

The Use of Grownl Vocal Technique to Enhance Voice Quality in Singing Pop Songs

Suryati¹

Jurusan Pendidikan Musik, Fakultas Seni Pertunjukan, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta

ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide solutions for students of Music Education Study Program of Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta who face problems in singing pop songs, particularly to reach high notes. Grownl is a kind of vocal technique for producing growling sounds. Initially, Grownl vocal technique was used by metal or rock vocalists. However, this technique can be applied to pop songs as a variation. As a result, it can be functioned as a solution to reach high notes for the singers having low range of notes. This study focused on the process of practicing Grownl vocal technique and the use of Grownl when singing pop songs. The author implemented qualitative method emphasizing on cas study approach. The data collection was carried out through literature studies, observations, and interviews by selecting sample from the respondents engaging in this study case in which the subjects of the study were Pop Jazz vocal students in Music Education Study Program of Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta. The application of Grownl Vocal Technique is highly efficacious when singing both low and high notes in legato manner. In addition, Grownl can be an emphasis on the specific lines of song lyrics to convey the enotional meaning of that part. Furthermore, it also can be functioned as an alteration to create divergence of a singer in using vocal techniques when singing. It leads to a novelty that the use of Grownl vocal technique can be said to be an aesthetic expression to make voice much more amusing.

Keywords: singing; vocal technique; grownl; pop songs

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan Teknik Vokal *Grownl* untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Suara dalam Menyanyikan Lagu Pop. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan solusi bagi mahasiswa Prodi Pendidikan Musik Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta yang menghadapi permasalahan dalam menyanyikan lagu pop terutama untuk menjangkau nada-nada yang tinggi. Teknik vokal *Grownl* adalah teknik vokal untuk menghasilkan suara geraman. Pada awalnya teknik vokal *Grownl* digunakan oleh vokalis metal atau *Rock*. Akan tetapi teknik ini dapat diterapkan pada lagu-lagu pop sebagai variasi. Oleh karena itu sebagai solusi untuk menjangkau nada-nada tinggi dapat melakukan dengan teknik vokal *Grownl*. Penelitian ini terfokus pada proses latihan teknik vokal *Grownl* dan penggunaan teknik vokal *Grownl* lagu Pop. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka, observasi, dan wawancara dengan mengambil sampel studi kasus mahasiswa vokal Pop Jazz di Prodi Pendidikan Musik, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta. Penerapan Teknik Vokal *Grownl* ini kebayakan pada nada-nada yang harus dinyanyikan secara legato dari nada rendah ke nada tinggi. Selain itu bisa sebagai penekanan pada lirik lagu tertentu, untuk menunjukkan keemosian dari makna lirik lagu tersebut. Penerapan Teknik Vokal *Grownl* ini sebagai variasi seorang penyanyi dalam menggunakan teknik vokal saat bernyanyi. Pada kenyataannya penggunaan teknik Vokal *Grownl*, dapat dikatakan sebagai ekspresi estetis untuk memperindah suara dalam bernyanyi.

Kata kunci: bernyanyi; teknik vokal; *grownl*; lagu pop

¹ Correspondence: Program Studi Pendidikan Musik, Fakultas Seni Pertunjukan, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta. Jalan Parangtritis Km 6,5 Sewon Bantul Yogyakarta. *E-mail*: atik.jurasik@yahoo.com; *HP*: 085872874142.

Introduction

Pop song is one of the lecture materials given to Pop Jazz vocal students in Music Education Study Program, Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta. Pop song materials provided are Western and Indonesian Pop songs adjusted to the students' skill level. Students taking advanced vocal courses have been given Pop song material with difficult skill level. The difficult level Pop songs are songs from Whitney Houston, Celine Dion, Mariah Carey, Jennifer Hudson, Christina Aguilera, Destiny's Child, Emeli Sandi and so on. Those singers produce a lot of high notes when singing. Therefore, to be able to sing these songs, a good and correct vocal technique is highly needed.

