

Playing out serious meanings : from private cognizer to public vocalizer

jean-remi.lapaire@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr

Workshop given at « Le Doctorat Mode d'Emploi » Université de Strasbourg, Summer School 2015

I would like to express thanks to all participants who attended the workshop on July 10th, 2015 (1 :30-4 :30 pm).

INTRODUCTION

General aim: exploring the *physicality of speech* (Richard Schechner) ; *engaging* in communication ; giving life to scientific discourse ; developing an awareness and achieving conscious control of co-speech gesticulation

Language is part of a broader system of « body-based communicative behavior » (Birdwhistell). The articulators of speech are essentially :

- the vocal apparatus / tract
- the whole human body with gesture / gestural action movement (voc. 'do a ... move / action'), posture, facial expression

Meanings are **acted out** and concepts **take shape** (Arnheim)

Speakers are not just « speakers » but *social actors* who perform meanings on the *interactional stage* (Goffman)

The forms and meanings we *produce* should be viewed as *stage productions* in which we *physically engage*, both as directors and actors, choreographers and performers. As James Asher rightly

claims, « language is orchestrated to a choreography of the human body¹ »

What English ?

- General English ?
- English in scientific writing ?
- English in scientific discourse ?
- American English ? British English ? Global English ?
- All are varieties of the English language.

Workshop plan : (i) Warm ups (ii) Formal instruction and practical exercises (variations) combined (iii) Final task : living speech (delivering serious talk and projecting key words / quotations in front of an audience).

1. WARMUPS

SITTING

1. (Back against the wall) Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out. Exhale through your nose / mouth. Hold your breath. Relax your shoulders. Keep them down.
2. Roll your head gently from one side to the other. Then forward and back. (Tilt your head back, forward, to one side).
3. Form your mouth into the shape of an 'o'. Small. Protruding.

STANDING, WALKING

4. Tense every muscle in your body (eyes, jaws, toes, fist). Count to 3 then relax.
5. Step forward. Place your hand on your open eyes. Eyes : look up, down, sideways. Repeat.

¹ Asher (1972).

6. Experience the pull of GRAVITY : flesh spreading out, points of contact, forces and counterforces, swinging from side to side

Shoulders down

Always going back to initial rest position

2. GETTING STARTED WITH GESTURAL ACTION

1. Smoke / Tree / Horizon gestures : based on (i) shape of the object (ii) interaction with the object (iii) emotions or impact of the object

2. Developing choreographic variations:

Working the shape and dynamics of gesture

FASTER / SLOWER

BIGGER / SMALLER

HIGHER / LOWER

VERTICAL / HORIZONTAL

STRAIGHT / REVERSED

REGULAR / TRANSFERRED

BRISK / SOFT

PUSHING / RESISTING

Working on the quality and texture of gesture

IMMERSED IN THICK PASTE (e.g. chocolate spread)

PIECES OF STRING / ELASTIC STRAPS

3. Making contact with others

[SKIPPED] [Fr. Non réalisé]

EYES

FOREHEAD

BACK

4. MOOD SWINGS

HAPPY / DEPRESSED

CONFIDENT, ASSERTIVE / SHY, TENTATIVE

CLOSE / DISTANT

5. MEET & PART

REAL GESTURES : form and stress

E.g.1 (processual + stress) : the idea that life is *reFlInable* and *imPROvable*

+ postural shifts

E.g. 2 (negation) : I'm NOT worried. I'm NOT having this, etc.

E.g. 3 (raised arm) : and LAUGH

3. MOVEMENT THEORY

Bibliographical references provided at the end of this transcript.

MCNEILL & KENDON

- Definition : « the movements of the hands and arms we see when people talk »
- Meaningfulness & co-expressiveness: gestures « carry meaning » and are « synchronous with speech » (Mc Neill 1992, 2005) voc. ' speech-synchronized gestures '

Features: *innate - enhance fluency / correct dysfluencies - symbolic - combine with prosodic emphasis - 3-phased* (preparation, stroke, retraction) - *integrated* (not ' paralinguistic ') (Phases : preparation - prestroke - stroke - post stroke hold – retraction)

- Gesture categories / types (McNeill 1992)
 - **Iconics** (= iconic / imitative gestures)
 - Metaphorics (= metaphoric gestures)
 - Deictics (= pointing gestures, including abstract pointing)
 - Beats (=rhythmic gestures)
- Kendon (1988) describes the ' gesture continuum ' as: **Gesticulation** (obligatory presence of speech) > **Emblems** (Optional presence of speech) > **Pantomime** (Obligatory absence of speech) > **Sign Language** (Gesture as speech)

ECKMAN

7 basic, universal emotions : SURPRISE, JOY, CONTEMPT, SADNESS, ANGER, DISGUST, FEAR.

Neutral : « baseline »

LABAN

8 "basic effort actions": PRESS - WRING - GLIDE - FLOAT - PUNCH - SLASH - FLICK - DAB [as defined in *Modern Educational Dance*]

pressing

dabbing : e.g. painter dabbing on spots of color, fingers in typewriting (hands, feet, across parts of the body, dabbing or tapping steps. Shaking consists of several dabs).
(Fr. tamponner)

flicking: light, quick twists of the wrist and fingers as if flicking away dust on one's clothes. Flicking movements can be made with shoulders, head, feet. May be experienced in other parts of the body (shoulders, elbows, knees, feet). Feet may be flicked into the air. (Fr. chiquenaude, petit coup, petit mouvement)

punching and thrusting: with one arms, two arms. Downwards, upwards, forwards, backwards, standing, sitting, with stamping steps. A natural resistance (fighting AGAINST space, time, weight).

floating or flying: usually sustained, flexible and light. Mostly felt through the air in a leap. Can also be performed in standing. E.g. hovering of smoke.

wringing: pulling to a twisting movement. More easily felt in the shoulders, the arms, hands. More difficult in hips. Wringing out clothes > the whole body can be set into a wringing motion. Wringing movements of the arms can be directed in various zones. Fighting against weight is in the essence of wringing.

gliding: easily felt in the palms of the hands, moving over a smooth surface. Or legs: moving over a smooth surface. Gliding actions can be felt in walking steps

slashing: sudden, firm and flexible. Variations like whipping. Easily experienced in one arm at a time. Should be experienced in all directions. Moving into all space directions. Away from the body or towards the body. Can be performed in standing, kneeling. Object offers resistance.

ASHLEY Linda [Skipped – Non traité]

Basic dance actions : TRAVELLING, JUMPING, TURNING, GESTURE ,
STILLNESS, FALLING

Basic actions of the joints (Fr. articulations): FLEX, EXTEND, ROTATE

4. CORPUS

POSTURE & Demeanor : walking, lying on the floor, prancing, etc.

TONE, VOICE QUALITY, DELIVERY : whispering, yelling, prophesizing,
thrilled, taken aback, etc.

FOCUS : self-focused, other-oriented...

4.1. Serious quotations

LABAN (1948) « **Movement is the essence of life.** » (All expression –
whether it be speaking, writing, singing, painting, or dancing – uses
movement as a vehicle) »

ASHER (1972) « In a sense, language is orchestrated to a choreography of
the human body ».

EKMAN (2003) based on DARWIN (The expression of the emotions in
animals and men, 1872)

« **Basic facial expressions are universal but *display rules* are culture
specific** » > group work with a division of labor

(« Social rules may dictate that we diminish, exaggerate, or hide completely
the expression of emotion ».)

4.2. Greetings, introductions, question time, etc.

Any questions ? (hand sweep + variations)

I have a question ! (raised hand, leaning forward)

Postive responses : « Sure ! » (head nods)

Pragmatic codes : the « feel good » script

E.g. **Welcome** everyone and **thank you** for attending this theme session / for being with us this afternoon. Our first speaker is... from... OR I am **happy** / **pleased** to introduce... from...

5. REFERENCES

- Adler, Stella, 2000, *The Art of Acting*, New York : Applause.
- Arnheim, Rudolf, 1969, *Visual Thinking*, Berkely : University of California Press.
- Asher, James, 1972, Children's First Language as a Model for Second Language Learning, *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 133-139.
- Ashley, Linda, 2005, *Dance Sense*. Second Edition, Tavistock, Devon : Northcote House Publishers Ltd.
- Bidwhistell, Ray, 1970, *Kinesics and Context. Essays in Body Motion Conceptualization*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Calbris, Geneviève, 2011, *Elements of Meaning in Gesture*. Amsterdam : John Benjamins.**
- Croft, William, 2003, *Typology and Universals*, Cambridge : CUP.
- Dickinson, Emily, 1976, *The complete poems*. Edited by Thomas Johnson. Boston, New York, London: Back Bay Books.
- Forsythe, William, 2013. *Choreographic Objects. An essay*.
<http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html>
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York : Double Day, 1959.
- Goffman, Erving. *Interaction ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York : Pantheon Books, 1964.
- Goldin-Meadow, Susan, *How Our Hands Help Us Think*, Cambridge Mass. : The Belknap Press.
- Goldin-Meadow, Susan, Wagner Alibali, Martha, 2013, Gesture's role in speaking, learning and creating language, *Annu Rev Psychology*, 64: 257–283.
- Jousse, Marcel, 1978 (1957), *L'Anthropologie du geste*, Paris : Gallimard.
- Kendon, Adam, 2004, *Gesture. Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge : CUP.**
- Lakoff, George et Johnson, Mark, 1980, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago : The University of Chicago Press.
- Laban, Rudolf, 1963, *Modern Educational Dance*, London : Macdonald & Evans, Ltd.
- Lecoq, Jacques. *Le corps poétique*. Arles : Actes Sud, 1997.
- McNeill, David, 1992, *Hand and Mind. What Gestures Reveal about Thought*, Chicago : The University of Chicago Press.**
- McNeill, David, 2005, *Gesture and Thought*, Chicago : The University of Chicago Press.
- Schechner, Richard, 2003. *Performance Theory. Second Edition*. London and New York : Routledge.**
- Streeck, Jürgen, 2009, *Gesturecraft. The manufacture of meaning*. Amsterdam : John Benjamins.

