

A Study on the Effects of Two Teaching Approaches on Music Appreciation

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine students' preferences between two music appreciation teaching methods, historical and analytical analysis, with a group of 120 students enrolled in music appreciation classes in a university in Jiangsu, China. The results show both two teaching approaches positive effects on music appreciation. The analytical information group helps the subjects understand the composer's intention and the structure of musical works. Historical information is more powerful than analytical information in arousing emotional responses and stimulating learning interest.*

Keywords: *music appreciation, historical approach, analytical approach, university students*

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is generally accepted that the purpose of music education is to cultivate people's understanding and respect for music. The art of actually enjoying and appreciating music is an ability that many are coming to admire. The actual mastery of enjoying music, perceiving each lyrical content and instrument creates an intense experience for the listener. Meanwhile, the ability of appreciation makes it possible for an individual to understand composers' emotive intent. This gives the listener a general sense of connection to the music.[1] (Regelski, 2006)

As major mean of cultivating music understanding and aesthetic orientation in higher education, music appreciation classes are offered in the form of public courses in increasing universities. Music educators not only want to familiarize students with the principles and basics of music but also want to introduce students to the art of musical mastery and appreciation of the different disciplines that music has to offer. To achieve enhanced appreciation among students, universities have to develop ways to motivate students' desire to learn music not only for pleasure but also to connect with the art itself, finding an approach to music appreciation, which will have a great impact on people's understanding of music.

1.2 Need for Study

Historical approaches and analytical approaches exist as two means of teaching music appreciation. The goal of music appreciation class is not only to be familiar with a piece of music, but also to help students acquire knowledge of the history or musical structure. An effective teaching method can maximize the effect of learners' ability to comprehend the many facets of music. Therefore, the further study of the two approaches of music appreciation will provide guidance for teachers in application.

Music appreciation has developed into a necessary part of music education. The research on the teaching means of appreciation is to improve teaching methods and provide some reference for music teachers. In Halpern's (1992) study, the results of his 45 subjects showed the effectiveness of historical means. Before that, few people did research on historical means.[2] This study will expand the number of samples and explore the influence of the two methods again.

1.3 Purpose statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine students' preferences between two music appreciation teaching methods, historical and analytical analysis, with a group of 120 students enrolled in music appreciation classes in a university in Jiangsu, China.

1.3.1 Research Question

1) What are the differences if any between students' preferences for the teaching methods of analytical and historical music appreciation?

2) What do student reflections tell us about their preferences for the two music appreciation instructional approaches?

1.4 Limitations

Most of the subjects have their own favorite music type, pop music is a typical example. They seldom listen to Western classical music, and it is difficult for them to understand it because they do not have relevant experience and knowledge to support their understanding. This research is also a challenge for them to make thorough evaluations in open questions.

This study cannot absolutely evaluate which music appreciation approach is definitively better. It can only discuss the relative effectiveness of the two methods with one group of students. In addition, since the reading materials for students will be provided by the researcher, especially analytical materials, they may have some bias and this may affect the results.

1.5 Definitions

Analytical Approach: This refers to providing the analysis of music sound and structure as the basis for music appreciation instruction. (Halpern, 1992)

Historical Approach: This refers to providing music background and composer's historical information as the basis for music appreciation instruction. (Halpern, 1992)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

What is music appreciation? According to Bradley (1971), the prime role of music instruction is to cultivate the aptitude of individual to have aesthetic experiences with music.[3] Thus, developing an appreciation implies that music gains traction in the life of the students. The process of thickening such a toehold needs to be perpetual so that they will continue to pursue musical experiences that can provide treasured enjoyment and aesthetic satisfaction. This particular discipline of music education has evolved through history. Below is a review of the research literature that has informed the thinking surrounding this discipline and its evolution to date.

2.2 The Teaching Approaches to Music Appreciation

Scholars have posited that familiarity, brought about by repetition of musical selections while teaching music appreciation, has a positive effect on the musical preference responses of students. Earlier study of Getz (1966) support this theory.[4] By conducting a study to determine the extent to which repetition of musical selections is appropriate, and the effects of the acquaintance brought about by such recurrence on the musical preferences of the test subjects, the scholar concludes that familiarity brought about by repetition had a positive effect on the affective responses of the students (whether liking or disliking the musical selections).

