Music - support for non-native speakers of Romanian language. Case Study

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ABSTRACT
Multiculturalism is a phenomenon frequently encountered not only in numerous countries, but also in Romania. Cohabitation based on respecting the cultural values of each ethnicity is natural and is the main cause of intercultural exchange, enriching each person involved. Absorption, integration of non-native people in a socio-professional environment is conditioned by communication, a good oral and written expression representing an important element of their lives.

This study is supposed to highlight a working method dedicated to learning a new language, learning through music. Our purpose is to expose the current situation of the capability of non-native speakers to express themselves in Romanian, to analyse the results obtained from an educative intervention through Romanian children folklore songs, on a class that has Hungarian as the learning language. We aim to confirm that the results will be represented by a substantial enrichment of children's vocabulary, a better understanding of a read text, and last but not least, an improved ability to express themselves in full sentences, phrases.

KEYWORDS
music involvement, case study, non-native speakers, children's songs, musical education

INTRODUCTION
1.1 PRESENTING THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY THE AUTHORS OF THE STUDY
In the context of the teachers’ early training in view of their future teaching process at primary school within the Hungarian section, acting as coordinators of the pedagogical practice, we often assist activities and lessons taught in Romanian, classes which are held by our students with non-native children. On the basis of our observations we can assume that not only from an oral point of view, but also from a written one, students need to improve their ability to express themselves in Romanian.
After a couple of discussions with non-native students, we came to the conclusion that the level of linguistic competence is strongly connected to their primary education, this depending on several factors:

The environment where they grew up. The ones who grew up in an urban environment prove to have a superior ability to express themselves in Romanian, compared to students who were raised in a rural environment. In small communities formed by non-natives, the need to speak the official language is almost absent. Therefore, children do not practice Romanian enough, which makes the learning process even harder. Also, the contact with native speakers is so rare, that they seldom reach the point to actually communicate and express themselves in Romanian. During their daily activities (playing with their friends, practicing sports, etc.) children frequently use their native language.

The mentality of the adults regarding the cultivation of the ethnic identity. We are talking about a large number of opinions which were generated by the different attitudes that adults have towards their own culture. This is obviously separating the two different sides of the issue: adults who reject any other culture, refusing to speak the official language of the country, and adults who want to get absorbed by the society, giving up speaking their mother tongue. This is a major factor when it comes to deciding the language which a child will use during his/her studies.

The tendency to give a greater amount of attention to minority cultures, which is required to be kept safe. This tendency determines the way groups where children integrate tend to spend their free time.

The native language of the adult who spends more time at home with the family. No matter if we talk about the mother, the father, the babysitter, the adult tends to talk to the children using their native language. The language in which the child decides to study is often determined by the connection which is formed between the child and the parent. This can be represented by a close connection or a rejecting attitude (Zimmerman 2009).

The relationship of the child with the native or non-native parent. The language in which children choose to speak with each parent is the result of their affective relationship with them. The option for a particular language can indicate either closeness or rejection, revolt, the child’s tension in relation to the parent who he/she speaks to, as he/she can delimit the area of topics for discussion related to family life and that of the official ones.

On the basis of the above mentioned points, we can confirm the fact that, generally speaking, children with non-native parents frequently use their parent's mother tongue, not Romanian.

1.2 PRESENTING THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

A student asked: "Why is that when we like a song in Romanian we can learn it quickly and with no issues whatsoever, and a random piece of information presented in Romanian requires so much effort to remember?”. On one hand, this marks the presence of a problem related to learning Romanian. On the other hand this also shows that there is the desire and the potential to learn Romanian among the non-natives speakers. Still,
during the educational process, studying Romanian doesn't quite follow a smooth, progressive path. It actually follows a sinuous path, influenced by the frequent changing of the teachers of Romanian language and literature. Children who receive their education in an urban environment are not faced with this problem as much as children who are educated in the rural environment.

A wish of the ones who wish for a better integration in multicultural societies is valuing the equality of chances offered not only by the ability of using both the official language and their native language, but also by their academic results. Furthermore, students who prepare to become primary school teachers, point out the importance of a good ability to use Romanian ever since childhood. For this purpose, they experiment with curiosity and enthusiasm different working methods with non-native children, making the process of assimilation of the Romanian language both attractive and efficient.

1.3 ASSESSING THE PROBLEM TO BE STUDIED AND DEFINING IT
The current socio-political-economic context has a pronounced kaleidoscopic character. The dynamic of life has increased considerably over the past few decades, with more and more people choosing economic and socio-professional stability in defiance of maintaining an organic link with their native places. As a result, the number of mixed families is increasing. In order to achieve a beneficial integration at both a personal and social level, their cultural and linguistic profile is of interest both at empirical as well as scientific level.

