

Perceptions of Talking Time in Choir Rehearsal

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A. Statement of Intent

The study will determine the accuracy of choir teachers' perceptions regarding the amount of time they spend talking during rehearsal.

B. Background and Significance

Time is limited. This is a truth that is especially apparent in a choir rehearsal. The amount of time spent talking during rehearsal can be a significant factor in achieving maximum effectiveness in a rehearsal. Talking time impedes students' attentiveness (Nápoles 2006). Studies show that expert music teachers talk less than novice or beginning teachers (Goolsby '96; '99). When asked to self-assess their talking time and teach again, preservice music instructors reduced their talking time by about 50% (Nápoles). So how much talking time is appropriate? Studies report that *successful* choir directors spend between 35% (Caldwell, 1980) to 40% (Thurman, 1977) of rehearsal time talking.

What percentage of time, then, does an average choir teacher spend talking? What percentage of time does an average choir teacher *believe* they spend talking? How accurate are their perceptions? If music teachers become aware of the reality of time spent talking, they may be more likely to adjust talking time to produce more effective rehearsals. In the preservice music teacher study, teacher talk decreased and teacher estimates were more accurate after their second rehearsal (Nápoles 2012). However, there is no research regarding public school choir teachers. Therefore, this study will examine the accuracy of

public school choir teachers' perceptions of time spent talking in order to determine the potential for increased rehearsal effectiveness.

C. Methodology/ Procedures

I will observe 12 teachers through video recordings and then question them regards their perceptions of time spent talking. Under the direction of the BYU Music Education Division, teachers (50% male, 50% female) will be identified within the local suburban area, based on experience level: four student teachers; four novice teachers (1-10 years of experience); four experienced teachers (11+ years of experience). Of the four teachers per category, two (1 male and 1 female) will teach in high school and two will teach in junior high school. Selected teachers will be contacted via phone and/or email in order to solicit written permission to perform the observations. For more accurate results, I will explain that the purpose of the observation is to learn conducting techniques rather than to measure talking time.

1) I will observe and video record one thirty-minute rehearsal for each of the twelve selected teachers. The middle thirty minutes of rehearsal will be recorded. For example, in a fifty-minute rehearsal, I will observe minutes ten through forty.

2) Following the observation, I will ask the choir teacher the following question:

“How much time do you spend talking in the middle thirty minutes of rehearsal?”

3) I will analyze the rehearsal recording using a stopwatch to measure the amount of time spent talking by the teacher.

4) The teacher's answer will be compared to the amount of time they actually spent talking in the recording to determine the variance between the teacher's perception and reality.

5) The twelve teachers' results will be compared to determine:

a) The average amount of time choir teachers spent talking; b) The average amount of time choir teachers *believe* they spent talking; c) The accuracy between choir teachers' perceptions of time spent talking versus reality; and d) The proximity of the choir teacher's amount of talking time from the 37.5% average deemed "successful" between Caldwell's & Thurman's studies.

D. Human and Animal Subjects Approval

I received an ORCA grant for this research; I have submitted an IRB approval form; I am waiting for approval.

E. Preliminary Outline or Prospectus of the Finished Thesis

The final thesis will be divided into six subcategories: an introduction, a review of literature, the research question, an explanation of methods or design, a discussion of the results, and a conclusion.

F. Preliminary Research

1) Nápoles, J. (2006). The relationship between type of teacher talk and student attentiveness. *Journal of Music Teacher Education (Online)*, 16(1), 7-19.

Teacher effectiveness is a goal that is highly sought after. Research has shown that teacher effectiveness is closely associated with student attentiveness. Other researchers have shown that students are more attentive when there is less verbalization and more performance. However, there are various types of verbalization. Jessica Nápoles seeks to

determine the relationship between the different types of teacher talk and student attentiveness in order to improve teacher effectiveness.

2) Goolsby, T. W. (1996). Time use in instrumental rehearsals: A comparison of experienced, novice, and student teachers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44(4), 286-303.

The usage of time in music rehearsals affects the teacher effectiveness and student attentiveness. Researchers have determined that generally, the more a teacher talks the less effective the rehearsal. Goolsby found that different teachers talk to varying degrees. Experienced teachers talked less than student teachers and allowed students to play the most.

3) Caldwell, W. M. (1980). A time analysis of selected musical elements and leadership behaviors of successful high school choral conductors. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1980). Dissertation Abstracts International, 41 (3 A), 976.

