers implement Italian singing etudes in the teaching of solo singing in basic art schools in the Czech Republic, mapped their general approach and attitudes towards this issue, all with regard to the area of practical use of these didactic compositions in practice.

Data Availability Statement

Data is available upon request.

Declaration of Conflicts Interests

The author declares that they have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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