

Scat Singing Learning Method in Jazz Vocals for Vocal Students of Music Presentation Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Scat singing is the designation of vocal improvisation techniques in jazz music. This form of vocal improvisation was first popularized by Louis Armstrong in 1962. Scat singing is often learned by imitating improvised musical instruments into vocals, such as saxophones, trumpets, guitars, or pianos. Popjazz vocal students of the ISI Yogyakarta Music Presentation study program began to be introduced and learned scat singing from semester 2 to semester 6. Only a few students successfully apply this vocal improvisation technique when singing in performances and jam sessions. The author as a lecturer of popjazz vocal practice in the Music Presentation Study Program has observed the difficulties experienced by the majority of students. Several stages of learning have been applied in the learning process, for example by understanding scales and chord patterns, developing the main melody in songs, enriching vocal dialects, to multiplying musical references. This stage of learning was not significantly successful in helping students master scat singing. This study aims to formulate a learning method of vocal improvisation techniques for scat singing. The data collection process is carried out by observing the learning process during lectures, interviews with students, and regular singing practice. Inductive qualitative data analysis, which is an analysis based on the data obtained then developed a certain relationship pattern or hypothesis. The research was conducted by qualitative methods, with the final result being a descriptive sentence formulation of steps to master the vocal improvisation technique of scat singing. This conclusion is expected to be an overview for lecturers in order to determine the right approach to help students master scat singing and dare to apply it in songs.



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INTRODUCTION

Not all vocalists who are steeped in jazz music are adept at scat singing. Quoting from Mark C. Grudley, Billy Baker in his article *Successful Steps to Scat Singing* (2010) said, the meaning of improvisation in music is an expression of spontaneous composition. Musicians process melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and form into a new musical sentence. In jazz music, a vocalist is considered the same as an instrumentalist. That is, it is expected that a vocalist can improvise with his vocals just as flexible as an instrumentalist playing with his instrument. By separating vocal lines from verbal meanings, vocalists who perform scat singing enter the realm of instrumental music that is not affected by the meaning of words, called instrumental music. Jazz vocalists who want to go into the realm of instrumental music can do so by adopting instrumentalists (Bauer, 2022).

Michele Weir (2015) wrote 5 simple steps to learn scat singing: 1. Listen, listen, listen, 2. Learn a Song, 3. Substitute Syllables for Lyrics, 4. Improvise around the Melody, 5. Expand on Your Improvisation. Scat singing is the designation of vocal improvisation techniques in jazz music. Improvisation learning can also be started from the introduction of basic vocal techniques, such as breathing, vocalizing, scale exercises, and listening to references (Siahaan, 2022). Porter (1997) said, the main characteristics of scat singing are breath control, vibrato and glissando techniques, rhythmic feel and jazz phonetics. This is supported by the analysis of melody and rhythm from improvised transcriptions.

The improvised technique of scat singing is one of the characteristics of jazz vocals. This form of vocal improvisation was first popularized by Louis Armstrong. In 1962, Armstrong recorded a song called "Heebie Jeebies". During the recording session, he suddenly couldn't remember some parts of the lyrics and started improvising with meaningless syllables (Farhana, Arwiria, & Muttaqien, 2019). This became the beginning of scat singing introduced to the wider community (Stoloff, 1996). Scat singing is also often learned by imitating improvised musical instruments into vocals. Therefore, vocalists usually transcribe (imitate) some improvisations played by instrumentalists such as saxophone, trumpet, guitar, and piano players for practice.

The art and challenge in practicing scat singing is that a vocalist must string notes rhythmically and dialectically directly when performing a song. Even when a vocalist is very used to performing a song, the direct experience of performing when playing music can be difficult. Therefore, learning scat singing with the jam session method is a very important point to practice. The D4 Music Presentation Study Program of ISI Yogyakarta strongly prioritizes practical courses as the main strategy in developing students' skills in the field of performing arts. The pop-jazz vocal soloist course is one of the compulsory practical courses that vocal students must take. This course is tiered from Basic 1 to Advanced III. Jazz music genres are the main study in this course, including blues, swing, Latin, to funk and modern styles. In all of these genres, students are required to be able to improvise scat singing vocals (Djaelani, 2016).

From many references, it can be concluded that the scat singing technique is naturally a form of a vocalist's musical response to the experience of live and spontaneous singing. This simple thing turns out to be very complex when faced with many inhibiting situations, such as self-confidence, lack of mastery of music theory, lack of appropriate musical references, supportive learning partners, and many things (Febryansach, 2019). In terms of self-confidence, students are challenged to display their skills honestly. This honesty is not easy for some people. Generally, students assume that to be worthy of scat singing, they must be able to string complex melodies with complex intervals and diverse syllables. Even though it can't happen right away. A vocalist should start from simple scat sentences. After that, skills will continue to grow along with the learning carried out so that it will grow. Music references are also one factor that should not be ruled out. From appropriate musical references, one learns to understand the 'feel' that is characteristic of jazz music (Firdaus, Santosa, & Ardini, 2019).

Many simple steps and methods can be learned, but some students still find it difficult and hampered to get used to scat singing. Most students are very rigid when practicing scat and can't name what makes it difficult. This study aims to formulate a learning method for scat singing techniques in accordance with the musical abilities of popjazz vocal students of ISI Yogyakarta Music Performance study program (PSD4PM). The results of scat singing learning which are considered less than optimal in the reality of lectures become the urgency of the research to be completed. If it is not corrected immediately, the vocal improvisation ability of college students will not make significant progress (Karina, Widyastutieningrum, & Hirza, 2022). The method of learning the scat singing technique that will be formulated is expected to help lecturers determine the right form of training in mastering scat singing. The method applied is also unique because it refers to the conditions of PSD4PM students in terms of musicality, music reference, learning environment, facilities and infrastructure and learning motivation. The results of this research are expected to be a benchmark in further learning so that it can be more effective and efficient, and make it easier for students to master and practice scat singing.

RESEARCH METHODS

The general scope of this research study is to formulate the most appropriate and effective learning methodology in learning scat singing improvisation techniques for jazz vocal learning at PSD4PM in particular. In general, this research can produce recommendations for learning methodologies that can be applied in learning improvisation techniques on jazz vocals. The selection of these criteria is based on the personal experience of the researcher as a lecturer teaching a practical course, namely Popjazz Vocal Soloist who observes the phenomenon of popjazz vocal students at PSD4PM finding it difficult to learn scat singing technique material.

Types of research

This research is a qualitative study where the researcher is the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2015) which is supported by the theory of classroom action research. Classroom action research (PTK) is a process of developing skills with new developments to solve problems by being directly involved in the process (Farhana, 2019). The application of action research is carried out in teaching and learning activities in the classroom with the aim of improving the teaching and learning process, with the aim of improving learning practices to make them more effective. The methods carried out are supported by learning literature that is in accordance with the subject matter. The research was conducted by the researcher with 1 team member. PTK was applied to popjazz vocal students with material arranged in stages of the scat singing training process formulated from the reviewed literature with appropriate development. In this study, the demonstration activities were broken down into 5 stages, namely: 1. Scale, scale, chord elements, and rhythm exercises. 2. Practice combining pitch and rhythm, adjusting chords, and dialect. 3. Activities to study references through videos, imitate simple scat singing, feel the feel of swing. 4. Practice making scat singing in standard jazz songs directly. 5. Deepening the practice of scat singing with attitude in jazz music, spontaneity, call and response, feel swing, blue note. This research was conducted in August - October 2022. In this demonstration activity, researchers and the team observed and recorded the results of each demonstration and analyzed the data needed to draw conclusions (Madura, 1996).

Data collection process

Data sources come from literature studies, field observations, and the class demonstration process on PSD4PM popjazz vocal students. Literature study was conducted by collecting information from journals, supporting books, and scientific articles. The literature study was complemented by field observations and seeing the reality of the learning environment at PSD4PM. In field observations, researchers and the team collected information by brief interviews with popjazz vocal soloist students, vocal lecturers, and other popjazz instrument students. Researchers and the team began the data collection process by compiling data from literature studies and field observations, matching data and formulating data that would be used to process data from the demonstration process. The data interpretation process was carried out by matching the literature data with the data from the demonstration process to get conclusions.