Singing is a series of activities to convey expression through song melodies. Singing intended to produce qualified voice requires a good vocal technique or appropriate method (Sinaga, 2014; Sinaga, 2018). Good singing entails particular technique, so that the voice produced sounds melodious and beautiful. To result a great voice, a proper and correct vocal technique is a necessity despite the fact that each singer has their own character and vocal technique when delivering songs to audience (Pambajeng, 2019; Pramudya, 2019). If a singer is able to apply the correct vocal technique, automatically they can produce sound well then. In this regard, some Pop Jazz vocal students in Music Education Study Program still deal with difficulties to reach high notes with accomplished voice as they have not mastered the vocal techniques thoroughly. Singing with good technique obviously will produce louder voice, improve strength, and readily reach high and low notes (Sinaga, 2018). Therefore, as an alternative for singers to reach a high note, the author proposes the implementation of Growl vocal technique.

Growl vocal technique is a vocal technique for producing growling sounds. At first, Growl vocal technique was used by rock or metal vocalists. However, with the development of music, Growl techniques are widely used by pop singers, such as a highly prominent singer, Whitney Houston. Growl technique can be applied to Pop songs as a variation to level up the voice quality. As Middleton

said in Potter in Bintarto that variations of voice registers with falsetto and variations of timbre, such as shouts of cheers, screeches, growls, hums, and groans without words are the most widely used (Bintarto, 2014). Setiasih also explained that vocals are usually sung with death grunt, guttural growl or death growl. Singing techniques like this are also often called "Cookie Monster vocals" (Setiasih, 2019).

There are several types of rock vocal techniques that are often used in rock singing, including: (1) Growl: This type of sound is usually heavier than scream. The more it is produced, the more sinister it sounds, even there is a term called Deep Growl. (2) Pig squeal: The sound produced in this technique is commonly called pig squeal. This technique uses inhale but there is no definite provision. However, there are also some people who emit pig squeal with exhale. (3) Grunt: this technique is distinguished from screams and growl because grunt breathe the sound in. This technique is relatively easy to learn because you only need to speak by inhaling, not making sound. (4) False: this technique is considered highly difficult to implement since this technique is the same as screaming but there is distortion in the throat and widening of the shape of the mouth, resulting in a high but distorted scream sound. (5) Scream: a type of vocal technique by shouting while exhaling heavily. (6) Death: this scream technique is a very shrill kind of scream that sometimes sounds like falsetto. (7) Fry: this technique is a modification of scream, that is, it will sound like a sound coming out of a dry throat. However, most of these fry techniques are obtained from the distinctive sound of each or the character of each vocalist's voice.

Pop songs are songs that are sung slowly combined with deep emotion. Pop is a genre of music that is outrageously loved by teenagers, adults, elderly and even children. This type of song has several characteristics that distinguish from other song genres. Ordinary pop songs are created with simple arrangements that are effortless to remember. In addition, pop song melodies can usually be integrated with various song lyrics and combined with other song genres. The characteristics of other pop songs are that they

have varied tempos, can be performed fast or slow, loud or slow and have simple forms of harmony. In general, the lyrics of pop songs are usually in accordance with current trends or matters related to love, romance, life, parties and others. Millennial generation is generally more inclined to choose music that is correlated with their age (Christy, 2019; Rahmat, 2022).

Singing is a series of activities to express feeling and emotion through song melodies. Singing is vocalizing voice with regular tones, usually accompanied by musical instruments. Singing can be conducted by a soloist or in a group. It is emphasized by Jamalus that the activity in singing is an activity of making sound, in an orderly and rhythmic way, accompanied by either musical accompaniment or without musical accompaniment (Rachman & Lestari, 2012). Therefore, to sing well, you must learn the basic techniques in singing, including posture, breathing, voice formation, articulation, and resonance. Good singing requires separate technique, so that the sound produced sounds melodious and enjoyable. To produce a good voice, a good and correct vocal technique is needed (Suryati, 2021; Siringoringo, 2021). In related with Suryati, Theodora explained that if singing techniques or methods are applied precisely, they will produce great quality of voice (Sinaga, 2018; Silitonga, 2017). Quality of voice in this case is the beauty of singing. In order to attain the "beauty", a singer needs voice processing which can be done using basic singing techniques.

Beauty is the characteristics that refer to something beautiful, where humans express these beautiful feelings through various things that contain aesthetic elements generally valued by society. The definition of beauty based on fine aesthetic sense is a person's aesthetic experience in relation to something they perceive. Appreciation is an introduction to art through feelings and inner sensitivity to art aiming to understand and acknowledge the values of beauty expressed in works of art (Utomo, 2018; Irawati, 2021). In this case, aesthetics no longer refers to something related to beauty only, but it is notably viewed as a matter of perception (Laksono, 2015; Rahmat,

2022). Music contains beauty and it is the result of creativity that originates from mind of the soul. In accordance with beauty, singing can be created with various variations so that the voice becomes beautiful and pleasing to hear. The use of Growl technique varies, including high and hoarse Growls, low, and fierce growls (Surakarta, 2021). To be able to produce an appropriate growling sound, a singer requires intense practice.

Regarding the problems faced by advanced Pop Jazz vocal students of Music Education Study Program in reaching high notes or legato tones to sing pop songs with difficult skill level, a strategy for applying Growl vocal technique is significantly necessary. Therefore, this study is urgent to conduct since it provides solution for the students. To make it more comprehensive, this study is focused on the process of practicing Growl vocal technique and the implementation of this technique in Pop songs.

Research Method

The method applied in this study was qualitative, particularly case study approach (Elmoulat, 2021). The qualitative method is a method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used to examine the condition of scientific objects (Sugiyono, 2011). Case studies are included in descriptive analysis study, which means that a study is focused on a particular case to be observed and analyzed thoroughly. Sugiyono said that the description method is a method used to describe or analyze results, but it is not used to make broader conclusions. Case study research or field study is intended to study intensively the background of the problem, the situation and the position of an event that is currently taking place, as well as the environmental interactions of certain social units that appear (Krause, 2021). Research subjects can be individuals, groups, institutions or society. In this study, the case study becoming the object is the problem faced by vocal students of Music Education Study Program Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta in which the subject of this study was those who still find difficulty to reach high notes when singing pop songs in advanced level.

Chronologically, this study can be carried out through several stages. The first stage was the data collection which is a step to obtain data. The techniques of collecting the data conducted by the author were literature and field studies or observation, interviews and documentation (Rachman, 2022).

Observations were made directly to observe students practicing singing pop songs at Music Education Study Program. This technique was implemented to observe something, person, or environmental situations in detail and accurately through various ways (Andaryani, 2011). Furthermore, to obtain data that cannot be obtained through observation, the author carried out direct interviews on students who practiced singing pop songs in advanced level involving high notes.

Documentation was included to record the results of observations and interviews related to Growl technique applied by the participants. The use of Growl technique in pop songs in this study was implemented in a song entitled "And I am Telling You" sung by Jennifer Hudson. The song contains high-skilled level, especially in the intervals. Sources of unwritten data come from observations in the field, interviews with informants and documentation data processing (Pandaleke & Jazuli, 2016).

Furthermore, in the second stage, after going through the process of collecting data obtained from literature and field studies, the author carried out data processing followed by qualitative data analysis. Data processing and analysis technique implemented by the author was reduction. Analysis of the data started with data reduction, continued with data presentation, and finally conclusions were drawn (Perlovsky, 2010; Paputungan, 2020; Pratama, 2023). Data collection and data processing were assisted by a student named Lasti Yuliana Tamba. The stages carried out in this study were expected to provide accurate information and reliable data, so that it can be processed and analyzed as the result of this study focusing on the application of Growl technique in singing Pop songs to beautify the voice.

Result and Discussion

The Process of Growl Technique Coaching

In this discussion, the author explains the results of experiment on the application of Growl technique to pop songs to enhance the voice quality. It focuses on discussing two problems faced by Pop Jazz vocal students. The first discussion is about the process of exercise applying Growl technique in learning Pop Jazz major vocal instrument and the second discussion is about the application of the growl technique. In higher level Pop Jazz vocal major instrument practice class, the material provided has already been much more difficult. It can generally be carried out within 14 meetings, 1 middle test and 1 final examination like other courses.

At the beginning of each meeting before the song material was given, the author provided warming-up activities in the form of vocalizing using vowels "A, E, I, O, U, A, E, I, O, A, E, I, O" to train articulation with tones 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 3 1 (do re mi fa sol fa mi re do mi sol mi do) The second warm-up activity used syllables "MA, ME, MI, MO, MU, MA, ME, MI, MO, MA, ME, MI, MO" to increase the resonance with tones 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 3 1 (do re mi fa sol fa mi re do mi sol mi do). Then, to strengthen the resonance, the author used the syllables "KA, KE, KI, KO, KU, KA, KE, KI, KO, KA, KE, KI, KO" from the range of low to high notes on the tone 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 3 1 (do re mi fa sol fa mi re do mi sol mi do) The following is an example of the notation when vocalizing as warming-up activities.

A E I O U A E I O A E I O

Notation 1: Example of warming up activity for articulation exercise. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Ma Me Mi Mo Mu Ma Me Mi Mo Ma Me Mi Mo

Notation 2: Example of warming up activity for broadening room of resonance. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Ka Ke Ki Ko Ku Ka Ke Ki Ko Ka Ke Ki Ko

Notation 3: Example of warming up activity for strengthening room of resonance. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Those processes were conducted in order to train and relax the muscles related to voice production. However, in reality, by doing vocalizing, there were still many students facing difficulty reaching low and high notes properly. This obstacle can be overcome by using Growl technique to reach the tone. Despite the effectivity, it was not easy and not everyone could apply Growl technique. Therefore, exercising this technique needs a process.

Practicing Growl technique could be carried out in several stages. The process of exercising Growl technique is not like metal or underground singers in general. It was applied in singing pop songs specifically in order to reach high notes, particularly the intervals from low to high notes in legato. The first stage was the singer was urged to frequently listen to Western songs performed by foreign singers like Whitney Houston. The second stage after listening was repeating the

song at difficult intervals over and over again. In the third stage was practicing to slowly take deep breaths through the nose and mouth until the diaphragm was full of air. Then, the fourth stage, slowly exhaled with growl from the mouth in a low tone, tense neck position. At the stage of making a growling sound, the position of the mouth was slightly open by stretching the teeth. The following is an example of a picture of the process of breath practicing.

The voice produced by the mouth which initially widens and then narrows was resulted in legato in singing letter A towards the letter O or AU. Furthermore, in the fifth stage, after practicing with low tones and the student could perform properly, then the exercise was altered to produce tones from low to high in legato. This exercise was repeated until Growl technique was well produced and pleasant to listen to. The following is an example of the process of practicing Growl technique.



Figure 1: Process of inhale using mouth and nose exercise. (Source: Suryati, 2022)



Figure 2: Process of exhale using mouth and nose exercise capture from one side. (Source: Suryati, 2022)



Figure 3: Process of exhale using mouth capture from the front. (Source: Suryati, 2022)



Figure 4: Process of exhale using AU exercise. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Notation 4: Example of vocal exercise using Growl technique with long tones on AU. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Notation 5: Example of vocal exercise using Growl technique with Legato tones on AU. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

The use of Growl Technique in the song "And I am Telling You"

The author selected a sample for the experiment of using Growl Technique in the song entitled "And I am Telling You". The sample was a student named Lasti Yuliana Tamba. The implementation of growl technique begins from the second line of first verse, "I'm not going". It was used in the word "I'm" which is underlined to give growling voice as a variation. Furthermore, the second growl was used in the last line of the second verse, "You're gonna love me". Growl technique is applied in the word "You're" to give growling voice as a variation. Growl's technique is then applied by repeating the second line of the third verse, "I'm not going". Similar to the first verse, growl



Figure 5: Lasti Yuliana Tamba is singing. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

was used in the word "I'm" which is underlined to give growling voice as a variation. The following is a picture of Lasti Yuliana Tamba singing the song "And I am Telling You".

The followings are the notation of growl technique applied in the word "I'm" and "You're".

Notation 6: The use of growl technique in the word "I'm" and "You're". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Notation 7: The use of growl technique in the word "I'm" and "You're". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

Furthermore, the third line of third verse, "Even though the rough times are showing", growl is used in the word "are". Next, in the last line of this verse, "We both have the same mind", there are two words emphasized with growl. The words are "both" and "mind". The use of growl technique is given in the first line of fourth verse, "And time and time, we've had so much to see and". It can be identified in the underlined words "And time". The followings are the notation of growl technique on the words "are", "both", "mind" and "And time".



Figure 6: Lasti Yuliana Tamba is singing. (Source: Suryati, 2022)

18 rough times are show-ing There's just_ no way, there's no_ way_ We

Notation 8: The use of growl technique in the word "Are". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

22 both share the same blood_ We_ both have the same mind_ And time

Notation 9: The use of growl technique in the word "blood", "mind" and "And time". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

In the second and third line of fourth verse, "No, no, no, no, no, no way" and "I'm not waking up tomorrow morning and finding that there's nobody there", growl is used in the underlined words. In the fifth verse, growl is applied in the second, third, and fourth line, "No, no, no, no way I'm living without you". It can be identified in the underlined words "No, no". Growl is also used in third line "I'm not living without you" and fourth line, "You see there's just no way, there's no way". The followings are the notation of growl technique on the underlined words.

24 _ and time_ We had_ so much to share No no no no no no way

Notation 10: The use of growl technique in the word "No no". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

26 I'm not wa-king up to mo-rror mor-ning And find-ing that there's no -bo dy there_

Notation 11: The use of growl technique in the word "and finding" and "nobody". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

28 _ No no no no way No no no no way I'm_ li-ving_ with-out you I'm not

Notation 12: The use of growl technique in the word "No no", and "I'm". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

31 _ li-ving with-out you_ There's just, uh, no way There's no_ way

Notation 13: The use of growl technique in the word "No way". (Source: Suryati, 2022)

The use of growl technique is the same as the chorus with the same repetition in the same word. The use of growl technique in the song "And I am Telling You" sung by Lasti Yuliana Tamba can be delivered properly and proportionally. The result can be beautifully perceived and listened due to the variations as an aesthetic expression in singing.

Conclusions

Based on the results presented in the previous paragraphs, it can be concluded in two points. The first is that the process of exercising Growl technique starts with appropriate breathing. Next step is practicing deep inhale and then exhale while producing low voice, like growling slowly. Then, the author train the participant to be engaged in difficult interval practice, such as sexte, septime, and octave with legato until the participant is able to produce Growl. This process is done intensely and when the growling voice has been precise, it can be applied in pop songs.

The application of Growl technique to a pop song entitled "And I am Telling You" can be applied at the beginning, in the middle or chorus, and at the end of the song. Mostly, Growl technique is implemented on notes that must be sung in legato, from low to high. Besides, it can be an emphasis on certain song lyrics to show the emotion conveyed through the song. The application of Growl technique is functioned as a variation for a singer in using vocal techniques when singing. In fact, the use of Growl techniques can be concluded as an aesthetic expression to improve the quality of voice when singing.

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