



Observed teaching styles of junior development and club professional tennis coaches in Australia.

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ABSTRACT

Diverse learning conditions and experiences are often created by employing different teaching styles and tennis coaches need to purposefully implement a range of teaching styles. This paper presents the findings of research completed on the observed teaching styles of 12 tennis coaches in Australia using Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles (2008). The 12 coaches were selected after completing a survey questionnaire about teaching styles and indicating their willingness to participate in systematic observations of their instructional practices. Results indicate that Junior Development and Club Professional tennis coaches commonly use two teaching styles (Command Style-A and Practice Style-B). These teaching styles share common and complimentary pedagogical principles with direct instruction guidelines whereby the coach is in control of what the students are learning in addition to how and why they are learning it.

Key words: Teaching styles, Development, Coaching.

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of teaching or coaching is to connect learners in consequential goal-orientated activities with the aim of achieving instructional outcomes specific to an individual lesson or group of lessons (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008; Rink, 2002). The manner which tennis coaches organise and configure practice, deliver information and offer feedback has been represented by numerous terms including; strategies, styles, approaches, frameworks, processes and methods. This paper refers to the term teaching styles. According to Ashworth a teaching style can be defined as,

A plan of action that defines the specific decision interaction of the teacher or coach and the learner for the purpose of leading to the development of specific objectives in subject matter and behavior (Ashworth, personal communication, March 2, 2010).

Previous research has revealed that Australian tennis coaches believe they use a range of teaching styles during their coaching sessions throughout the year (Hewitt & Edwards, 2011). Literature has also submitted, however, that teachers have a tendency to overestimate the frequency with which they

report to using teaching styles (Cothran et al., 2006; Mosston & Ashworth, 2008). It has been suggested that the instructional practices available to tennis coaches have been confused by the presence of various terms and coaching language (Reid et al, 2007).



The importance of coaches basing their practice on a theoretical framework has been well documented in the literature (Lyle, 2002; Mosston & Ashworth, 2008). A theoretical

framework offers clarity around the purpose and arrangement of activities that promote increased student interest, cooperation, and managerial effectiveness and more legitimate assessments of learning (Metzler, 2000; Mosston & Ashworth, 2008).

Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles

Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008) describes a unified theoretical framework of teaching where an array of teaching styles have been arranged on a continuum. The structure of The Spectrum of Teaching Styles stems from the initial premise that "teaching is governed by a single unifying process: decision making" (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008, p.8). Every deliberate act of teaching is a result of a previous decision. The latest version of The Spectrum of Teaching Styles consists of 11 different teaching styles (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008) (See Table 1).

LANDMARK STYLES	
Reproduction	Production
Command (A)	Guided Discovery (F)
Practice (B)	Convergent Discovery (G)
Reciprocal (C)	Divergent Discovery (H)
Self-Check (D)	Learner-Designed Individual Program (I)
Inclusion (E)	Learner-Initiated (J)
	Self-Teaching (K)

Table 1: The Spectrum of Teaching Styles with the Reproduction and Production Clusters located.

The five styles (A-E) form a represent teaching options that foster reproduction of existing (known, past) information and knowledge. The styles (F-K) form a cluster that represents options that invite production (discovery) of new knowledge. This paper outlines research that has been undertaken to address the lack of literature about the teaching styles of Australian tennis coaches.

RESEARCH METHOD

The coaches in this study were selected for detailed observations after completing a survey questionnaire on teaching styles and indicating their willingness to have their lessons recorded. Systematic observations were then used to identify the teaching styles that the coaches employ during lessons. Junior Development (JD) and Club Professional (CP) coaches were observed and videotaped during three tennis lessons of 30 minutes duration with four players. The lessons were performed during the coaches' formal certification coaching courses conducted by Tennis Australia (TA). In order to code and record the coaches' teaching behaviours during lessons, the Instrument For Identifying Teaching Styles (IFITS) (2004) coding sheet was used in conjunction with Ashworth's

Identification of Classroom Teaching Learning Styles (2004). The coding procedure employed in using IFITS consisted of a ten second observation proceeded by a ten second recording of this observation. In other words, every 20 seconds the coder using IFITS made a decision regarding which teaching style the coach was using or whether they were engaged in a class management activity. Class management is defined as any activity that is not directly related to instruction. All of the 36 videotaped lessons were coded by the researcher and a second trained individual. To clarify any queries during the coding process, Prof. Sara Ashworth provided extensive assistance and advice.