Stages of Research

This research process went through several stages to obtain accurate and valid data. The stages carried out in this study are: planning, data collection, demonstration and conclusion. The planning stage begins with a study of related literature, collecting research journal references, formulating problems. Data collection is done by processing literature data with field observations. Supporting data was also formulated from the demonstration stage in the field. Data processing is carried out by the confirmation method, on the conclusions obtained from the literature study and data conclusions from the demonstration process in the field (Rogin, 1992).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out before entering the field (by processing literature data and field observations), during the field (by processing literature data and data from field demonstrations), and after completion in the field (interpretation of interim conclusions). This method is taken from the Miles and Huberman (1984) model, that activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until completion. Running data analysis is done by reducing data, selecting valid and invalid data. Data validity can be known from the match of data from the literature with data from the demonstration process in the field. This is done so that the data is easy to interpret and there are no errors in the conclusion making process.

The process of interpreting field demonstration data is carried out by observing student learning responses, student enthusiasm in demonstration activities, understanding of the material, and the final results in the practice of performing scat singing in the final stage. From the data of the demonstration results, qualitative conclusions were obtained which were arranged in points (Suryati, 2021). This conclusion contains supporting data that leads to the final conclusion to answer the formulation of this research problem. The process of interpreting literature data and demonstration practices is the result of confirming the two data with the subjective interpretations of researchers and teams. Researchers and teams are the tools of data interpretation in qualitative research. Therefore, researchers and teams must equip themselves with a lot of supporting literature so that the interpretation process really leads to conclusions that represent research data and answer problem formulations (Pramono., dkk, 2019).

As a basis for drawing conclusions from existing data, the author uses the concept of data analysis Miles and Huberman. Based on the concept of data analysis, there are several components, namely: (1) sorting out the main things from the amount of data obtained (data reduction); In this process, the answer points for the first problem formulation can be formulated. (2) The results of the reduction are presented descriptively and equipped with supporting diagrams. From these diagrams, many conclusions can be formulated related to the data needed by researchers (data presentation; and (3) Conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Conclusions were drawn based on the researchers' and team's interpretation of the reduced data. Data reduction is a sensitive thinking process. This stage is an important stage for the researcher and the team. Researchers are beginners, therefore in this process researchers also discuss with colleagues who master the field under study to develop data interpretation. With this flow, it is hoped that researchers can really formulate things that can become valid conclusions from this research. A chart of the planning and research stages to be carried out can be seen in Figure 1 below:

a. Research Flow Chart

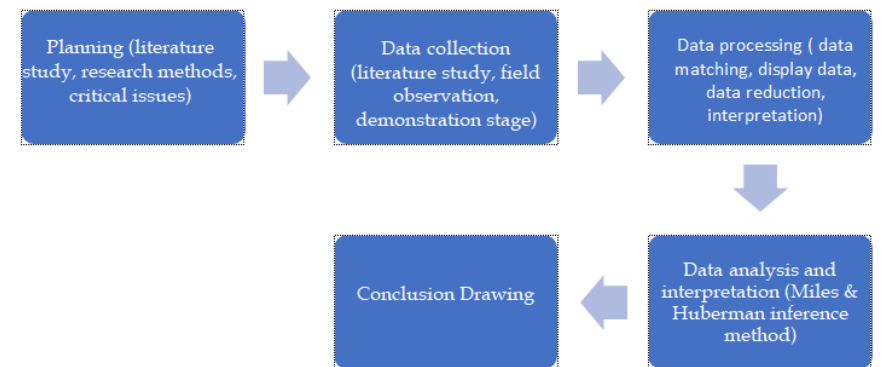


Figure 1. Research Flow Chart
Source: personal documentation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Study Results

Scat singing skills are closely related to individual musicality. Musicality includes music theory, taste, and reference. In the literature studied, the method of learning scat singing is done by directly practicing one of the traditional jazz songs. The vocalist is directed to directly replace the song verse with the dialect in scat singing, for example ba-da-ya-du-dn-dap-dwe. This method is indeed very simple to practice. But in reality, in the practice of major popjazz vocals at PSD4PM, many students feel less helped by this method. Based on the research and understanding of the situation, the researcher and the team concluded 5 learning steps, namely:

1. Scales, chord elements, and rhythm exercises.
2. Practice of combining pitch and rhythm, chord adjustment, and dialect.
3. Activities of studying video references, imitating scat singing, feeling the swing.
4. Practice scat singing in standard jazz songs live.
5. Deepening the practice of doing scat singing with attitude in jazz music (spontaneity, call and response, feel swing, blue note).