Other scholars who have supported this theory include Hare (1959) who stated that there should be an adequate repetition of a musical selection so that the student might become familiar with it.[5] The results of a test study by Bradley (1972) also pointed to the significance of familiarity with music, through repetition, in determining musical preference and posited that it is an expedient instructional routine in any thoughtful listening program.[6]

Contrastingly, there is extant research that seems to suggest that repetition, in and of itself, is not a very effective method of analyzing the evolution of music appreciation. While the author agrees that repetition has a positive effect on whether subjects like a designated piece of music, Hargreaves(1984) suggests that further repetition beyond a critical point will cease to generate any positive effects in terms of appreciation.[7]

Whereas Bradley (1971) does not provide conclusive information on the possible negative

consequences of repetition in teaching musical appreciation, Getz (1966) posits the principle that there is a peak mark of appreciation achieved through repetition, and then aesthetic yields wane. Such the response may be hastened or hindered depending on an array of variables (such as complexity of music among others). It is an inevitability.

2.2.1 Analytical Approaches

Besides, other themes also have a bearing on the approaches to teaching music appreciation. For instance, Bradley (1972) examined the correlation between specially designed listening procedures and the development of musical preferences. This is a facet of music appreciation. He also studied the effects of a program of up-to-date art music on the musical preferences of students. The author postulates that most curricula suffer from a severe deficiency as a consequence of omitting current music.

The results of the test study indicated that a specially designed program that incorporates substantial modern-day art music elicited a positive alteration in the expressed musical preferences of the test subjects. It also deduced that there are more impactful variations to the preferences of the test subjects when a program of analytical listening and repetition is deployed as opposed to solely using repetition.

Additionally, other scholars Prince (1974) have examined whether the approach through which certain types of music are presented to students affects their preferences positively or otherwise.[8] That is, does there exist an association between the use of instructional listening programs with analytical commentary and the enjoyment of specific styles of music? His results showed that the subjects' preference for classical music did not increase.

Despite acknowledging that structural flaws to the studies conducted weakened the certainty of the findings, the scholar still concluded that training students on the formal and stylistic characteristics of music have more effects on their musical preferences than using repetition alone.

The critical research of Brown (1978) showed that discrimination in music has little effect on students' music choice.[9] Even though the research acknowledges the role of past studies in establishing a link between music appreciation and teaching approaches such as repetition (as juxtaposed with variable factors like analysis, instruction, expectation, age, and training among others), the author suggests that these are still inadequate proof that which can be relied upon as an effective mechanism of influencing music preference.

2.2.2 Historical Approaches

Researchers found that the effect of historical background information in music appreciation is rare. In Payne's (1980) study, the historical information of music was studied as a component of music appreciation. Historical materials are objective statements of history facts. The results show that historical information does not help to increase the attraction and familiarity of music.[10] Afterwards, Halpern (1992) once again pointed out that historical information is difficult for people to understand music directly. However, he does not deny that background knowledge can help the audience to form psychological images and form the overall impression of composers in a specific era.

Although there is little research on historical methods, there is always a debate on whether they should be used in teaching. Reimer (1970) strongly opposes the teaching of non-musical experience, which has nothing to do with musical emotional response.[11] However, Burkholder (2015) pointed out that "Almost every question you can ask about music is in part a question about history".[12] The sentence indicates that a comprehensive understanding of music plays a critical role in the systematic learning of music.

2.3 Discussion and Conclusion

What emerges is that both the analytical and historical teaching approaches on music appreciation have merits as well as demerits. Another explicit factor is that the application of one does not necessarily imply the preclusion of another; if anything, it is possible to integrate the approaches in a bid to come up with a more effective approach that suits the contemporary circumstances. Although some scholars have attempted to wade into the territory of how technology comes into play with the extant historical and analytical approaches. This is still relatively uncharted territory, and one that is still evolving quite rapidly.

In conclusion, I find that the information concerning the use of technology in music education and how that dovetails with the extant historical as well as analytical approaches on teaching music appreciation is still inconclusive. Hence, future research is needed.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study will employ a survey to gather and compile data from the selected study sample. The survey will help the researcher to gain knowledge about the best teaching method for music appreciation to ensure that all the students benefit from the lessons. The survey method is appropriate for this study because, according to Roh, Heo, and Whang (2019), it will provide critical information in the form of meaningful data concerning the best method for music appreciation.[13] This will help teachers make informed decisions on how to prepare, organize, and deliver their lessons. Besides, as stated by Blom et. al. (2020), the data collected will offer good insights since well administered surveys promote response rates by including both closed-ended answer responses and open-ended comments.[14]