Participants and Setting

Participants for this study were recruited from earlier research by Hewitt and Edwards (2011) who conducted a survey questionnaire on the self-identified teaching styles of 208 tennis coaches in Australia. From the 208 coaches, 56 expressed an interest in having their lessons videotaped and coded. The characteristics of the final observation group were male and female, coaches with different coaching qualifications and experiences and from states.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the participant breakdown of the range of teaching styles observed during the coaches' three by 30 minute coaching lessons (n=36).

PARTICIPANTS	OBSERVED TEACHING STYLES
Junior Development 1, 2, 5 Club Professional 8	A, B
Junior Development 3, 4, 6 Club Professional 7, 9, 10, 11, 12	B

Table 2: Participant breakdown of the range of teaching styles observed being employed during the coaches' three by 30 minute coaching lessons (n=36).

The coaches in this study were observed implementing two teaching styles. These included, Practice Style-B and Command Style-A. Practice Style-B was employed by all 12 participants, while Command Style-A was used by eight of the coaches. A depiction of the breakdown of total time (%) that the 12 participants employed these teaching styles during their three 30 minute coaching lessons is displayed in Table 3.

TEACHING STYLE	PERCENTAGE OF TIME THAT TEACHING STYLES OBSERVED
Command Style-A	10.58%
Practice Style-B	84.25%
Styles C-K	0%
Management	5.15%

Table 3: The breakdown of total time (%) the 12 participants were observed using teaching styles.

From the 36 lessons that were observed, Practice Style-B was used 84.25% of the time while Command Style-A was used 10.58% of the time. No other teaching styles were observed.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that tennis coaches in this study employed two teaching styles (Command Style-A and Practice Style-B) when instructing tennis. Practice Style-B was used in 84.25% of lesson time. The use of these teaching styles strongly correlate with direct instruction guidelines where the coach makes decisions about student learning and how and why they are learning. Australian tennis coach accreditation manuals (Tennis Australia Learner Guide, 2010; Crespo & Reid, 2009) recommend that tennis coaches should combine the use of direct and discovery teaching styles. The teaching styles observed in this study are not necessarily compatible with the favoured teaching processes identified in these publications. Coaches should understand and purposefully implement a range of teaching styles to achieve various learning outcomes. No one teaching style encompasses all learning eventualities so an effective coach must possess the capability to change and combine teaching styles during lessons. Previous research has suggested that tennis coaches believe they use a range of teaching styles during coaching sessions throughout the year (Hewitt & Edwards, 2011). These results, however, suggest that there is a lack of congruency between the teaching styles that tennis coaches believe they use and what they actually use. Through an awareness of a range of teaching styles, coaches change, modify, or support their instruction to maximise their interactions with students.



CONCLUSION

This paper reported on the observed teaching styles of 12 tennis coaches in Australia using Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles (2008). The results from the systematic observations undertaken can assist in accurately

identifying the instructional practices utilised by tennis coaches. Junior Development and Club Professional tennis coaches in this study use two teaching styles when coaching tennis. These teaching styles were Command Style-A and Practice Style-B. The predominant teaching style was Practice Style-B. The findings from this study can be used in the design of coach education programs and professional development initiatives and may also extend relevance into sports coaching more broadly. The information outlined in this paper is part of a doctoral study. Further research includes exploring the teaching and learning experiences called canopy designs that are located between each teaching style. Interviewing coaches to reveal insights into how they decide what teaching styles to use and when to use them has also been undertaken. It is anticipated that these findings will present coach education providers with valuable information about tennis coaching behaviour.

Notes:

1 The term teaching style is synonymous with coaching style in this paper.

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