A Descriptive Examination of Aural and Visual Practice Strategies Exhibited by Beginning-Level String Students when Memorizing Music Material

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Abstract

The present study examines what strategies beginning-level string students use to memorize aurally and visually presented musical material over 15-minutes of self-monitored practice. An observational descriptive design was implemented. Results indicated only 12 (48%) of the 25 participants ($n_A = 5$, $n_V = 7$) were able to memorize the simple 8-bar melody successfully. The visual treatment group performed fewer pitch and rhythmic errors than the aural treatment group. Participants in the both treatment groups seldomly used non-motoric strategies (i.e., listening, singing, chanting) and preferred using motoric strategies (i.e., strategies involving the left or right hand and the instrument). Successful participants in the aural group preferred using segmental motoric strategies during the first practice session, and then alternated to a holistic motoric strategy during the second and third practice session. They also played without the recording substantially more than unsuccessful participants. Successful participants in the visual treatment group used holistic and segmental practice strategies, and were able to isolate measures 5-8 earlier than unsuccessful participants. Applications are discussed.