

Understanding Self-Talk on a Mirror Tracing Task: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Gaining a better understanding of self-talk (ST) or interior dialogue while performing a novel psychomotor task (mirror tracing task) was explored using a phenomenological approach in which recorded results were compared to the ST data of diverse research disciplines. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to more fully understand ST (what) and its reported functions (why) while performing a fine motor task. **METHODS:** Participants, asked to complete three trials of the task, were presented with two open-ended questions regarding their inherent ST before, during and after each trial of the task: (1) self-reported ST, "What specific ST are you currently engaging in?" and (2) self-reported ST function, "Why are you engaging in the specific ST you just reported?" The responses of the 19 participants (over 14,500 words) were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The recorded data were coded using groupings derived from existing literature and categorized based upon inductive reasoning (emergent from collected data). **RESULTS:** Our results have revealed the use of motivational, instructional, positive, and negative ST (e.g., "I can do this!", "Stay between the line", and "Oh, no!") before, during and after each trial of the task. Additionally, unique categories of ST emerged, such as 'prayer' and 'no ST'. **CONCLUSION:** We expected to find instructional and negative ST due to the difficulty and type of task, based upon the majority of current research. The results of this study are beneficial to improving our insight into the array of ST used while performing a difficult and novel fine motor task. The information collected from this study can be used as a foundation toward further understanding ST during other novel tasks and recommend its further study in a variety of disciplines.