



FRAMEWORK MODEL: ANALYSING VOICE AND MOVEMENT



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SEARCH FOR THE “GOOD POSTURE

Inside and outside

The voice, the body, the presence of the educator are their main tools, everything they do is mediated through their presence. The word presence inevitably evokes a double perspective: internal and external, presence felt and seen. We have an internal sensation about our body, and at the same time it makes a visual impression on others. The same is true for our voice, our emotional landscapes and our relational and self-presentation strategies. As it often is with dichotomies, it is tempting to put the emphasis on one or the other: be terribly concerned about what we look like and forget how it feels or to the contrary only focus on our sensations and ignore the impact we have on others.

From “Good” and “bad” to mindfulness

Since all our actions always happen in a social, therefore a culturally “written” environment, it seems almost inevitable to have expectations and judgements on how we look and behave. Our ‘cultural brain’ – without being aware of it – is constantly checking whether we fit to our image of the ‘ideal’ educator, woman, colleague etc. Do we smile enough? Are we open enough? Etc.

Often it is these real or imagined expectations and judgements that prevent us from achieving a good quality of presence. We are too busy with ‘I should do this or that’ to fully enjoy the process of teaching / being in the moment.

We borrowed the idea of ‘mindful posture’ from Zen philosophy. In our understanding this means: in each situation when we find that body posture which is with the least effort adapted to the context and the activity we do. Through constant attention to physical sensations we can keep the quality of presence: when our body and mind are in good balance and harmony.

What is important is not to force our body in the postures and positions perceived as ideal, but to use our senses to become aware of what is happening and to adjust ourselves to our environment.

Our proposal then is not to create inventories of body and vocal behaviors (looking, breathing, speaking, moving etc) that are good or bad in absolute terms. Rather, our proposal is to develop an embodied awareness that helps to adjust our breathing, voice, movements, grounding, our use of space and relational behaviour in a way that creates a good harmony and balance between us and our environment.

Of course, an analytical approach has its merits too. Conceptual self-awareness is very much needed to reflect on how our vocal/body behaviour is connected to our message or to our pedagogical principles. Embodied and conceptual self-awareness should walk hand in hand, to honour our double nature of being embodied as much as intellectual.

THE COMPASS WE PROPOSE

1. Awareness

Instead of judging your different behavior patterns we invite you to become aware of them. Awareness is not the same as analysis, and even less as evaluation. The type of awareness we are proposing is an embodied self-awareness, that is "the ability to pay attention to ourselves, to feel our sensations, emotions and movements online, in the present moment, without the mediating influence of judgmental thoughts" (Fogel).

2. Patterns

Once you learnt to become aware of the act of breathing, speaking, moving, etc. you can orient your attention to identify your specific patterns within each dimension. Identifying your vocal profile, relational strategies, movement repertoire and so on you can recognise aspects that are completely in line with your self-image and your pedagogical priorities and styles, and that you are ready to assume and also identify aspects which you'd wish to change. (Guimbretiere 2014:25).

3. Stress

We often imagine "stress" as something objective and external on which we don't have any control. However stress is actually the result of a particular relationship between us and our environment, where we feel that our resources are not enough to respond to the requirements of the situation (Lazarus 1984). Under stress we can feel irritated, anxious and be overwhelmed by bodily sensations that may make our breathing more shallow and fast, our voice thinner. Stress can make us lose our rhythm, influence our decision-making and teaching effectiveness. Being attentive to these reactions may help us to avoid reacting on the emotion in an involuntary way and to address what may have caused the emotion.

4. Multimodal perspective: connection between verbal, vocal, non verbal communication

Our capacity to convey a message is the result of the interplay between the different aspects of our communicational behaviour (the 6 dimensions of our model). They should not be considered in a disconnected way.

5. Pleasure

Thinking about pleasure may at first glance seem superfluous - the trainer is not expected to feel good, but rather to transmit a message or trigger a change. In some dimensions it may seem even bizarre - how could we take pleasure in the way we use space? Yet we feel this is very much relevant. On the long term it helps to avoid burn-out. And in the short term of our immediate presence it helps to check whether there is a good alignment between who we are, what we think of our mission and what we actually do.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR APPROACH

To create the basis of our model, we used an adaptation of the Laban Bartenieff Movement System, proposed by our colleague Katharina Conradi (In Touch). We completed it with voice related components, proposed by our colleagues of VoiceLab and a relational approach of élan interculturel. The initial model was then tested and adjusted in collaboration with adult educators.