Caldwell dissected teaching behaviors of fifteen choral directors that were classified as “successful”, determining the amount of time proportioned to various behaviors. He found that only 17.6% of the rehearsal time was dedicated to “Verbal Only” instruction. Of the rehearsal time devoted to verbal behavior, more than half of that time was classified as “Music Instruction”, even though “Illustration” has been found more effective as a teaching behavior.

4) Thurman, V. L. (1977). A frequency and time description of selected rehearsal behaviors used by five choral directors. Dissertation Abstracts International, 38(6), 3135-A.

From Thurman’s research, it was determined that the choral directors devoted 35% to 40% of the rehearsal time to “verbal communications”. Of this percentage, about

50% was focused on “elements of choral performance”. After his analysis, Thurman advises that the next step is to determine connections between teacher behaviors and teacher success.

5) Nápoles, J., & Vázquez-Ramos, A. M. (2013). Perceptions of time spent in teacher talk: A comparison among self-estimates, peer estimates, and actual time. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 60(4), 452-461. doi:10.1177/0022429412463246

This study helped to reveal the role of perceptions in choir rehearsal and teacher talk. Student teachers were video recorded teaching a rehearsal, estimated their amount of talking time, and then after confronted with the actual data, taught again. There were significant differences in the amount of teacher talk and the accuracy of their perceptions after the self-evaluation.

6) Yarbrough, C., & Madsen, K. (1998). The evaluation of teaching in choral rehearsals. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 46(4), 469-81.

This study determined what university students determine as worthy of “high” ratings. The study found that university students rate highly examples where student attentiveness, enthusiasm, pacing and eye contact are present. Teaching excerpts last 5-6 seconds. This study helps to determine what is desirable in choral rehearsals.

G. Qualifications of the Investigator

I am a 4th year Music Education: Choral Emphasis student at BYU. I have taught stake choir, ward choirs and lab choirs. I am an MTC Spanish Teacher and have had various teaching experiences within my family and church. I am pursuing graduate degrees in Educational Administration and Education Psychology. I am fascinated by helping individuals have a more effective learning experience.

H. Qualifications of Faculty Advisor

To quote his BYU School of Music online profile: “Paul Broomhead received a PhD in Music Education from the University of Washington in 1999. Dr. Broomhead has taught Junior High choir and general music, High School choir, and collegiate music education. He recently co-edited the book *(Re)Imagining Content-Area Literacy Instruction* and wrote two of the chapters. He has published a broad assortment of research and opinion articles in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Music Educators Journal*, *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Teaching Music*, *Update*, *Contributions to Music Education*, *Reading Psychology*, *Teacher Development*, and others. He has served in Music Educators National Conference as Chair of the Instruction Strategies Special Research Interest Group and as Western Division Collegiate Chair. In Utah, he served as Higher Education Vice President of Utah Music Educators Association.”

I. Schedule

May 2016

*Receive IRB permission

*Recruit 12 teachers to participate in the study

October 2016

*Complete Video Observations

*Analyze data with a statistician

December 2016

*Write paper and solicit publishing in the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*

*Present findings in Music 275: *Explorations of Music Teaching*

*Submit ORCA grant final report

*Submit Honors Thesis

J. Expenses/Budget

I will not require outside funding for this project.

K. Closure

This project will provide additional understanding to the relatively young field of perceptions of teacher talk in choir rehearsals. It is hoped to be a springboard for further studies in order to determine how accurate teacher perceptions are of talking time and if needed, how they can be improved.

L. References

- 1) Nápoles, J. (2006). The relationship between type of teacher talk and student attentiveness. *Journal of Music Teacher Education (Online)*, 16(1), 7-19.
- 2) Goolsby, T. W. (1996). Time use in instrumental rehearsals: A comparison of experienced, novice, and student teachers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44(4), 286-303.
- 3) Caldwell, W. M. (1980). A time analysis of selected musical elements and leadership behaviors of successful high school choral conductors. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1980). Dissertation Abstracts International, 41 (3 A), 976.
- 4) Thurman, V. L. (1977). A frequency and time description of selected rehearsal behaviors used by five choral directors. Dissertation Abstracts International, 38(6), 3135-A.
- 5) Nápoles, J., & Vázquez-Ramos, A. M. (2013). Perceptions of time spent in teacher talk: A comparison among self-estimates, peer estimates, and actual time. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 60(4), 452-461. doi:10.1177/0022429412463246