In Romania, especially in the West, multiculturalism is a very old phenomenon. Living together based on mutual respect to the cultural values of each ethnicity is natural and results in an intercultural exchange that enriches all those involved.

Absorption, assimilation, integration of non-natives in the socio-professional environment is conditioned by communication. Thus, we consider that their good oral and written use of Romanian is an important element of their existence.

Student/teacher discussions are mostly conducted in their native language. The Romanian language is used almost exclusively in Romanian language classes. The topics discussed during these classes are strictly related to the contents of the school manual, rarely referring to the children's lives. Romanian is studied as a foreign language, so the first step in learning it is to acquire a basic vocabulary. Proper use of terms in sentences and phrases is hampered by lack of praxis. Disagreements, improper use of words in sentences and phrases generate uncertainty in expression. One of the most difficult tasks in classes with non-native children is to create the appropriate context for the exercise of the Romanian language.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon, we aim to highlight a well-established way of studying a new language, learning with music. We intend to check whether the results obtained from an intervention using Romanian songs on a class with Hungarian as the teaching language indicates a substantial increase in children's vocabulary, a better reading comprehension, a better capacity of expressing themselves in sentences, phrases.
The presence of music is a constant in the child's life, it is a natural one, which often accompanies activities during the day. Children often sing while drawing, creating or dancing. They sing whenever they feel the need to share their joy with others.

The study discipline involved in conducting this investigative approach, musical education is extremely popular among young people, due to the fact that it appeals to the means of accomplishment close to their needs and concerns at their current age, such as: playing, singing, dancing, stories, movement. An amalgamation between Romanian communication and music, represented here by songs in Romanian ensures an increase in efficiency in the child's linguistic performances.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

OBJECTIVE

The fundamental objective of this analytical study is to highlight and prove through practical musical education, all the songs having Romanian lyrics, that aiding children to easily learn the vocabulary, different linguistic formulae, etc. is possible by music.

The derived objectives of the research that support the hypothesis, objectives that lead to achieving the main goal are:

- **Syncretic analysis of the relationship between song lyrics and melody, a symbiosis that makes words easier to remember in English. Through achieving this goal, we will highlight the fact that the musical teaching method requires learning both the melody and the lyrics.**

- **An analysis of the theory that the rhythm, present both in music and in the word, is innate and appears as a given of the human kind, which is a great help in studying English as it helps the learner to understand more easily the musicality / musicalisation of a foreign languages.**

- **The rhythmical support of a song with the help of the body - as a pseudo-instrument - and the musical instruments transform the didactic activity with clear, predetermined objectives into a form of play, this being the most common practice in preschools and small schools offering better results. A rhythmic accompaniment to the song for the proposed songs is welcome. Thus, children will intuitively grasp a fundamental difference between the two languages: accents. Unlike Romanian, in Hungarian, the emphasis is always on the first syllable of the word.**

- **Using didactic methods specific to learning songs (singing chorus-solo, alternating two singing groups, etc) lead to the possibility of repeating the same content, while still somehow having variety. The above mentioned aspects result in an easier learning of the songs, and by default of the English language.**

- **Creating a variety of music learning contexts for children, not only through methods that are appropriate to their age, but also through musical activities which involve participation of a large number of students to the realisation of the artistic art, no matter of their skill.**
In order to enrich and diversify the teaching-learning "arsenal", didactic musical and rhythmical games were created. Using them during a class, a more relaxing atmosphere will be created and there will be an efficiency boost.

SAMPLE

The basis of this study was both the analysis of the existing school situation and the realization of a musical educational process, carried out for a period of 12 weeks, with the children of the I C class with teaching in Hungarian from the 16 Secondary School in Oradea, consisting of 14 girls and 13 boys.

Children have been studying Romanian since kindergarten, therefore their vocabulary contains the minimum number of words required to convey simple, specific information related to the domestic universe. The differences between the Romanian and the Hungarian alphabet are considerable, especially in relation to the ability of understanding of a 6-7 years old child. This is the main cause why reading and writing in Romanian is taught to Hungarian children only in the second grade, as stipulated in the school curriculum.

From the point of view of parents' level of education, the families of the children are formed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>One parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>One parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the point of view of the ethnic composition of the students' families, the data is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Both Hungarian parents</th>
<th>Romanian father - Hungarian mother</th>
<th>The Hungarian father - the Romanian mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spoken language in mixed families is the Hungarian language for all children. Children with a Romanian parent rarely speak in Romanian.