3.2 Subjects

This research will study students in university taking a music appreciation class. The age of the students will be between 18 to 19 years. The students will be taught the same content with different instructional approaches and will sit for the same examination. A sample of 120 students from this university will be selected for the study. They are divided into 3 groups: (1) Class A: Control Group; (2) Class B: Analytical Group; (3) Class C: Historical Group. Simple random samples from classes will enable the researcher to statistically measure the sample to approximate the parameters of a larger group. According to Sharma (2017), SRS (simple random samples) lack bias since the participants are selected at random and each member of the population has equal probability to be selected for the study.[15] This implies that a balanced sample is created that will carry the greatest potential for representing the entire population of music students. Besides, SRS is simple because it does not involve additional steps in the random selection of individuals and increases the accuracy of representation.

3.3 Instructional Plan

The time for class is 12:30 pm to 13:15 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. The Class B will be presented with analytical information through multimedia in the first 10 minutes. Considering that the vast majority of students in university are non music majors, they can not read complex music scores. The reading materials of the analysis information group will be presented as prose descriptions, such as "the beginning of this work uses the method of homophonic repetition to show the tension of the situation". All the complicated musical terms have been changed as much as possible. The class C will be also shown with historical information about the same works. The reading materials of the historical information include the era, environment and personal experiences of the composer. The Class A is the control group. Students only listen to music and complete the same survey without reading materials.

The next 25 minutes are for playing music. Due to the lack of music appreciation textbooks in universities, the four pieces of music will be selected from representative works in four different periods. Pieces will be fully played through the classroom multimedia equipment, a total of 25 minutes. They are from different periods: (1) Bach: BWV244, Part One No.1 Chorus: Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen; (2) Schubert: Erlkönig, D328; (3) Debussy: La fille aux cheveux de lin (4) Schoenberg: String Quartet No.2 in F-sharp Minor, Op.10 I. Moderato.

Students will listen to the selected music completely and rate each work ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) on the Likert-scale. The questions include: (1) I like this piece; (2) the music is very expressive; (3) I understand the composer's intentions; (4) The music was technically well-constructed; (5) I'd like to get to know other works by this composer. The sixth question is only for Class B and Class C: Reading materials provided positively influence me in enjoying music.

The last 10 minutes are for writing open comments which is not mandatory. The comments include their feelings, imagination, reflection, etc.

3.4 Data Collection

Data will be collected using paper surveys. These questionnaires will help the researcher to generate much higher response rates than online surveys. Chiriac, Pinteala, and Chiriac (2018) argued that most respondents frequently believe more in the anonymity of printed surveys over online surveys.[16] This suggests that the participants will be more honest on the printed survey which will improve the accuracy

and reliability of the research findings. Besides, paper surveys do not require mobile phones to complete reducing the technological investment required. Paper questionnaires are easy to disseminate across the large sample of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected using the paper surveys will be sorted, organized, and entered into Excel for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean, standard deviation, range) will be computed. Analyzed data will be presented in the form of a table.

3.6 Ethics

The researcher will obtain informed consent for the participants. Besides, the research will minimize the risks of harm to the students selected while protecting their anonymity and confidentiality. The participants will be provided the right to withdraw from the study whenever they choose to and no deceptive practice will be tolerated (Hammer, 2017).[17]

4. Result

Halpern (1992) believed that large samples make it easier to get significant results, and advocated more subjects participate in similar experiments. Based on her research, this study expanded the sample size (N = 120). This survey was designed to study whether analytical and historical approaches are effective for students' music appreciation and which of the two methods is more popular. Meanwhile, reflecting on what students' preferences tell us. This research is carried out in the music class of a university. Pieces are selected from representative works from different periods. This research is committed to enrich the teaching methods of music appreciation and improve the level of students' music appreciation.

