

POS-087

Musical Discrimination and Styles Task: A New Possibility for Assessment of Music Aptitude in Elementary Music Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative pilot study was to describe and explain the relations to other variables (validity) and reliability of a new, developmentally appropriate musical discrimination and styles aptitude instrument for elementary music students, entitled the Musical Discrimination and Styles Task (MDAST). This framework was influenced by the cognitive theory of Jean Piaget and theoretical models of music discrimination and audiation proposed by Edwin Gordon. The design of the instrument assessed the ability to determine comparisons of musical discrimination, musical contours, composers, musical styles, and musical eras in a same, different, or "I don't know" response format. The sample consisted of elementary students in Grades K to 5, ages 5 - 11 (N=7). A panel of five experts with graduate degrees in music evaluated and verified the measure's content validity (trustworthiness). The Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 was utilized to establish internal consistency and reliability. Inter-item analysis in the KR20 indicated highly statistically significant consistency in the .80s for all items after fine adjustments were made. Bivariate correlational analysis revealed a highly significant relationship between the second and third subtests at .788, $p = .035$. However, these sections of the test evaluate completely different subject matter, so the researcher decided to keep both sections of the test. Due to the number of items that had to be excluded from analysis from lack of variance (due to the small sample size), the Musical Discrimination and Styles Task had limited internal reliability at that time. A second pilot study with a significantly higher sample size is currently under way to determine the true reliability of this instrument. If the instrument maintains the tendency toward high content validity and reliability values found in the first pilot study, then the implications for music education could extend into longitudinal studies, norm-referenced studies, and eventually classroom assessment.