Children have academic results similar to those of other subjects. The teacher admits that, in the case of this subject, tends to be more lenient, less severe, in terms of qualifying to encourage the little ones in the study of the Romanian language, as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Insufficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONFIGURATION OF RESOLVING SOLUTIONS

The song becomes the instrument by which, in a different way, the child is familiarized with the sounds of the Romanian language, by developing listening and comprehension skills. Acuteness hearing formed through musical auditions improves Romanian
pronunciation, familiarizing students with the accents and sounds specific to it. Listening to Romanian words in songs will allow a good focus on pronunciation and the understanding of the rhythm of this language, its specific accents, its poetry and musicality, different from the sound of the Hungarian language.

The organic link of the text with the melody, continuously exploited, by various means proves to be extremely beneficial for both domains. Rhythmic support of a song with the help of the boy-as a pseudo-instrument-and the musical instruments transforms didactic activity with clear, predetermined objectives in a form of dynamic play, this being the most common practice in preschools and primary schools, leading to the best results. Developing more analyzers and senses in the process of producing and creating music brings a gain in terms of streamlining activities, steadiness of information or skills.

Musical games which are based on songs with Romanian lyrics bring a valuable advantage to activities, given by the emotional involvement which is offered by the "game" idea. It harmonizes the specific tasks of the game with the learning objectives, joined by the children's general joy to sing, which undoubtedly represents the most appropriate and effective way to communicate and consolidate knowledge and to develop skills, attitudes and values.

Using certain teaching methods specific to learning songs (solo- chorus singing, the alternation of two groups while singing) offer the possibility of various repetitions of the same content, without boredom, all repetitions having as purpose the easier and more pleasant learning of the songs, and by default of the words and expressions in Romanian.

Some songs appeal to patterns based on repetition of sounds or words, which renders the learning of the text way easier. Music has a strange ability to get stuck in our heads. Songs and lyrics will often infiltrate our thoughts returning ostentatiously to our memory. All these will contribute to a more pleasant learning of the language. Children will memorize a common vocabulary and common expressions from songs, the themes being: animals, elements of nature, plants, objects.

A song, through its global approach, appeals to the principles of eurhythmics which assures the freedom of expression during the Romanian class. The fact that Romanian text is represented by certain movements, makes learning the language a little easier. The child, still young, according to the particularities of his mental and physical development, needs movement. Intellectual activities should alternate with those involving agitation, emotion, movement, action because the student's attention at this stage is focused for a relatively short period of time. The song intervenes as a savior to meet all these requirements and to ensure a balance in Romanian classes for minorities.

The development of mental capacity at a young age has particularities that make a difference in the process of learning of a foreign language, Romanian language, in the current case.

Learning a foreign language, by children who are still very young, can be optimized if certain psychological developmental particularities are respected. It is important that the professors who teach English know that around the age of 7 there are numerous changes regarding the cognitive evolution of children. For example: awareness of the language, an
increased ability to focus, a considerable increase of the memorizing capacity which was found to be responsible for pupils' performance at school, the development of children's capacity to organize information (categorizing or efficient use of memorandum strategies, which represent not only a consequence, but also a cause of memory improvement during the early school period).

SYNCRETISM- A CONCEPT ASSOCIATED WITH MUSIC
The syncretic image of the arts is among us ever since the Antiquity, as a combination of the different forms of communication and artistic expression. Arts that we know nowadays as music, theatre, dance, poetry were born from an original matter of the syncretic conception existent ever since the beginning of civilisation, becoming self-standing entities once with the spiritual evolution of mankind, with the desire for clearer expression targeted to a specific domain.

In music, rhythm is one of the fundamental elements, consisting of the organized sequence of sounds. The basic exponents of the rhythm, derived from it, are the meter (the periodicity of the accents), the durations (ratios between different sound values). The rhythm, as the main dimension of music, is the bearer of musical expression, rhythmic formulae with infinite diversity. Dance is unleashing and is based on this primordial element, which generates movement, rendering feelings of joy, sadness, love. The syncretic image of the arts is to be noted and presented in the following:

![Poetry, Music, Dance Syncretic Image](image)

Figures 1. The syncretic image of the arts with the unifying rhythm element

The generating force that unites the triad of music-dance-poetry is the rhythm. It is also present in speech, and the periodic association of accentuated and non-accentuated sounds during linguistic discourse composes the rhythm in which we express. As one of the important elements of the diction and musicality of a language, it must be adapted according to the messages we intend to transmit. The syncretic approach of the relationship between the text of the song and the melody highlights the presence of a necessary and ancient element, present in our lives in various hypostases, namely the rhythm. A profound and thorough analysis of it, an element infiltrated both in music and in the word, as a given of the human being from a musical and linguistic perspective, highlights the fact that exploring this unifying component of the two directions helps the one who learns a foreign language to get used to its musicality and the durability of its
words and expressions. That is why the association of language and music, respectively songs which contain lyrics in the language which needs to be improved, is appropriate, song-based learning activities bringing benefits in making the language learning more efficient.