The Laban-Bartenieff Movement System : a theoretical framework

As a point of departure we used the Laban Bartenieff Movement System (LBMS). This is a comprehensive system to observe, describe and understand the patterns of human movement. The system is applied in different fields for various purposes. LBMS offers an embodied theoretical framework describing the four basic components of movement: Body, Effort, Shape and Space and the inter-relationships of these components. This rich system supports developing movement vocabulary, optimizing efficiency, refining skills, and enhancing communication and expressiveness. With these movement parameters, one can also create, analyze, document, and integrate the complex nature of movement.

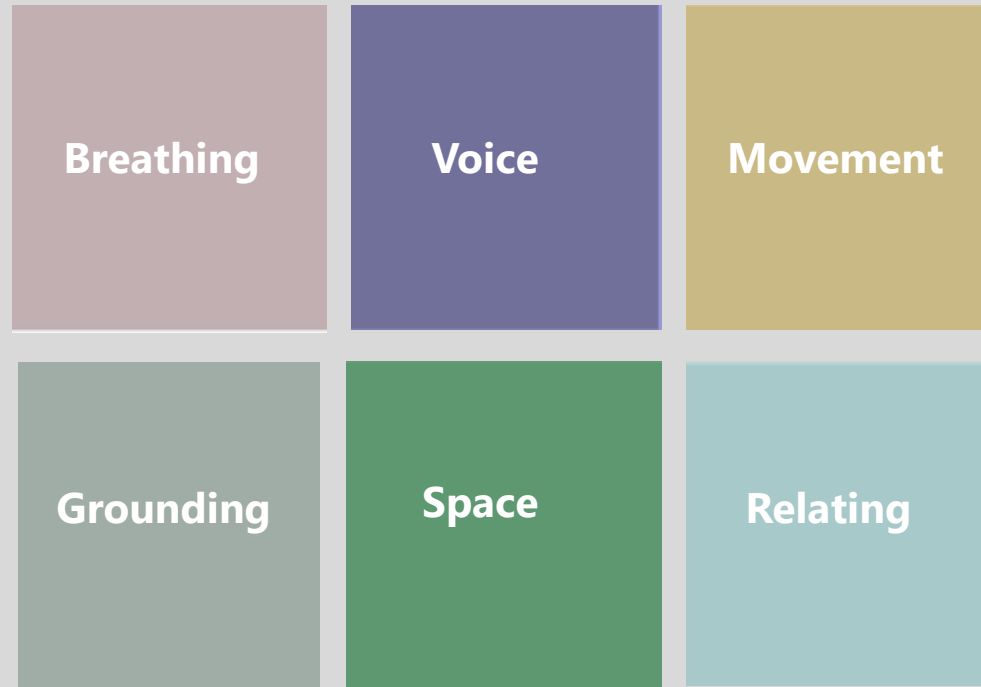
LBMS is based on the theories and practice of two legendary individuals: Rudolf von Laban and his protégée Irmgard Bartenieff. The interweaving of Laban's theories of Space Harmony with Bartenieff's "Fundamentals of Movement " explicate the nature of our human design in mastering and coping with our environment. Laban & Bartenieff students, and today their students, carry on their work in ever broadening applications.

Testing and adjusting through pilot sessions in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Palermo, Paris and Wroclaw

Based on the LBMS system, completing it with the approach of VoiceLab for voice analysis we created a set of assessment tools and activities to share our work with educators coming from a diversity of fields, who were interested in working on their presence. Through these test sessions we simplified the conceptual framework and the tools to make them more accessible and user friendly.

THE STRUCTURE OF OUR TOOLKIT

Our toolkit proposes six dimensions for exploring our vocal and body behaviour during education activities we lead:



For each dimension, we propose:

- ✓ A short theoretical background to that particular dimension
- ✓ How this dimension is relevant in adult education
- ✓ Questions for self-assessment
- ✓ Activities for development

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