These five learning steps are formulated based on the conclusions of the reviewed literature, adjusted to the ability of students, facilities and infrastructure as well as the learning situation on campus.

Scat Singing Learning Method

Effective learning methods used to learn scat singing are:

1. Conventional learning method / lecture method
2. Demonstration learning method
3. Discussion learning method

Of the 3 methods used, the method that has the largest percentage is the demonstration learning method. This method is very influential in the learning process because scat singing can be more easily learned when practiced directly. Lecture and discussion methods support the demonstration method to deepen students' understanding of music theory, vocal techniques, and interpretation of scat singing.

In the conventional method, the learning materials provided include the history and origin of jazz music, the definition of improvisation in jazz music, elements in improvised scat singing, and references to vocalists and instrumentalists.

The discussion learning method provides an opportunity for students to convey their experience of trying to do scat singing. In this method can be found important points in the research, among others: the difficulties of each student in the practice of scat singing (Wibowo, 2021).

In the preparation of this learning method, several important things can be concluded:

1. The main difficulty of students is the lack of basic musical skills, so the solution is to strengthen the practice of scales and knowledge of music theory.
2. The demonstration method is filled with vocal practice material, including vocals, scales, intervals, melodic and rhythmic variations, phrasing, and sense of swing.
3. Each learning step has a clear and measurable target in stages. The targets to be achieved must not overlap and must complement the next step.

Field Demonstration Practice

Exercise scales, intervals, chords, rhythmic, and dialects.

Scat singing can be broken down into the smaller elements of pitch, rhythm and dialect. The first stage of the demonstration was conducted to support the students' musical abilities and reinforce each element of scat singing. The researcher and team developed a series of simple vocalization exercises to make it easier for the students. Some of the exercises included vocalization in the form of scales, chromatic, pitch intervals, rhythmic, tritone, dialect/syllable.

There is a significant difference in the 'style' of reading sheet music between classical music and jazz. This difference in reading is done to get used to the syncopation of jazz music. Practice reading scores with syncopation is a common thing to do, for example reading notes 1/8 to 1/16 can be seen in notations 1 and 2.

Go-in' a - lone life is your own_ but the cost is some-times dear

Notation 1. Song notation examples

Image source: private

Notation 1 as previously read like notation 2:

Go-in' a - lone life is your own_ but the cost is so-me times dear_

Notation 2. Examples of how to read song notation

Image source: private

This reading style is applied to familiarize oneself with the syncopation that is often an ornament in jazz music. The target to be achieved in the first stage of the demonstration is that students have a solid foundation in the concepts of scales, supporting music theory, and reading sheet music (primavista). The concept of scales and rhythmic exercises can be developed as needed and adapted to the students' abilities. Students should be familiar with the pitch intervals, rhythmic variations, chord progressions, and improvisational concepts that characterize jazz music.

Exercise tone and rhythmic merging, chord adjustment, and dialect.