4.1 Research Question 1

In the study of Research Question 1, all the subjects filled in paper Likert-scale according to their subjective feelings. The results of all the subjects in the control group, analytical and historical information group were coded and entered into a statistical table. The following Table 1 shows the means and standard deviation of each question corresponding to each music clip.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation for Groups

Subjects' Feelings for Each Clip						
1. I like this piece.						
	Control		Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	3.58	1.16	3.50	1.14	3.85	1.13
Schubert	3.60	1.07	3.63	1.22	3.73	1.22
Debussy	4.08	0.91	4.10	1.04	4.15	1.13
Schoenberg	2.68	1.08	3.15	1.37	2.55	1.32
2. The music is very expressive.						
	Control		Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	4.08	0.75	4.30	0.60	4.53	0.63
Schubert	4.03	1.11	4.03	1.06	4.20	1.12
Debussy	3.73	1.05	3.83	1.09	3.90	1.02
Schoenberg	3.08	0.93	3.18	1.26	3.65	1.13
3. I understand the composer's intentions.						
	Control		Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	2.85	0.96	3.23	1.17	3.05	1.22
Schubert	2.98	1.06	3.18	1.16	3.00	1.28
Debussy	3.03	0.91	3.30	1.27	3.33	1.27
Schoenberg	2.28	0.87	2.50	1.20	2.48	1.14

4. The music was technically well-constructed.						
	Control		Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	3.75	1.07	3.95	0.92	3.95	0.86
Schubert	3.53	1.02	3.75	1.16	3.68	0.96
Debussy	3.38	0.91	3.93	0.82	3.85	1.04
Schoenberg	2.73	1.12	3.35	1.09	3.38	0.97
5. I'd like to get to know other works by this composer.						
	Control		Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	3.15	1.24	3.05	1.22	3.25	1.32
Schubert	3.35	1.22	3.45	1.28	3.33	1.25
Debussy	3.38	1.07	3.33	1.33	3.48	1.30
Schoenberg	2.65	0.99	2.83	1.30	2.58	1.20

Compared with the control group, the results of the historical information group were significantly higher than that of the analytical information group. When listening to Debussy's music, a student of the historical group put forward that "I seem to be drinking afternoon tea in the garden, chatting with Impressionist painters". The result of the second item is similar to that of the first. When commenting on Bach, a subject in the analytical information group said "when I try to find different chapters and parts of the analytical material, I forget the expressiveness of the music itself."

In the third and fourth item, both the analytical and the historical group rate higher points than the control group. In terms of understanding the author's intention, the subjects rate the analytical information higher, while the two groups are one the same level when understanding the technology and structure of the work. None of them has outstanding advantages. Neither treatment groups have a strong advantage in the fifth item. Intriguingly, in Schoenberg's music, the analytical information group is more prominent.

4.2 Research Question 2

Based on the five items of the Likert-scale of Halpern (1992), the sixth item was added for two treatment groups. The following Table 2 summarizes the mean and standard deviation of rating for each work.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation for Groups

Subjects' Attitude for Reading Materials				
6. Reading materials provided positively influence me in enjoying music.				
	Analytical		Historical	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bach	3.78	0.96	3.88	1.08
Schubert	3.73	1.18	4.05	0.92
Debussy	3.85	0.79	4.20	0.98
Schoenberg	3.70	1.00	3.65	1.17

The data of the analytical information group distinguish it from the control group. One student commented on Schoenberg's tuneless music: "without this material, I'm just listening blindly to this piece. I won't get anything." Another wrote: "I don't understand the music, but these descriptive explanations immerse me in imagination."

In addition to Schoenberg's clip, the scores of the historical information group were significantly higher than the analytical group. Taking Schubert's fragment as an example, in the historical information group of 40 subjects, only 3 people believe that the reading materials have a negative impact on music appreciation, and 4 people hold a neutral or uncertain attitude. When commenting on Bach's works, a subject said: "By listening to this piece of music, I have an impression of the Baroque period." Another participant said: "I feel Schoenberg's music is modern and free, but I don't enjoy it at all. It's noisy."

This chapter presents the statistical results of the Likert-scale from 120 subjects and comments for each piece. These results will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 5.

5. Conclusion

This chapter will include a summary of the research results, a statement of the existing literature and

reflections for further study. It is worth mentioning that this study does not deny other music appreciation instructional methods. It compares and discusses the analytical method generally recognized by scholars and the historical method that students often use in my working university. I hope to enrich students' experiences in music appreciation courses.

5.1 Discussion

The results of this study can be summarized from two research questions: (1) What are the differences if any between students' preferences for the teaching methods of analytical and historical music appreciation? (2) What do student reflections tell us about their preferences for the two music appreciation instructional approaches?

5.1.1 Research Question 1

The first research problem can be analyzed from three aspects. The first is the influence of teaching methods on emotional response. The result of the first item in the Likert-scale survey shows that analytical materials are not very useful to music appreciation. Historical information appears to affect student's emotional response. This emotional response is more likely to help people empathize and produce subtle emotional changes. Certainly, the more subjects are affected by emotion, the more expressive the music is. In other words, emotional response is a reflection of musical expressiveness.

