

METHODOLOGY FOR CONDUCTING CHORAL CLASSES TO STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING MUSIC

Najmetdinov G'ayrat Mamajonovich
Kokand State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

Annotation. In this study, the practice of two directors who showed a traditional profile and a more complex profile is compared.

We analyzed the practice of exercises of two amateur youth choir conductors. These conductors were selected in accordance with the training profiles specified in the previous research work. One traditional profile and one profile focused on learning outcomes were aimed at learning and representing students. The differences in practice were analyzed according to the structure of the exercise, the main typical activities and some training measures they promote. We also examined the relationship between the concepts of conductors and their practices, found that there is a strong relationship between theories and practices to identify two different ways of conducting choirs.

Keywords: Choir conduction Choir rehearsal Implicit theories Music learning Representation modalities.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, various studies have analyzed choir rehearsals as a setting for learning music. This is because, in contrast to professional choirs, singers in amateur choirs usually have different score-reading skills and different levels of musical practice. This kind of situation conditions the role of the conductor, who is partly a teacher, and needs to implement different teaching/learning strategies but also a performer who develops a version of the piece that will be performed by the singers. During the last decade a large number of studies on good practices in vocal and instrumental music have appeared. Some of them have focused on highlighting that there is no "ideal" way of learning, but that this depends on the context and learning aims. Others have focused on the challenges raised in choir teaching by the advance in technology, and particularly in audio, video and digitalizations of musical scores. All the studies use different methodological approaches. Some are based on answers to questionnaires or interviews with teachers and learners, while others use direct observation of lessons. The former could be said to analyze teachers' beliefs or conceptions regarding educational practice. A choir conductor's approach to his/her action plan with the singers is ultimately related to his/her prior representations of learning, which may be simple or sophisticated, to different degrees. This study questions the relationship between the choir conductors' conceptions on teaching and learning, their styles, and their profiles as choir conductors. We have attempted to identify different forms of amateur choir management in accordance with these conceptions. A better understanding of the relationships between conceptions and practices in choral conduction can contribute not only to improving the design of these practices but also to help choir conductors to reflect on their conceptions, as part of their professional training.

Conceptions of teaching/learning have been studied within the framework of implicit theories, among other approaches. The term refers to the set of mental representations underlying the way in which we address or interpret different teaching/learning situations. Different studies have identified three types of implicit theories. From the simplest to the most complex, they are the direct, interpretative and constructive theories. According to the direct theory, the teacher provides knowledge mainly through demonstration or verbal instruction with the aim of the learner producing a more or less faithful copy of the teacher's activity or discourse. In the interpretative theory, even though the teacher also expects the learner to produce a faithful copy of the knowledge gained, he/she assumes that in order to do so, it is necessary to take into account and activate in the learner's mind a series of psychological processes that mediate the learning (attention, motivation, memory, etc.). Finally, the constructive theory involves a deeper qualitative leap. It considers that in order for learning to take place, the learner needs to regulate and manage his/her own motor and cognitive processes, so teaching involves helping the learner to take control of his/her own learning.

Within this theoretical framework, the analysis of learning is based on three components proposed by Pozo, 2008: outcomes (contents learnt or intended to be learnt), processes (cognitive and metacognitive activity set in motion by the learner to achieve those outcomes) and conditions (aspects related to the learner, the setting, the organization of learning, and the types of teacher/student interaction). Each of these components is a different dimension, divided into several categories which can be observed in practice or analyzed through different methodologies.

As will be subsequently described, in the section on methodology, we developed an observation system called SAPIL the efficacy of which has been proven in different research studies on music. This system distinguishes between (a) what type of learning is sought (e.g. whether the aim is to play or sing a piece of music by precisely reproducing the musical score or whether the aim is to promote effective cognitive processes for musical execution, like memory, internal hearing or transference), (b) the conditions the teacher uses for acquisition of this learning (e.g. imitating the piano forte dynamics of the conductor or, on the contrary, letting the choristers construct the piece's dynamics through their own self-regulation) and (c) the type of processes the students or choristers should follow to achieve it (e.g. repeating the teacher's model or conversely, self-evaluating, etc).

In the same paper, Lopez and Pozo, 2016 conducted an in-depth study of the practice of a violoncello teacher with her 7-year-old student. This teacher had previously shown a constructivist conception of learning. Both the teacher and the student talked extensively, with the teacher's oral production being only 5% more than the student's. This shows that dialogic interaction may be more extensive in more constructive teaching/learning practices.

