ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Using Learning-Theory-Based Teaching Strategies for Teaching Singing: An Explanatory Sequential Study of Collegiate Teachers of Singing

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The purpose of this study was to explore the uses of learning-theory-based teaching strategies (LTBTS) by teachers of singing in colleges and universities for teaching singing. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the first quantitative phase used a researcher-developed questionnaire of Likert-type statements to assess participants’ attitude towards, frequency of use, and perception of importance of using ten LTBTS when teaching singing. A link to the online questionnaire—“Effective Teaching Strategies for Teaching Singing”—was sent to 6,912 collegiate voice teachers and choral directors in the United States using the College Music Society’s email distribution service. The sample (N = 350) was found to be representative of the population receiving the email through comparison of the percentages of individuals in CMS job title categories with similar primary and secondary teaching roles identified by participants. Results indicated participants viewed the use of LTBTS very positively but moderately important. In response to questions about how frequently respondents used each teaching strategy, responses indicated each strategy was used “most of the time,” with breaking down repertoire into small chunks for mastery, providing high quality feedback, teaching students to be aware of their thinking about singing, and teaching deliberate practice
strategies being used “always.” Only weak and very weak correlations were found to exist between demographic characteristics and participants’ attitude and importance scores, whereas an open-ended question suggested a potential disconnect regarding knowledge about LTBTS among teachers of singing and a lack of distinction between voice science and vocal pedagogy.

Based on the quantitative results, three respondents with diverse scores and demographic characteristics were selected to participate in phenomenological case studies. Through analysis of interviews, teaching observations, and the collected teaching materials, the following themes emerged as descriptions of the participants’ lived experiences of the phenomenon: *Observed Uses of LTBTS, Familiarity with LTBTS Terminology, Variety of Vocal Pedagogy Training, Differences in Defining Vocal Pedagogy, and A Desire to Be a Better Teacher*. Each of the case study participants confirmed the frequency of use and positive attitude; however, the case studies suggested the participants were not always aware of the use and did not have prior exposure to LTBTS specific terminology. A comparison of the two data sets implied a clarification was needed to distinguish vocal pedagogy from voice science in the field of voice teaching. Additionally, the researcher recommended developing a graduate voice educator degree that would combine the courses traditionally taught in a vocal pedagogy program with courses that would deliver information about the application of educational learning theories and cognitive science to teaching singing. Future research may provide additional information about how singing teachers are prepared for teaching at the collegiate level and how collegiate instrumental instructors may perceive the use of LTBTS for teaching applied music lessons.