The second is the effect on the understanding of composition intention. Broudy (1958) proposed that "no one can enter Shakespeare without first going through the symbolic gate of language". Brown (1978) also emphasized that knowing is valuable. Understanding the structure and background of music allows students to more closely examine the musical pieces and how the composer fits them together to make the final work. This study confirms this point again.

In the result of the third item, both analytical information and historical information are effective. The students in the historical group have already known the environment of the composer's period, while the students in the analytical information have a sense of emotion the composer expresses in a specific phrase. Interestingly, there was not much difference between the two treatment groups. The titles of the music may have given students an indication of the composer's intent even if they did not receive information about the historical background of the piece.

The third is the effect on the understanding of musical techniques used in these works. Bradley (1972) suggested "in a listening program designed to influence students' affective response, the music educator should be aware of the importance and usefulness of an analytical approach to listening". The results of item 4 show that the analytical group has more advantages than the control group in understanding the musical components. Surprisingly, the historical group did not lag behind the analytical. The historical group knew the composer's background and reputation, this may have made them more confident that music by this composer was well-constructed. It can be a further research problem.

Finally, the fifth item also indicates that historical information is conducive to students' willingness to know more about the composer. Schoenberg's work is an exception, probably because of its obscurity. Analytical materials present the composer's music thinking in more depth.

In conclusion, two teaching approaches play a positive role in students' music appreciation. The analytical information group helps the subjects understand the composer's intention, and it also plays a role in the subjects' understanding of the structure of musical works. Historical information is more powerful than analytical information in arousing emotional responses and stimulating learning interest.

5.1.2 Research Question 2

The second research question is about the preference of students for the two music teaching approaches. Different from Halpern's (1992) research, which generally raised the question about the subjects' views on reading materials, this study added the sixth item: "Reading materials provided positively influence me in enjoying music in Likert-scale." It aims to find out whether there are some specific and significant differences in student preferences for each work and genre, instead of a general feeling about all the pieces.

The results of this study cannot negate the role of analytical materials. However, in the historical group fewer subjects thought that reading materials were useless. Although in Payne's (1980) study, historical information did not promote music appreciation, the results of this study reveals that historical approaches are preferred by students.

5.2 Reflections

In this study, there are some problems that should be discussed. First of all, the subjects may not be trained in music. They have varying levels of music experience. One way to account for this difference in future research would be to distribute students with music backgrounds equally to each group. This is a problem worth considering. Then, I think the type of music pieces can be more diversified and closer to students' life. In addition, items were not explained in this study. I'm not sure the students understood the items, especially the fourth. I have some doubts whether the historical information affects the understanding of techniques? It can be an issue for further research in the future.

Historical information is more conducive to stimulate students' learning interest in learning and improve the ability of music appreciation. Reimer (1970) repeatedly objected to teaching background knowledge when teaching music, but instructors who teach music background knowledge are trying to combine music with literature and history, so that students increase their understanding and passion for music.

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Appendix

Questions Survey using a Likert-scale

Reading materials and listening to 4 music works. Please answer the questions according to your subjective feelings, and mark a "✓" in the box before the choice. You are free to comment your feelings, imagination and thinking to each work.

Bach: BWV244, Part One No.1 Chorus: Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klage

1. I like this piece.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. The music is very expressive.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. I understand the composer's intentions.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. The music was technically well-constructed.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I'd like to get to know other works by this composer.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. Reading materials provided positively influence me in enjoying music.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Schubert: Erlkönig, D328

1. I like this piece.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. The music is very expressive.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. I understand the composer's intentions.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. The music was technically well-constructed.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I'd like to get to know other works by this composer.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. Do reading materials provided positively influence you in enjoying music?
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Debussy: La fille aux cheveux de lin

1. I like this piece.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. The music is very expressive.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. I understand the composer's intentions.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. The music was technically well-constructed.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I'd like to get to know other works by this composer.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. Do reading materials provided positively influence you in enjoying music?
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Schoenberg: String Quartet No.2 in F-sharp Minor, Op.10

1. I like this piece.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. The music is very expressive.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. I understand the composer's intentions.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. The music was technically well-constructed.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I'd like to get to know other works by this composer.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. Do reading materials provided positively influence you in enjoying music?
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree