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The Implementation of Voice Exercises for the Occupational Voice Users in Indonesia

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Abstract

Voice exercises are part of important training for the professional voice users. The voice exercises are meant for conditioning and to achieve good voice production. The occupational voice users especially in Indonesia however, hardly received any training concerning voice and speech production to avoid the risk of voice loss in their occupation. This paper will elaborate the importance and benefit of the Implementation of voice exercises for the occupational voice users with some elaborate example of voice exercises.

Keywords: voice exercises, occupational voice users, voice problem, professional voice users, voice warm-ups

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Penerapan Latihan Vokal untuk Pengguna Suara Okupasi di Indonesia

Abstrak

Latihan vokal adalah salah satu komponen penting didalam pelatihan vokal sebagai pegguna suara profesional. Latihan suara bermanfaat untuk memperkuat suara serta membentuk produksi vokal dengan baik. Namun sebagai pengguna suara okupasi atau non profesional, informasi mengenai teknik dan pelatihan vokal sangat jarang sekali di dapatkan khususnya di Indonesia. Artikel ini akan mengupas tentang pentingnya akan latihan vokal dan penerapan latihan vokal untuk pengguna suara non profesional serta beberapa contoh latihan vokal untuk menghindari hilangnya suara pada saat bekerja.

Kata kunci: latihan vokal, *occupational voice users*, gangguan suara, pengguna suara profesional, pemanasan suara

Introduction

The term occupational voice users are classified for people who use their voices as an essential part in dealing with loud environment in their job settings. The occupational voice users are normally teachers, gym instructors, clergy, telemarketers, salesperson, doctors, among many others; the professional voice users include singers, actors, and broadcasters. While they must receive proper voice training in their careers, the occupational voice users usually have very little knowledge about proper training about voice production and voice care.

In the United States, studies shown that 25% of working population consider its voice to be critical to their job performance and essential for their occupation. The same comparable figures also appear in Finland (Williams & Carding, 2005). Although there is no exact data available in the country like Indonesia, there is no doubt that Indonesia has the same estimated number of populations that consider its voice critical to their occupation.

Among the occupational voice users in Indonesia, teacher is considered as one of the most crucial occupations. The official data shown by Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Education, there are almost 2.936.893 teachers in 2019, which is approximately 1,1% from the Indonesian population (Kompasiana, 2020). This statistic shows that Indonesia has a very low percentage of teacher compared to the United States which comprises 2% of the total population. The ratio of teacher and student in the United States is 1:12 (Christensen, n.d.), while the ratio of teacher and

student in Jakarta, Indonesia is 1:21 in the elementary school in the year 2019. The ratio low ratio in Indonesia is very concerning. Apart from the low ratio of teacher in Indonesia, there is also another potential threat to the quality of educational system in Indonesia, voice problem. Voice loss is reported to be one of the reasons for job loss. It is reported in countries like Australia, one-third of the teachers missed work due to the voice problem.

On the other hand, the recent polling from one of the voice trainings in Indonesia held by *Himpunan Manajer Pelatihan Perhotelan Indonesia* (Hospitality Training Manager Organization), consists of occupational voice users, showed that 100% of the participants were aware of the importance of vocal health, but only 24% understood how to maintain their voice in their careers, and 76% had little or no knowledge about voice care. This lack of knowledge about voice care can potentially lead to the impairment of the voice which could cause major financial loses. Some risks that occupational voice users may find in their voice practice includes speaking excessively, speaking in a noise or loud environment and to long distances without voice amplification which might potentially lead into voice problem (Khidr, 2017).

Although the percentage in the organization above could not represent the general occupational voice users in Indonesia, but others might have also very little knowledge about proper training with their voice production and voice care. Unlike the professional voice users, the occupational voice users receive little to none voice training for speech production in their career.

Benefits of Voice Exercises

The professional voice users, especially classical singers, receive a lot of voice training to achieve the best voice production while singing to long distances without voice amplification. The term voice exercises are heavily-used by the classical singers in their daily practice regime to condition their voice and achieve the best voice production. Voice exercises are also utilized to help the singers to find their voice and used as warm-up regime before rehearsals and performances. Singers are trained not to sing in front of the public unless their voice is fully warmed up to avoid straining their vocal fold. Similarly, Athletes would do the warm-up regime to prepare muscle for prolonged, strenuous activity before the activity to avoid any muscle soreness and any injuries. Studies have shown that singers who received voice training appear to have more endurance that those did not receive voice training (Milbrath & Salomon, n.d.). This voice training and warm-up regime for singers would also benefit the occupational voice users if they implement some short voice exercises before they perform their vocally-demanding occupation.

Voice exercises should include some general warming up exercises to flex the vocal fold before being heavily used throughout the day. It also improves vocal resonance by enhancing resonance to maximize voice quality and increases voice loudness with carrying power. By improving vocal resonances, the voice could project with minimum effort without straining the voice (William, Nerys, & Carding, 2005).

