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Abstract

When teaching a new skill to learners physical educators present a progression of tasks to facilitate student learning. Each task within the progression adds to the level of difficulty or complexity of the skill being performed. What we know about task progressions specific to motor skills, however, is not commonly applied by physical education teachers when employing new instructional strategies. Knowledge about the use of task progressions as applied to motor skill development could be helpful to teachers when implementing new teaching approaches, particularly ones that are complex. The concept of task progression is applied to the employment of Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) Reciprocal style of teaching (C) in this paper. A brief description of style C and its connection to the National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 1995) are presented followed by a sequenced task progression of learning experiences that can be used to introduce style C in a physical education class.

Applying a Task Progression to the Reciprocal Style of Teaching

Breaking content down and sequencing it into meaningful learning experiences is critical to effective teaching. The term associated with this instructional practice is task progression. When teaching a new skill to learners physical educators present a progression of tasks to facilitate student learning. Each task within the progression adds to the level of difficulty or complexity of the skill being performed. According to Rink (2002), physical educators "use progressions of tasks to lead the learner from beginning levels to more advanced levels with the content" (p. 111). Following is an example of a task progression as presented by an elementary physical education teacher.

Emily is teaching her fifth-graders the forearm pass in volleyball.

Task 1

"Standing about 30 feet apart, toss the ball to your partner such that he/she receives it at a low level. Partner, show me what you think would be the best way to return the ball in the direction of your partner." After having given the students opportunity to practice, Emily calls them in and asks, "what skill did you use to return the ball in the direction of your partner and why?" Two students who had some previous experience playing volleyball stated, "we used the bump pass because it was low; it wasn't high enough to set." "Great answer, girls! That is correct. By the way, the bump is now called the forearm pass."

Task 2

"Now, I want you to move 10 feet from your partner and complete the same task like this." She tosses the ball, a two-handed underhand toss, to John a student demonstrator. Madelyn, who performs the skill with some consistency, passes the ball back to Emily. Emily catches the ball and says to the class, "I am going to toss the ball to Madelyn three more times. Watch her carefully - put a hand up when you can identify one or more skill cues in Madelyn's performance." After having passed the ball three times, Emily asks her class, "what are the skill cues for the forearm pass?" The students responded with elbows locked, thumbs parallel, sitting position, and wide base (feet apart, knees bent). "Outstanding," says Emily. "Now, in pairs, toss the ball to your partner 10 times, as demonstrated. Think about the skill cues you identified. After 10 good tosses, switch roles. Continue this task until I ask you to stop. Begin."

Task 3

After observing the students for a minute Emily notices that many are keeping their arms too close to their bodies on contact. Emily stops the students and says, "where are my arms (in relation to my body) as I pass?" The students watch her as she passes the ball back to a partner three times. "Melissa, where are they?" "Away from your body," she says. "Good, very good. Now go back to your partner and focus on your arm position." After several minutes of practice Emily stops her class and says, "we're ready to make the task more game-like."

Task 4

"Get into groups of three." Emily then explains the task with a group of three learners. "Madelyn, you stand on the 10 foot line on that side of the net (net height set at six feet). Take the ball with you. Melissa, you stand just beyond the 10 foot line on this side of the net (opposite side from Madelyn). Get in ready position to forearm pass. Meghan, you need to stand right beside the net on Melissa's side. You are the target for Melissa. Madelyn, toss the ball to Melissa (just like we did in the last drill) so that she can forearm pass the ball to Meghan." The three demonstrate the task three times at which time Emily instructs them to rotate positions (passer to target, target to tosser, tosser to passer). "Are there any questions about what you need to do and how you need to rotate positions?" asks Emily. "How do we score points?" asks Jon. Your group of three scores a

point each time the target catches the ball without moving his/her feet. Okay, form groups of three and begin the task.