Another factor that distinguishes teaching practices is the type of score processing fostered by teachers or conductors. Score processing types range from those that focus only on notation (symbolic or notational processing) and analysis (syntactic processing), which are more related to direct and interpretative conceptions, to those that add contextual comprehension through knowledge of the work and the composer (referential processing). In the abovementioned studies by Karlsson and Juslin (2008) and Rostvall and West (2003), in addition to talking more than the students, teachers focused much of their discourse on the correct interpretation of the musical notation on the score, penalizing student errors. Yarbrough and Price (1989) observed similar patterns in a study on 79 music teachers, with aspects such as emotions or expression only arising marginally or implicitly.

Types of assessment used in teaching/learning situations are another factor that distinguishes traditional teaching practices from other, more advanced practices. Durrant and Varvarigou (2019); Perry et al. (2002); Varvarigou (2016) suggest that when teachers promote self-regulation activities and get their students to view their errors as learning opportunities, the students begin to use more complex cognitive processes, make progress on the task, or self-assess and select what and how to study.

Thus, the papers outlined above show a relationship between teachers' conceptions of learning and the type of teaching practices used in the classroom for musical instrument learning. However, different studies have also shown that these theories are not altogether monolithic since the teachers may maintain different conceptions in different situations or settings. For example, their theory may be more traditional on the learning of scores and more constructive on motivation. These differences do not necessarily involve contradictions but combine beliefs or profiles that are activated with different probabilities. We have pondered on whether the same type of association occurs in the context of choirs. Thus, in a previous study we analyzed the conceptions of 41 choir conductors regarding the learning that takes place during the choir rehearsal, using a questionnaire based on conditions, processes and outcomes. Cluster analysis found three conductor profiles, which we called Traditional, corresponding to the direct theory; Focus on Reading, corresponding to a direct-interpretative approach, and Focus on Learning and Representation, related to an interpretative constructive approach. The characteristics of these three profiles are summarised.

However, different studies have shown that there is a difference between theory and practice, in the sense that practices tend to be more traditional than the statements and declarations teachers usually make. It is therefore not enough to ask teachers to explain their reasons for a practice or a certain type of practice. We need to ask ourselves what is the relationship between theory and practice among choir conductors.

This paper has two objectives. Firstly, it aims to answer the question about whether people with different conceptions on learning also have different ways of directing amateur choirs and it therefore seeks to analyze and compare the way in which two conductors of two different profiles work. Secondly, it intends to explore whether these profiles based on what conductors say are consistent with what they actually do, and the extent to which those actions are examples of good practices in choir rehearsals. To do so, we have selected two conductors who are representative of opposite profiles in the aforementioned study. We have observed and described their practice during rehearsals using the encoding and analysis system (SAPIL) which is described in the following section and is based on learning outcomes, processes and conditions.

- 1) To describe the practice of two choir conductors with different learning conceptions, in terms of the structure of their rehearsals, main typical activities and some of the learning dimensions they promote.
- 2) To compare the practices of these two conductors and observe their association with their implicit conceptions.

Method

The participants are two choir directors, one of whom was identified as having a Direct/Interpretative profile (conductor A), and the other as Interpretative/Constructive (conductor B) in the aforementioned study. What A and B have in common is that they both manage a youth choir composed of boys and girls in the second cycle of secondary education and they are both teachers. Both characteristics (youth choirs and teacher-conductor) were discriminatory in the recently mentioned previous study. Although both conductors shared an extensive further education training in music, piano, music teaching and choir management, the first was classified as an expert (over ten years of experience as a Conductor) whilst the second was classified as a novice (under ten years of experience). Furthermore, the variable expert-novice was discriminatory in the first study mentioned. Another differentiating characteristic was the learning context: whilst the conductor and choir A were in the second year of a secondary school specializing in music, the conductor and choir B were in the same year but at a school which did not specialize in music.

Tasks and procedure. Participants were interviewed. They were asked how long it takes to prepare a new piece of medium difficulty for their choirs, from the beginning to the final rehearsal prior to the concert. They both proposed three rehearsals, each of which corresponds to a different learning phase. These three phases are initial, intermediate and final and are consistent with the proposals in previous research on instrument players when studying works. The three rehearsals were video-recorded, and each participant was interviewed before and after each recording to clarify the information drawn from it and encode it accurately. For all recordings, the informed consent process was followed, both with the choir directors and with the singers.