Many professional voice users are required to work on the aspects of voice projection and voice amplification, especially teachers and gym instructors. Appropriate voice projection requires a good breathing-for-speech technique and relaxed (minimal effort) laryngeal vibratory mechanism and an open oral tract to maximize the resonance (William, Nerys, & Carding, 2005). The exercises that are intended specifically to warm-up the larynx should produce immediate benefits (Milbrath & Salomon, n.d.).

Larnyx is an important apparatus which produce voice for the human speech. The other important components include the articulatory structure (tongue, jaw, soft, palate, lips) and pulmonary system which could cause disorder in speech communication if any of these components are disrupted (Williams & Carding, 2005). Therefore, the occupational voice users should also pay a great deal of attention in doing some exercises for the articulatory structure to achieve better speech production and pronunciation. These exercises are meant for singers to enhance their sound production in singing. A paper by Thomas Fillerbrown (2006) stated that singing voice and the speaking voice are identical and the training for each should be the same. The same study by Dr. Morell Mackenzie also stated that singing contributes to good speaking, as the greater includes the less.

Warm-Up Exercises

Some warm-up and relaxation exercises that could benefit the voice before starting the daily speaking job are:

1. Lip trill exercise

   Put your lips together and exhale by vibrating your lips like a motor boat. Let your tongue relaxed while exhaling. When this exercise is done correctly, the nose and lips should feel the ticklish sensation ("Voice vocal warm-ups," 2011). This lip trill exercise gets the respiratory muscles into full action rapidly (Titze, n.d.).

2. Forward tongue roll and extension

   Let your tongue roll forward and extend out and do this on the vowels [a] and [i] by singing in scales up and down. This exercise will loosen tongue and jaw (Titze, n.d.).

While doing these exercises, be mindful of not squeezing your breath out till the last word. Instead, you should let the voice produced with a good amount of breath to achieve a good and efficient sound. Squeezing your breath at the very last word may create tension on laryngeal area and stiffness in your throat area which may lead to voice loss and fatigue. Jaw, teeth and tongue should be relaxed (not clenched and tensed) by keeping the upper and lower teeth separated and let the jaw move freely during speech at all times.

Resonance Exercises

Some exercises that could increase resonance without straining your voices are:

1. Siren exercises

   Each vowel sounds create different scale of resonance and has its own characteristic pitch. The highest resonance is the [i] vowel creates the most natural resonance from the other vowel (Fillerbrown, 2006). Therefore, [i] vowel will be the favorite vowel exercise in building resonance for better speech production (Titze, n.d.)

   Use [i] vowel to create a siren sound, starting from your highest pitch and slide down to the lowest pitch which goes down to two octaves. The consistency of the vowel and sound should be kept while sliding from high pitch to the lowest pitch. *The importance of doing this exercise is to keep the sensation of resonance in head area throughout the exercise to establish the same consistency of sound.* Other than increasing resonance, siren exercise could also give maximal stretch to vocal fold.

2. The nasal consonants exercise

   Milbrath and Solomon suggested that many vocal warm-up protocols include the use of nasal consonants and nasalized vowels. The basis for this exercise is that improving overall resonance is thought to improve voice quality and provide maximum vocal economy (Milbrath & Salomon, n.d.).

   The nasal consonants exercise can also benefit in developing the resonance in nose and head area. This exercise will give vibration sensation thay can be felt in the thin bone of the nose. The consonant *ng* can create the right space between the upper teeth and lower teeth while doing it with a relaxed jaw.

Repeat the *ng* sound for three times and prolong the sound for at least four counts in each repetition. Next step is to add vowels [i], [u], [e], [o], [a] after the *ng* sound in each repetition.

Example:
ng----[i]----, ng----[u]----, ng----[e]----, ng----[o]----, ng----[a]----*

Be very careful when transitioning between *ng* to the vowel by *not changing the nasal resonance and losing the sensation of vibration that felt in the thin bone of the nose*. Focus on moving your tongue and lips while pronouncing the vowel and watch for very little movement of jaw and chin.
Once this exercise is fully achieved, the word *ng* can be substituted by adding some consonants, such as *sing*, *ring*, or *ting* and increase in pitch for each repetition.

Tongue Flexibility Exercises

These exercises are meant to relax the articulators, such as tongue, jaw, and lips. In order to enhance the clarity of speech, the articulators need to avoid excessive movement that leads to tension.

Some favorite tongue twisters' exercises are:

The tip of the tongue, the lips, the teeth.
Sally sells sea shells by the sea shore.
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickle peppers.
("Voice vocal warm-ups," 2011)

Studies have examined that the effect of vocal exercises on vocal function have differed substantially in the duration of the activity. Some involved a single session of vocal warm up exercises alone and others had participants perform exercises for weeks to months (Milbrath & Salomon, n.d.). Implementing these voice exercises by doing it daily and religiously will condition the vocal fold to achieve longer working hours. When the resonance exercise (the nose-and-head resonance) will be fully established, the journey of speaking and performing will be done with ease (Fillerbrown, 2006) and more efficient for the occupational voice users in Indonesia.

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