Presenting content to learners in a simple-to-complex or part-to-whole task progression is a widely accepted strategy used in physical education instruction (Metzler, 2000; Rink, 2002; Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000), one that is supported by research (French et al., 1991; Hebert, Landin, & Solmon, 2000; Rink, French, Werner, Lynn, & Mays, 1991). What we know about task progressions specific to teaching motor skills, however, may not be commonly applied by physical education teachers when employing new instructional strategies. Knowledge about the use of task progressions as applied to motor skill development could be helpful to teachers when implementing new teaching approaches, particularly ones that are complex.

In the remainder of this paper I will apply the concept of task progression to the employment of Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) Reciprocal style of teaching (C). A brief description of style C and its connection to the National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 1995) will be presented followed by a sequenced task progression of learning experiences that can be used to introduce style C in a physical education class. The Reciprocal teaching style is selected for presentation in this paper because it is complex and takes considerable class time to present to students effectively. In addition, style C can be broken down into its natural components which allows for the development of a part-to-whole or simple-to-complex task progression. In a recent issue of Teaching Elementary Physical Education a special feature was presented on several of Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) teaching styles, including style C (McCullick & Byra, 2002).

Reciprocal Style of Teaching (C)

In physical education a commonly employed peer tutoring structure is the Reciprocal style of teaching (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). Within this teaching style learners are paired; while one learner (doer) performs the modeled task(s), the other learner (observer) provides specific feedback to the doer based on the task sheet. For example, Taryn observes Jon striking a foam ball with a paddle against the wall. After observing his performance, she says, "nice job, I like how you follow-through to the target." When the doer completes the task(s), the doer and observer switch roles.

In addition to developing the learning tasks and designing the task sheet, the teacher must listen to the observer's feedback and observe the doer's actions to ascertain the degree of congruence between the doer's skill performance and the observer's feedback. To maintain the integrity of the Reciprocal style of teaching, the teacher is responsible for observing the actions of both the doer and observer, but only interacting with the observer about how the doer is performing.

Motor, social, and cognitive outcomes are associated with the Reciprocal style of teaching. First, students are provided with the opportunity to practice a task or series of tasks. In doing so, the students are working toward benchmarks associated with the first content standard (motor competency) of the national standards for physical education (NASPE, 1995). Second, students learn to give and receive feedback from a peer. Mosston and Ashworth (2002) suggest that this results in an expansion of learner socialization skills. Thus, benchmarks associated with content standards five and six (NASPE, 1995), personal and social responsibility, and respecting differences among people, are achievable. And third, students learn to analyze motor skill movement. By observing the performance of the doer, comparing the performance against the criteria, drawing conclusions about the accuracy of the performance, and giving appropriate feedback, the observer better understands the process of learning a task (Ernst & Byra, 1998; Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). Here, benchmarks specific to content standard two (NASPE, 1995), applying movement concepts, can be achieved. Teachers who employ the Reciprocal style of teaching value social and cognitive outcomes as much as they value movement outcomes.

The reciprocal teaching style in its full form can be employed with learners as early as the fourth or fifth grade. Participants in several style C research studies who have been from the upper elementary and middle school grades have demonstrated the ability to successfully analyze a partner's skill performance and give/receive feedback (Ernst & Byra, 1998; Goldberger & Gerney, 1990). It seems that learners from fourth grade up might best profit from the reciprocal style of teaching. The task sheets presented in the remainder of this paper are designed for fourth through sixth graders.

Task Progression for Implementing an Episode in Style C

When implementing the Reciprocal style of teaching for the first time, it is helpful to break the style down into its smallest components. In style C students must learn (a) the elements of a motor skill, (b) how to assess or analyze motor skill performance, (c) how to give and receive feedback from a partner, and (d) how to record the results of a partner's motor skill performance on a task sheet. Success in meeting the objectives of the Reciprocal style of teaching will be enhanced when students are exposed to each of these four components in a sequenced task

progression. Striking a ball with a paddle (forehand stroke) will be used as the sample skill to be taught throughout this task progression.