The pre-rehearsal interview questions were based on the items in the open-ended questionnaire from our previous study on conceptions. These questions are about rehearsal planning, proposed activities, expected difficulties and supervision activities. The answers provide information on the learning dimensions managed by the conductor during the rehearsal in terms of outcomes, processes and conditions. For the post-rehearsal interview, the researcher selected excerpts of the recording to watch again together with the conductor and ask about what had happened.

Design and analysis

This was a multiple case study. In addition, a descriptive, cross-sectional, simple study was performed on each case. All types of production (verbal, musical, gestural, mixed, etc.) in the three rehearsals were encoded using the software Atlas Ti, following the categories in the System for Analysing the Practice of Instrumental Lessons, (SAPIL) to encode and analyze the learning practices of different instruments, adapted to the current study on choir rehearsal as a context for learning music. The SAPIL components in a choir rehearsal are summarised in Table S2 in the online version of the article.

During the rehearsal there are different musical units (technical exercises, pieces, others) in which typical activities (TA, By the conductor, By the singer/the choir or Joint -conductor choir-) can be identified (see Table S3 in the online version of the article for a summary of the different TA). The term typical activities refer to the fact that the activities fulfil characteristic functions of musical interpretation. The third component distinguishes the Dimensions of practice (what is taught/learned; how it is taught/learned), according to outcomes, processes and conditions. Inter-rater reliability between two researchers knowledgeable on SAPIL was analyzed for all encoded categories. Agreement was $>.80$ according to Cohen's Kappa coefficient.

In accordance with the aims of this study, out of all the categories mentioned, in this paper we will only present the results related to Musical Units and Typical Activities in the rehearsal and some examples of Dimensions of the practice: Processing score levels promoted by the conductors (Outcomes dimension); Types of Interaction (Conditions dimension) and Supervision and Evaluation promoted by the conductors (Processes dimension). A comprehensive analysis of the Dimensions of the practice can be found in Corbala, n (2017).

Due to the large quantity of data and analysis provided by each participant's three recorded rehearsals, in this paper we have decided to present only the results from the first rehearsal of each for being the initial learning phase of a piece the one that can offer more significant elements in relation to our objectives.

Results

For the first study aim, we will provide brief summaries of the rehearsals conducted by participants A and B, including the frequencies and percentages for each agent at the rehearsal and the categories analyzed (see Fig. S1 in the online version of the article and Fig. 1). For the second study aim, we will compare the two conductors' results.

Participant A's rehearsal (direct-interpretative profile). This session lasts 45 min and 10 s and is organised into three main sections corresponding to the traditional structure of a choir rehearsal, namely: physical warm-up (posture and breathing exercises), vocal warm-up and work on the piece. These, in turn, can be divided into 11 episodes of variable duration. The conductor intervenes 160 times, accounting for 54% of the rehearsal; the choir intervenes 112 times, accounting for 38%, while 7% of the activities are performed together (23 interventions) (see Fig. S1).

In greater detail the most frequent typical activity in A's rehearsal is the conductor's own verbal production (49.74%), while the choir's verbal production accounts for 6.72% of the whole rehearsal. There is also a relevant difference (74%) in the number of words uttered by the conductor and the choir (conductor: 1621 words; choir: 238). The conductor's interventions are longer than the choir's and include many instructions, questions, utterances for classroom control and digressions, while the choir's interventions consist of short answers to the conductor's questions. Nine of the 12 digressions encoded are utterances initiated by the conductor, while only 3 are initiated by the choir. We shall return to digressions in the next section when we compare the practice of the two conductors.

The conductor's second most frequent activity is musical production anything that the conductor plays and sings (17.35%, compared to 9.86% by the choir). The conductor has mixed production (12.24%), though the choir does not. As specified in Table S3, mixed production involves someone performing several activities (singing, playing, conducting, etc.) at the same time.

For joint conductor/choir activities, aggregated digression and classroom control are the most frequent. Although we have classified this as a joint activity, it is important to note that out of the 12 digressions, 9 were initiated by the conductor and only 3 by the choir.

Among the score processing levels promoted, formal and harmonic analysis of works predominates, followed by musical syntax, although 31.2% of total rehearsal time is spent on reading scores (notational processing). On the other hand, the conductor asks the singers closed questions to elicit contextualization of the predominant rhythm type (odd meter), which can promote referential processing of the work, though through directed questions, as in the following example:

C: What do you remember about what I told you about this work?

S: That it was by a female composer from the Basque Country or thereabouts.

C: Very good.

S: That she was a choir conductor. C: Yes.

S: That you sang a work also composed by her. C: Yes.

S: That she was young. C: Not was e is. She is a very young woman. Yes. And what else? S: That it was written for four choirs.