Scat singing is the art of composing notes with rhythmic variations that are adjusted to the chords of the song spontaneously at that moment. Based on observations in the field and brief interviews with students, researchers formulated the target to be achieved in this stage is the habituation to create melodies spontaneously. The exercises carried out at this stage were carried out starting from the simplest level and then developed in complexity according to student responses. Demonstration stage 2 is done by practicing tone, rhythmic, and dialect separately first. practice composing tone is done by learning the blues scale and reversing the order of the notes as desired. An example is as written in notation 3:

Notation 3. Examples of composing notes in chords

Image source: private

The researcher and team developed a series of exercises to facilitate students' learning at this stage. Some of the exercises were:

- a. Using simple songs, learn to make simple notes that match the chords, then provide rhythmic variations. This exercise starts gradually from 1 note, then increases to 2, 3 notes and so on. Rhythmic variations are gradually done from the simplest. For example, the song used is a standard jazz blues song whose form is called 12 bar blues. An example of rhythmic variation can be seen as in notation 4:



Notation 4. Rhythmic variations
Image source: private

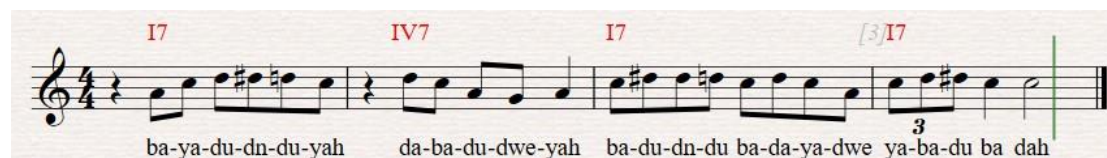
The exercise can start by sounding 1 note with a simple rhythmic variation, as in the example of notation 4. The next step is to add other notes so that a melody begins to form. The development of the melody can be as extensive as the improviser wishes. For example, in notations 5 and 6:



Notation 5. Melody development
Image source: private



Notation 6. Melody development
Image source: private



Notation 7. Addition of dialects
Image source: private

The last step is to add dialects, forming a scat singing sentence as in notation 7.

Activities to study video references, imitation of scat singing, feel swing.

Jazz music lovers may imagine a piece of jazz music undergoing a process of composition and rehearsal before performance. In fact, jazz musicians usually perform without musical notation, do not hold special rehearsals, and do not have a conductor to coordinate their performance. They may even play music together even though they may not know each other and have never met (Berliner, 1994). This leads to a 'culture' or what is commonly called 'attitude' in jazz music. Both scat singing and jazz music are western cultures that are not as familiar to students as pop music. Learning through video references is an important stage to understand how the artistic process of scat singing occurs. The researcher and team provided video references and directed students to imitate the process. Some of the artist references studied were Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Al Jarreau, Tania Maria, Chet Baker, Dizzy Gillespie, and George Benson. This third stage was conducted using lecture and discussion methods. Students have been equipped with practical exercises and understanding of music theory. Therefore, the target to be achieved in this video is to get the "feel" and equalize the "language" so that the scat singing performed can match the "feel" of jazz music. The following is a description of the knowledge learned from each artist:

- a. Louis Armstrong
Louis Armstrong was a jazz vocalist and trumpet player. As a vocalist as well as an instrumentalist, he has a neat and varied singing style. Louis still takes the original melody of the song and develops it rhythmically and melodically. His improvisation is neat and beautiful following the chords of the song. Louis' improvisation style can be a basic reference. Students can learn simple and dynamic phrasing and melody development techniques that are characteristic of jazz melodies.
- b. Sarah Vaughan
Sarah is one of those singers who has strong characteristics. The character of her voice is thick with vibration and strong intonation. Sarah Vaughan improvises with a variety of melodies. In her improvisations, Sarah uses many interesting modal approaches. She is not afraid to execute chromatic notes with tight rhythms. In scat singing technique, students can learn tone production techniques with proper intonation and strong power.
- c. Ella Fitzgerald
Ella Fitzgerald proved that an important element of her improvisational style extended the quality of 'language' in jazz music (Porter, 1997). Ella was one of the vocalists who often did scat singing in every repertoire she performed. Her character is very strong in executing the song. Ella has a very strong sense of jazz music. She can scat for blues songs to Latin songs. In Latin songs Ella enjoys rhythmic playing with limited and simple notes. Her strong nuances make the simple notes a very interesting ornamentation in her playing. From Ella Fitzgerald students learn to identify dialects to enrich their repertoire of scat singing.