Task 1: Introduce the Skill Cues

In the initial task the students must acquire the skill cues of the designated skill (striking with a paddle, forehand stroke) through a combination of physical and cognitive practice. Skill or learning cues are "simply short phrases or words that focus the learner on the critical elements of the skill to be practiced" (Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 2001, p. 128). The teacher must model the skill while highlighting the skill cues, then provide the students abundant opportunity to practice the modeled skill in conjunction with teacher feedback, feedback that matches the skill cues of focus.

To the teacher - the skill drill.

After demonstrating the task and highlighting the skill cues, have your students work independently against a wall. While standing approximately 10 feet from the wall, side to target and paddle back, drop the ball and let it bounce once before striking it. The skill cues for the forehand stroke are side to target, paddle back, eye on ball, and opposite foot step (Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 2001).

While your students are practicing the forehand stroke, check their understanding of the skill cues. You may even have your students say the skill cues out loud while practicing. This allows you to "see and hear" the skill being performed. Also, post the skill cues on wall charts so the students can see the key words (see Figure 1). Increase the meaningfulness of the wall chart by adding pictures. Once you verify that the students know the skill cues and can demonstrate the basic movement pattern associated with the forehand stroke, it's time to move on to the second task within the progression.

Place Figure 1 About Here

Task 2: Analysis of Skill Performance

In the second task the students must learn how to assess or analyze their partner's skill performance. Analyzing skill performance is the most important aspect of the entire process of the Reciprocal style of teaching because everything else hinges upon it. If students can't accurately assess skill performance, they will be unable to give accurate feedback to their partner and provide the teacher an accurate record of their partner's skill performance.

Before the observer is able to analyze the doer's performance, he/she must be appropriately positioned to see the performance. Appropriate observer position will depend upon the skill being performed, whether the learner is right or left-handed, and safety. When observing a partner striking a ball against the wall, the most appropriate observational position is from the racket-side of the performer (can see the front of the doer) at a distance of approximately five feet (for safety). It is imperative that the teacher demonstrate correct observer position when employing the Reciprocal style of teaching. If this doesn't happen, the observer will be unable to accurately analyze the doer's performance.

Once situated in the best possible observational position, the observer (a) observes the doer, (b) compares his/her performance against the skill cues (must know the skill cues before observing), and (c) draws conclusions about what is the same (correct) and what is different (incorrect). These three functions specific to skill analysis should be written on a large wall chart and posted on a gymnasium wall along with the skill cues (see Figure 2).

Place Figure 2 About Here

To the teacher - the skill drill.

Begin with the students in a large group. Have them observe you as you demonstrate the forehand stroke against the wall. Be sure that the students are all sitting in the best position to observe the skill demonstration. Stage several perfect performances of the skill and have the students, in pairs, identify (verbally or on paper) the skill cues that were performed correctly. Tell the students to discuss the performance with their partner; then ask several students to share their answers with the rest of the class. Be sure to refer the students to the wall chart while they are discussing your skill demonstration with their partner.

Next, stage a performance in which one or two skill cues are performed correctly and one or two performed incorrectly. In pairs have the students discuss those skill cues that they thought were performed correctly, followed by those that they thought were performed incorrectly. Then have several students share their answers with the rest of the class. Be sure to stage common errors of the given skill, errors that the students will likely see in each other's performance. Repeat this demonstration several times. Again, be sure to refer the students to the wall chart while they are discussing the skill performance with their partner.

Now the students are ready to practice analyzing their partner performing the forehand stroke. In groups of three, have one student take the role of doer and the other two the role of observer. The doer needs to perform the forehand stroke against the wall as he/she did during the first task. The two observers analyze and discuss the doer's performance (between themselves) after each trial. After the doer completes five trials, the three students need to rotate places. Once each student has rotated through the role of doer, bring the class together to discuss common characteristics of striking (skill cues and errors).

