

SAMPLE PROPOSAL OUTLINE

1. THE TOPIC - Pitch-matching of Junior High Boys
2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The ability to match pitch is one of the most fundamental skills in vocal music. The absence of this skill is one of the most challenging problems that vocal music teachers and their students face. This problem can be compounded in adolescent boys by the difficulties associated with the male changing voice. Consequently, pitch-matching problems and potential solutions have been the focus of a number of research studies. Early literature on this problem used such pejorative terms as “tone deaf” or “monotone” to describe students who had difficulty matching pitch (see Welch, 1979 for a review of earlier research). More recently scholars have labeled these students as “uncertain” or “inaccurate” singers.

A common assumption about inaccurate singers is that they lack strong perceptual skills: “good ears”. Studies that have compared pitch-matching perception and production skills, however, suggest that the relationship between the two may not be very strong.

3. THE LITERATURE - Researchers have looked at a number of factors that might influence pitch-matching performance including age, experience, gender, model characteristics, and perceptual skills.

Geringer, J. M. (1983). The relationship of pitch-matching and pitch discrimination abilities of preschool and fourth-grade students. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 31, 93-99.

Welch, G. F. (1979). Poor pitch singing: A review of the literature. *Psychology of Music*, 7 (1), 50-58

Yarbrough, C., Bowers, J., & Benson, W. (1992). The effect of vibrato on the pitch-matching accuracy of certain and uncertain singers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 40, 30-38.

Yarbrough, C., Green G., Benson, W., & Bowers, J. (1991). Inaccurate singers: An exploratory study of variables affecting pitch-matching. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 107, 23-34.

Yarbrough, C., Morrison, S. J., Karrick, B., & Dunn, D. (1995). The effect of male falsetto on the pitch-matching accuracy of uncertain boy singers, grades K-8. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 14 (1), 4-10.

4. VARIABLES TO CONSIDER

- 1) Age
- 2) Experience
- 3) Gender
- 4) model characteristics
- 5) perceptual skills

5. PURPOSE STATEMENT - The purpose of this study was to compare junior high boys’ performance on a two pitch-matching tasks involving singing (production) and tuning a knob (perception) to further explore the relationship between pitch perception and pitch production. The choice of junior high boys as subjects stems from the particular difficulties some boys experience in matching pitch as they undergo the physical changes associated with vocal maturation.

6. QUESTIONS The research questions were:

- 1) Is there a difference in perceptual ability between certain and uncertain singers?
- 2) Are perception or matching scores affected by the singing range of the subject?