In this lecture and discussion stage, students identify key points from each artist that will become knowledge for them. This method is also complemented by music transcription activities, which is the process of notating sounds, converting sounds into visual symbols, or the activity of visualizing musical sounds into notation by writing on paper. (Chase & Nettl, 1965 and Charles Seeger, 2012 in Karina, 2022). The transcription process is done to convey the characteristics and details of the musical composition (Karina, 2022). By doing transcription activities, students increasingly understand the details of the formation of scat singing, starting from the elements of tone, rhythm, tone value, syncopation, and phrasing. This method runs well and can achieve the target. As a result, students can formulate some scat singing sentences from their reference artists.

Practice composing scat singing in live jazz standard songs.

Practice with simple arranged etudes is expected to be absorbed in the memory so that students are able to respond to musical accompaniment with many ideas. The simple etude that has been mastered becomes a provision for developing melodic and rhythmic forms into songs. This stage stimulates students' creativity to develop melodic and rhythmic patterns with variations, of course, with musical appreciation that spontaneously follows. This demonstration stage can see the extent of students' skill development after passing through the previous stages.

From the practical activities in class, it can be seen that students are more confident in singing scat singing. Apart from the many notes that are not in accordance with the chords of the song, the variety of tones and rhythms of students has experienced significant development. The most important thing is that students are starting to be able to perform scat singing with a good swing feel. Simple tones and rhythms become more beautiful and musical. Students' musical response to song chord progressions is also supported by the ability to pronounce scat singing with a variety of dialects, so that melodic sentences sound like the "language" of scat singing to be achieved.

Deepening the practice of doing scat singing with attitude in jazz music (spontaneity, call and response, swinging feel, blue note).

Students' skills are sharpened by helping them understand the attitude in jazz music. The most important thing in this stage is to make students feel the communication with the accompanying musicians. Therefore, at this stage, students practice together with other musicians. Communication with other musicians makes them feel the experience of playing music in an ensemble, which has a difference with singing accompanied by accompaniment music.

This demonstration exercise was conducted outside the classroom. Students attended and joined the Jogja jazz community in jam sessions. This session is an output that illustrates the extent to which their skills have improved. Jamming with simple songs, students can overcome their nervousness because they have prepared themselves with programmed exercises and clear targets. The jam session experience complements their practice as it gives them a live performance stage.

Music playing skills are proven to be most effectively learned with practical learning methods, directly practicing playing musical instruments. Therefore, singing skills are also learned by singing practice. Some of the methods used in learning to sing are conventional learning methods/lecture, demonstration, and discussion. Of the 3 methods used, the one with the largest percentage is the demonstration learning method. Activities carried out include training in the elements of scat singing in the form of scales, rhythmic, and dialect. In the conventional method, the learning materials provided include

the history and origin of jazz music, an understanding of improvisation in jazz music, and references to vocalists and instrumentalists. The discussion learning method provides an opportunity for students to convey their experience of trying to do scat singing. In this method can be found important points in the research, among others: the difficulties of each student in the practice of scat singing.

The recommended scat singing learning methods for jazz vocal learning at PSD4PM are scat singing element exercises, scat singing element merging exercises, expanding music references, scat singing creation exercises in songs, and jam sessions. Jam sessions are very important to familiarize vocalists with live music situations.

CONCLUSION

The scat singing learning process that has been carried out so far has not shown significant results in the end session. In this research process, recommendations for new learning steps have been formulated as an alternative that is tailored to the abilities and understanding of PSD4PM students. The learning method used is the demonstration method supported by lecture and discussion methods. The demonstration method is used to practice technical exercises that support scat singing skills. Lecture and discussion methods are used to support students' knowledge of theory and understanding in scat singing, as well as understanding their difficulties in this vocal improvisation technique. The scat singing learning method is formulated in 5 stages, namely: (1) Scales, melodies, scales, chord elements, rhythmic, and dialect exercises, (2) Practice incorporating scat singing elements into simple blues song chord progressions (pitch, rhythm, and dialect), (3) Practice scat singing into songs, (4) Practice scat singing in a jam session., (5) Understand scat singing with attitude in jazz music. This designed method can result in different achievements for each student, according to their musicality and ability. Therefore, routine guidance and regular practice are needed to get significant results in accordance with the target to be achieved.

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