Task 3: Giving and Receiving Feedback

Once the students have practiced the skills associated with assessing skill performance, they must be introduced to the nuances of giving and receiving feedback from a partner. Giving and receiving feedback from a partner must be a constructive process for the students. The role of the observer is to help the doer learn a skill. Thus, under all circumstances the observer must be supportive of the doer.

Given this goal, two types of feedback statements can be provided by the observer in the Reciprocal style of teaching, positive specific feedback and corrective specific feedback. "Great step" and "Nice job pulling your racquet back" are examples of positive specific feedback statements. "Be sure to step forward on contact" and "keep your side to the target" are examples of specific corrective feedback statements.

To the teacher – the skill drill.

Have the students form pairs and identify doer and observer roles within their pair. Findings from research indicate that the level of interaction between pairs is enhanced in the Reciprocal style of teaching when learners select their own partner (Byra & Marks, 1993; Ernst & Byra, 1998). This is because students usually select a partner they know, which makes it more comfortable to give and receive feedback. Instruct the doer to perform the task (same as in tasks 1 and 2) three times and the observer to give the doer one positive specific feedback statement after the three attempts. Post a wall chart in the gymnasium with multiple examples of positive specific feedback statements specific to the task at hand (see Figure 3). After performing two sets of three trials, have the doer and observer switch roles.

Place Figure 3 About here

Repeat this sequence a second time, but with one change. Instead of providing a positive specific feedback statement, have the observer give the doer one corrective specific feedback statement after each set of three skill attempts. Having the learners focus on one type of feedback at one time helps them to better differentiate the two types of feedback.

Task 4: Task Sheets

Now that the students know the skill cues, have practiced analyzing a partner's skill performance, and have practiced giving and receiving specific feedback, they are ready to be introduced to the task sheet. Individual task sheets are used to make a record of the doer's skill performance (see Figure 4). Task sheets need only be used when the teacher wants to have a record of student performance.

An individual task sheet must include a place for doer and observer names, directions to the doer and observer, and a place to record performance. If not already posted on the gymnasium wall in the form of a wall chart, it is helpful to include the steps for assessing performance and sample feedback statements.

Place Figure 4 About Here

Task sheets can be designed to be used once or on multiple occasions. The task sheet presented in Figure 4 can be used on four different occasions if one set of five trials is completed at one time, or on two occasions if two sets of five trials are completed at one time. Advantages of designing a task sheet for multiple use include saving time, expense for paper, amount of paper used across classes, and ease of record keeping. A task sheet that can be used on multiple occasions also informs a student how well he/she performed last time.

The data collected on task sheets can be used for several purposes. First, the information can be used to determine the accuracy of a student's ability to assess skill performance. The teacher can watch a doer perform and then compare the observer's record of the doer's performance to what he/she saw. This can be done live while the teacher moves from pair to pair. When the observer is analyzing the doer's performance accurately, the teacher could place a check-mark on the task sheet. The task sheet can also be used to assess whether students are being responsible and on-task. A correctly completed task sheet reflects student on-task behavior, effort in practice activities, and ability to help others perform skills (Doolittle & Fay, 2002). Student honesty on task sheets is usually

not an issue if task sheets are used to motivate and keep track of level of participation or effort rather than used to directly assess student skill performance.

To the teacher - the skill drill.

Have students select a partner and sit down beside their partner at the class meeting place. Distribute a copy of the task sheet (see Figure 4) to each student and let them read it (one minute). Once read, select a student to demonstrate the role of doer (doing five trials of the forehand stroke) while you demonstrate the role of observer. Be sure to demonstrate all aspects of the role of observer. Then, reiterate the following about the task sheet: (a) determine the first doer; (b) offer one feedback statement to the doer after completing five trials; (c) circle C or NW, accordingly, for each skill cue; (d) rotate roles after the doer completes one set of five trials; and (e) complete two sets of five trials each. In addition, explain why you are asking them to make a record of their performance today (e.g., record of performance indicates student on-task behavior, effort in practice activities, and ability to help others perform skills – it will contribute to your “participation” grade). Students, begin when you are ready!