The domain that preserves the quintessence of the idea of syncretism in modern society is folklore, precisely because it refers eminently to its origin, to tradition, to values perpetuated over the ages. The purpose of the notion of folklore includes popular artistic productions reflected in the spiritual culture of the people, transmitted through music, literature and dance. There is an intimate fusion between music, body movements and words, or just two of the mentioned elements in order to offer more truth to some artistic content, transmitted in the form of an organic whole. Syncretism is the most obvious in the children's folklore, as the artistic products destined for it bring to light simple works, an accessible melody, words from the childhood universe and a natural rhythm (the giusto-syllabic system) that urges movement and gesture coordination.

ELABORATING STRATEGIES
Students of first grade C were exposed to musical educational activities in which they learned and sang in Romanian. Also, along with the traditional teaching moments of the Romanian language, song from the repertoire were repeated.

A rich intuitive material was used in order to make the children learn the songs. Sometimes, the text was translated in Hungarian by the teacher. In order to better fit the repertoire, the proposed interpretation variants were varied: with guided accompaniment (guitar playing), accompanied by students with percussion instruments, body elements percussion, motion games, musical pantomime games: recognize the song as I move, in groups, in pairs, with a soloist, with an inner voice etc. Due to the specific features of the game, the working climate was a good one for learning and brought a lot of joy and satisfaction to the children.

The presence of the musical element - song - in the Romanian language activities made the difference between the pre and post intervention stages, in terms of learning new words and a proper pronouncement. The "Tap Your ..." didactic game, used by the teacher in the first musical activities, played in rhythm and included in the musical metric, becomes a musical didactic game with beneficial effects on optimizing the retention and preservation in the long-lasting memory of the Romanian words. This is a good game for the stage of introductory musical activities that students prepare for assimilation of new content.

The challenge for novel educational contexts, the discovery of music and its creation, the elaboration of problematic situations, the differential treatment, the involvement of all students, regardless of their musical skills, have constituted some landmarks in conducting the training with the sample of participants in the study.

The presence of the musical game element in the music and movement activities, respectively the Romanian language, made the difference between the two phases of the study, in terms of learning new words and a proper pronouncement.
Table 1. Romanian songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romanian carols</th>
<th>Creatures</th>
<th>Elements of nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moș Crăciun cu plete dalbe</td>
<td>Merge rața către lac</td>
<td>Podul de piatră</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steaua sus răsare</td>
<td>Azi Grivei e mânios</td>
<td>Sâniuța fuge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astăzi S-a născut Hristos</td>
<td>Oac, oac, diri-diri-dam</td>
<td>Cântec de primăvară</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domn, Domn să-nâlțăm</td>
<td>Rățuștele mele</td>
<td>Ciocânele, ciocânele (Ploaia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS

EVALUATION, IMPACT, DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS
The applicative didactic approach to learning the Romanian language through music, performed in the 12 weeks, involved children in many activities based on songs and musical games based on songs in Romanian and on movement. The children were extremely pleased with the new lesson approach. The musical elements (songs, musical games, games for correct pronunciation, rhythmic recitatives) ensured success in activities and a climate favourable to learning. Students' attitudes during musical plays, as well as during varied interpretations of songs, were positive, and they were very interested in activities, being eager to explore the mysteries of the universe of music through the best interpretations, to gain the appreciation of those around them students as well as teacher. The atmosphere filled with positive emotions, joy, satisfaction with the immediate result of work, the desire for interpretation and continuous improvement, all led to the creation of an atmosphere of pleasure and good mood.

Music has the extraordinary ability to have a direct and immediate emotional impact. The presence of musical instruments during the activities has produced a positive reaction from the beginning due to the particularity of the work style and the immediate results of the work have brought many satisfactions and a desire for continuous improvement, all of which lead to creating an atmosphere of pleasure and good mood. The desire for instrumental accompaniment of songs also existed before their introduction into activities, being felt by the practical representation of the gesture (imagining the musical instruments) or their improvisation from crayons, other objects.

