

A study of the effects of perceptual modality and interrelated arts instruction on student achievement in the high school choral classroom.

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The purpose of this research is to investigate interrelated arts instruction in addressing the needs of visual and mixed modality strength learners. The specific problems of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the relationship between the perceptual modality strengths of high school choral students and their achievement in an interrelated arts unit;
2. To identify the relationship between the perceptual modality strength of the choral director and high school choral student achievement in an interrelated arts unit;
3. To identify high school choral student perceptions of an interrelated arts unit;
4. To identify high school choral director perceptions of an interrelated arts unit; and
5. To identify the relationship between student achievement and high school chorus student and choral director perceptions of an interrelated arts unit.

A pilot study was conducted to identify choral music and visual art exemplars.

Investigative data were obtained to provide a foundation for the present study. In the pilot study, this researcher surveyed high school choral directors to identify: ten pieces of choral literature that should be taught to all high school choral students; musical concepts present in those ten pieces of choral literature; and strategies choral directors employed to address the visual art component of National Standard #8. This researcher also surveyed high school art teachers to identify: ten works of visual art that should be taught to all high school students; art fundamentals and elements present in those ten works of visual art; and if and how art teachers related visual art to music.

This researcher selected three high school choral directors and their school chorus programs from a suburban town in the Mid-Atlantic region to participate in the pretest-posttest design study. Choral directors identified a specific chorus class to participate in the study and implemented researcher-designed units. Additionally, choral directors selected two pieces of choral literature, one for performance and one to study through guided listening. This choral literature was selected from choral music exemplars identified in the pilot study to this research. This researcher wrote two units of instruction (a performance unit and a guided listening unit) based on choral music exemplars selected by each choral director (a total of six units). These units matched choral music exemplars and visual art exemplars based on conceptual content of those exemplars, as delineated by the choral directors and visual art teachers from the pilot study survey, as a means to use visual art to reinforce musical concepts present in the choral music.

This researcher used the *Swassing-Barbe Modality Index* (SBMI) to assess the modality strength of each student to identify a correlation between modality strength and musical achievement. SBMI was administered to identify the perceptual modality strength of the choral directors to investigate the influence of teacher modality strength on the music achievement of the students. Following the instruction and posttest, a research-designed exit survey was administered to students and their choral director. This survey was designed to elicit opinions regarding the effectiveness of the units of study in understanding musical and visual art concepts and exemplars of choral music and visual art.

Although visual (n=28) and mixed modality (n=16) learners showed a greater statistically significant increase in three test subcategories than auditory (n=4) and kinesthetic (n=11) learners, visual and mixed modality learners overall did not show greater achievement in an interrelated arts unit.

Based on the data obtained in this research, it may be concluded that perceptual modality strength was not a factor in achievement in the interrelated arts unit. This conclusion reflects the findings that all students, regardless of perceptual modality strength, showed similar improvement from pretest to posttest. The present researcher, therefore, asserts that a multisensory approach to instruction is more appropriate than matching perceptual modality strength to instruction in the high school choral classroom.

This researcher concurs with researchers of perceptual modality (Falkner, 1994; Persellin, 1992) in recommending that multisensory instruction may be used to increase student achievement. Dunn (1994) found that matching perceptual modality strength with instruction is more suitable than multisensory instruction with third grade students. This researcher suggests that multisensory instruction may become more effective as the child matures into the high school years.