Summary

When teaching a new or complex motor skill to learners, physical educators frequently present a task progression to facilitate student learning. Implementing a teaching style for the first time may require the application of this same principle, particularly when it is a teaching style as complex as style C.

Teachers frequently face problems when first introducing style C because they are overwhelmed with having to implement such a complex task in its entirety. Teacher comments like “it takes too long to introduce this style to the students” and student comments like “I don’t understand” are frequently reported by those who are exposed to style C when presented in its entirety the first time.

Implementing the Reciprocal style of teaching over a series of lessons using the sequence of four tasks outlined in the paper is suggested. Use part of the first class to introduce the new skill (e.g., striking with a paddle) while allowing the students some practice time, second class to introduce and practice the steps needed for analyzing skill performance, third to introduce and practice the skill of giving and receiving feedback, and the fourth to introduce task sheets used to record performance. After the students have been exposed to this task progression with one skill, introduce a new skill to them in a similar fashion. It is likely that drill two (analyzing a skill), in and of itself, will not have to be included in the task progression for the new skill because the students already know the steps to follow when analyzing a skill. Nor will the first two elements of task three (giving and receiving feedback) be necessary. Remember, a task sheet is only necessary when you want a record of student performance.

Success in implementing the Reciprocal style of teaching style may be tied to using the described easy-to-simple or part-to-whole task progression. Employing this task progression may mean the difference between the teacher including or not including the Reciprocal style of teaching in his/her teaching repertoire in the future.

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Skill Cues for Striking with a Paddle

1. Side to target?
2. Paddle back?
3. Eye on ball?
4. Opposite foot step?

Figure 1. Wall Chart with Skill Cues

Steps in Analyzing Performance

Before you can analyze skill performance, you must KNOW the skill cues! Then . . .

1. Observe the doer perform.
2. Compare and contrast the performance against the skill cues.
3. Draw conclusions about what is the same and what is different.

If you know these three steps, you are ready to give feedback to a partner!

Figure 2. Wall Chart for Analyzing Performance

Examples of Specific Feedback Statement for Striking with a Paddle

Positive Specific

1. Great position, feet apart and side to target!
2. I like how you pulled the paddle back early. Excellent!
3. You stepped with your opposite foot on contact. Super!

Corrective Specific

1. Your paddle started in front of your body. Pull it back sooner.
2. Be sure to step forward on contact.
3. You need to have your side to the target.

Figure 3. Wall Chart of Sample Feedback Statements

Striking with a Paddle

Name _____ Partner's Name _____

Doer

While positioned 10 feet from the wall, perform three sets of five trials using the forehand stroke as demonstrated. Listen for a feedback statement from the observer between sets.

Observer

Using the criteria below, (a) offer one feedback statement to the doer, positive and/or corrective, and (b) circle C for correct (observed in each trial) or NW for needs work (observed in some of the trials but not all) for each criterion after each set of five trials.

		Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
	SKILL CUES	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
1	Side to target?	C NW	C NW	C NW	C NW
2	Paddle back?	C NW	C NW	C NW	C NW
3	Eye on ball?	C NW	C NW	C NW	C NW
4	Opposite foot step?	C NW	C NW	C NW	C NW

Steps in Assessing Your Partner's Performance

1. Know the skill cues.
2. Observe the doer's performance.
3. Compare and contrast the doer's performance against the skill cues.
4. Draw conclusions about what is the same and what is different.
5. Communicate the results to the doer.

Example Feedback Statements

1. Great position, feet apart and side to target! (positive specific)
2. I like how you got your paddle back. Excellent! (positive specific)
3. Your paddle started in front of your body. Pull it back sooner. (corrective specific)
4. Be sure to step forward on contact. (corrective specific)

Figure 4. Reciprocal Style Task Sheet