As a result of activities with the first grade children, I applied a questionnaire to identify the impact of music on the emotional-subjective and rational level. It was based on five questions about the importance of music in Romanian language learning and the pleasure of expressing music. Structurally, it was based on 5 items with closed, open questions, with single or multiple answers. In order to obtain answers as precise as possible from children, the questionnaire was applied in Hungarian.

Through the first item, we wanted to identify the extent to which children like to play percussion instruments. Their answers are indicated in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Much</th>
<th>Quite enough</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By the second question, we aimed at verifying the extent to which children understood that, in Romanian, the words are accentuated differently from the Hungarian language, as can be seen in the songs played with rhythmic support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third item was aimed at identifying how the pupils learned the most easily the text of the songs in Romanian. By choosing only one answer, they said they understood the contents when:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They had pictures</th>
<th>They pictured the song with movement</th>
<th>They had rhythmically sustained the songs with the percussion instruments</th>
<th>The Romanian teacher explained in Romanian</th>
<th>The teacher translated in Hungarian language</th>
<th>They didn’t understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth question referred to the relationship between the extent to which students like the melodic line of songs and the ease/speed that they appropriate the text of a song.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn more easily if they like the song</th>
<th>If they like the song, it distracts them from the text</th>
<th>It doesn’t matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth item referred to the excitement of children when they approached a musical repertoire in Romanian. They said they felt:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Just like when singing in Hungarian</th>
<th>With emotion because they didn’t handle the text well enough</th>
<th>Glad to sing easily and pronounce correctly in Romanian</th>
<th>tired</th>
<th>Bored and without any interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the educational context regarding the learning of Romanian in a school in Oradea, having young school students as subjects, has pointed out the existence of some relevant results, in relation with the researched subject. After the discussion with the Hungarian language teachers, it seems that Romanian is spoken too little outside of the classroom, thus being a pretty abstract aspect in the approach of some subjects. That’s exactly why, the study of the Romanian language, especially in the early school years, needs school activities with a strong ludic character. The most frequent out of them, involve drawing and making collages (which involves moving activities, such as shading,
cutting and pasting), imitatitional and onomatopoeia games which train a number of senses, but also the need to move, analyse and comment some pictures (the relation between the word and the picture, the “Hangman” game) or video sequences, through auditory recognition of certain elements.

All of these represent different variables implemented for the assurance of an efficient approach in the teaching of the Romanian language that will lead to the attaining of some efficient results. A very important role in these work choices with the kids is given by the singing of Romanian songs. The present work proposes and experiences the use of Romanian songs, with the purpose of facilitating the learning of this language. The song, through its educational values (linguistic development through intuitive learning, positive impact of the emotional factors, emanated joy, discipline, new ways to express yourself), calls on making the kid more active, ensures a happy climate full of joy, elongates the acquired knowledge, appreciation of the “beautiful” and it turned out to be very beneficial in classes. It is important to remind, that the steps proposed are not meant to replace or diminish the repertoire that the kids have learned in their mother language. We consider that through learning Romanian songs also, the young enrich their linguistic capacities in a pleasant manner, and at the same time develop an open-minded, relaxed and natural attitude towards the speaking of Romanian, towards the Romanian culture.

Talking to teachers who teach other foreign languages (e.g. English), we have come to the unanimous conclusion that this inexhaustible and very diversified in form and content resource –the song- increases the interest for the class and makes the linguistic acquirements more efficient, adding extra value to the teaching step.

The strong relations between music and linguistics, proven by the analysis made at the cortical level, through the existence of those neuronal populations which collide in the processing of music and language, both in adults and in kids, are backed up by the results of numerous studies made in the field. These findings suggest that the human brain, especially at an early age, doesn’t treat music and language as two distinct domains, but as different aspects of the same domain, or two poles of the same dimension which collaborate, and find themselves in a complementary relation.

The data offered by the results of the questionnaire and from the way all the activities took place during the psycho-pedagogical research, I allow the formulation of a conclusion for the teachers, that should guide the teacher in the approach and planning of the kids’ activities. The success in school, in relation to the learning of Romanian, is given by the joining of the two methodological processes (of teaching music, and of teaching language), the interdisciplinary approach of learning Romanian, being proven by the ease with which the students retain the Romanian collocations and words through singing, but also a correct pronunciation through the involvement of music. The interdisciplinary treatment, doesn’t suppress disciplinarity, but has the role to amplify the disciplinary connections, removing the fixed borders between different domains.
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