S: No, for two.

S: That is was like popular music. C: Not it 'was like', it was.

C: No. It is written in the sty - (pauses) S: style of popular music.

C: Yes, aaah ... rooted in Basque popular music. All the harmonies, these rhythms, eight by eight in this subdivision three, three, two, are typical of Basque popular music. And then there are more changes in metre, OK?

Interaction cycles are mostly type IRE-C (14) and IRE-Cs (21) (with closed replies that end in evaluation by the conductor) (see Table S5 in the online version of the article).

Types of evaluation by participant A are positive verbal (9), negative verbal (5) and positive gestural (4). Singers do not intervene as can be seen in Table S6 (in the online version of the article).

Participant B's rehearsal (interpretative-constructive). This rehearsal lasts 50 min and focuses on learning a piece with two-part harmony composed by the conductor himself and structured in two phrases, of which the first is imitative in character. The conductor presents successive learning activities planned explicitly to enable the singers to construct the piece progressively with the help of two schematic graphic scores previously prepared on flip chart, as shown in Fig. S5 (see online version of the article). The session is organised into 13 brief episodes (lasting 1e7 min each), beginning with learning the melody, and subsequently tackling the rhythm. Finally, the piece is practised twice, with singers moving freely around the room, accompanied by the conductor playing the piano. Before practicing the piece for the last time, B suggests that the singers record the piece with their cell phones so that they can review it.

Conductor's and choir's activities are distributed as follows: number of interventions by conductor (238), accounting for 54% of the total; interventions by choir (175), accounting for 39%, and joint interventions (30), accounting for 7% (see Fig. S3 in the online version of the article).

This is related to score processing levels fostered by B in this rehearsal. B promotes syntactic processing (as defined in Introduction) by means of several graphic scores (Fig. S5). The meaning of the signs referring to melodic movement (straight lines with arrows on the flip chart) and to rhythm (beats in silence after each preposition, represented by stars) is constructed inductively.

The mixed production mentioned above is part of the IRF interaction cycles in 90% of the cases (see Table S7 in the online version of the article). In it, feedback is provided by the singers 24 times (cycles CS and cS in the IRF column, as explained in Table 2) and by the conductor 23 times.

Types of evaluation in participant B's rehearsal are summarized in Table S8 (see online version) and will be discussed in the following section.

Discussion and conclusions

The first aim of this study was to describe and analyze in depth the practice of two youth choir conductors who, in a previous study, had been found to hold different conceptions on the types of learning fostered at rehearsals (Corbala, et al., 2019). We shall interpret our results based on our second aim, which was to compare the practices of two conductors in terms of implicit theories and look at how these practices relate to the conductors' previous conceptions of choral learning.

Our first element of analysis was the duration and type of interventions (verbal, musical and mixed) by both conductors. We found that participant A's extensive verbal production is related to traditional practices, in the same sense as reported in previous studies mentioned in the Introduction and in others such as Swanwick (2011). It is also consistent with the direct-interpretative conception shown by A in the previous study.

Participant B, who was found to have an interpretative-constructive conception in the previous study, spends only 10% more of rehearsal time speaking than the choir does, and the rehearsal articulated brief dialogic episodes between conductor and singers. These interactions, which are closed by feedback from both the conductor and the singers, are more consistent with a constructive conception of learning. This may be interpreted as this conductor's evolution towards practices that are more advanced than his conceptions.

Mixed production. Participant A sings, plays, conducts and talks simultaneously, but does not promote any simultaneous actions in the choir. Doing so might contribute to the singers developing different musical coordination and eurhythmic representations and in line with research studies on gesture and movement. Previous studies on musical learning in the framework of implicit theories show that, like the conductors, more constructive teachers perform more activities to promote different types of mental representations in learners.

Score processing levels in relation to modes of representation. It seems coherent that traditional profiles such as A's, which focus on the score, generally promote more activities involving reading, syntax and musical analysis to process the score, which is also consistent with the direct conception. On the contrary, construction of the meaning of the piece together with the singers based on graphic signs of intuitive interpretation, as in case, constitutes an example of constructive practice which may be useful for learning certain types of pieces whether or not the singers know how to read. Although studying with choirs who are expert in reading working on pieces of medium-high difficulty may give rise to a lower opportunity for the use of eurhythmic resources and different modes of representation, some studies have shown that the use of these resources benefits learning and memorization of complex studies. This was presented in a previous study on instrumental learning of an invention by J.S. Bach where it was demonstrated that the use of gesture e

movement and different types of visual representation, among other forms of representation, would help in memorizing the piece.

Types of Interaction in relation to types of evaluation and supervision. The mixed production in participant B's rehearsal, where the singers are part of the IRF interaction cycles, are examples of constructive practices. The singers themselves (rather than the conductor) provide feedback and self-evaluate. Similar results are reported by Cheng and Durrant (2007) in a study where one of the participating students initiated discourse and learning activities. On the other hand, evaluation as a regulating practice has been studied by among others.

The fact that in our study, the singers self-evaluate negatively shows that control of evaluation can be yielded to the singers, in contrast to traditional practices where only the conductor or teacher evaluates or supervises. In the previous study we also found that conductors with more advanced conceptions said they used different types of evaluation, including self-evaluation by the singers, either individually or in groups. The types of interaction that are promoted in cooperative musical learning practices, and in particular, choral learning, have been explored in many studies on cooperative musical learning in different musical groupings).

The results for conductor B show teaching practices which, according to the articles reviewed in the Introduction (see Lopez-Iñiguez and Pozo, 2016), can be interpreted as good practices. This is true, for example, of conductor B's communication with the choir by means of brief dialogic cycles that help the singer to construct his/her own learning and give the singer control over his/her learning, in contrast to the studies by Rostvall and West (2003), where there was no dialog between teachers and students and teachers made sarcastic remarks about the students. Moreover, the way in which our conductor B promotes self-regulation and self-evaluation in singers, fostering their autonomy and development of cognitive processes, is consistent with the findings of Perry et al. (2002) and Durrant and Varvarigou (2019), cited in the Introduction. The use of different ways of representing the music (gestures with movement, playing instruments, percussion with the body, recording what is sung, or creating graphics) which we found in the constructive practice, enables the singers to go beyond repetitive singing of fragments to learn the piece, with learning that does not focus only on notation, as occurred in the studies by Karlsson and Juslin (2008), Kotska (1984) and Tait (1992) on good practices. This also fits in with the principles of all active contemporary methods of musical teaching since the beginning of the 20th century (Dalcroze, Orff, Kodály) reported by different researchers, e.g., McPherson and Gabrielsson (2002).

Other examples of practices contributing to significant learning are the vocalizations created specifically for dealing with concrete difficulties in pitch or tone rather than the frequently decontextualized vocal warm-up at the beginning of the rehearsal. In choral settings, it is also often frequent to promote stylistic, historical and textual-poetic knowledge of the pieces, even in the more traditional conceptions and practices, as we have seen in the current case study and as also happened in the previous study on conductor profiles (Corbalán et al., 2019). This contrasts with the results of previous studies on instrumental teaching-learning (Bautista et al., 2009; Torrado and Pozo, 2008; Lopez-Iñiguez, Pozo, de Dios, & de, 2014; Pozo, 2008), where referential processing was associated with more advanced teaching profiles, and therefore may be considered to be an example of good practices in both choir conduction and musical learnings.

Considering these findings, we can say that the constructive approach in choir conduction employs practices that focus more on the learning process and the learner, than do the practices employed by the traditional or direct approach, which focuses more on the end product: the concert. Given that the traditional model is deeply rooted in choir conduction, we believe that in order to change the practices, it is necessary to begin by re-describing the conceptions of traditional conductors, e.g., through training activities that will enable the strategies we have proposed in this study to be tested. However, further studies are required to show whether these different teaching profiles generate different forms of learning in the different students and, specifically, whether the approach most focused on the students will lead, as we hope, to better choir learnings.

REFERENCES

1. Jalolova M. SENSORY DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL AGE // Archive of Conferences. - 2021. - T. 25. - no. 1. - S. 153-157.
2. Jalolova, Mohinur. "SENSORY DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL AGE." Archive of Conferences. Vol. 25. No. 1. 2021.
3. Jalolova, M. (2021, May). SENSORY DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL AGE. In Archive of Conferences (Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 153-157).
4. ISAKOVA M. T. SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN) // SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN) Founders: Center for Innovative Technologies. - no. 8. - S. 45-52.
5. ISAKOVA, MUAZAM TULKINOVNA. "SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN)." SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN) Founders: Obshchestvo s ogranichennoy otvetstvennostyu "Center for Innovative Technologies" 8: 45-52.
6. ISAKOVA, M. T. SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN). SOVREMENNOE OBRAZOVANIE (UZBEKISTAN) Founders: Obshchestvo s ogranichennoy otvetstvennostyu "Center for Innovative Technologies", (8), 45-52.