CHAPTER 11 ADVOCATING THE IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTIMODAL ACTOR TRAINING

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1 Introduction

Communicating and decoding thoughts, feelings and emotions are at the essence of the human condition.[1] In acting this condition is repetitively recreated and serves as a form of enhanced communication both in the context of the performance and to communicate with the spectators. However, the concept of language often influences perception when considering the term 'communication'. Direct communication through language is restricted to the sender-receiver transmission model, where a common and shared dialect is required for the communication to be successful, whereas performance can simultaneously communicate stories to multiple receivers with various personal-cultural and socio-cultural backgrounds, ethnicities and races.[2] To not embrace the inclusivity of all communication modes not only neglects the ontology of an embodied mind and body interconnectivity but also disregards the inherent human ability to communicate thought, feeling and emotion through nonverbal behaviouristic features such as physical movements, gestures, postures, acoustic sound and facial expressions.[3]

In South African theatre training contexts, the actor training emphasises Western constructs of imagination, recall, characterisation

1 E Nel *Embodied acting: The portrayal of emotion through nonverbal communication* (2016) 39.

2 H Ndou & J Lewis 'Disseminating folklore through cultural dance in South African contemporary theatre: A case of Siva (Seven) Dance Production' (2018) 28 *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 1-2; A Bogart *And then, you act: making art in an unpredictable world* (2007).

3 JK Burgoon, LK Guerrero & K Floyed *Nonverbal communication* (2016) xiii; L Sonneborn *Nonverbal communication: The art of body language* (2012) 8; Ndou & Lewis (n 2) 1-2.

and interpretation.[4] Such training in predominant cognitive acting methods include Method Acting, and text-based theatre principles found in Strasberg and Stanislavski's training courses. The sole implementation of these psychologically-inclined actor training practices not only increases the actor's mental and emotional fatiguing through repeated stimulus, but also hinders the actor's ability to holistically embody fictional characters from a blended psychological and behavioural perspective. Ravengai[5] similarly indicates that the socially-learnt or cultural expressiveness of the African performer may also 'hinder the psychological character in a Western sense'. Training for South African acting students, therefore, should include a syncretic combination of behavioural and psychophysical techniques. Moreover, the 'anthropology of the actor'[6] should be inclusive of the knowledge and cultural traits that the performer already brings to their acting to be enhanced through vocational training.[7]

Many South African university theatre departments already include diversity in their acting training programmes and include both psychological and physical approaches and methodologies.[8] For example, in the Department of Performing Arts at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) acting training includes the psychological and physical – or psychophysical – approaches of Stanislavski, Chekhov, Grotowski, Bogart (Viewpoints), Bloch, and Suzuki. Prior to 2020 actor training in the Department of Drama was also supplemented through performance training in voice and movement, inclusive of all the embodiment aspects pertaining to the expressive development of the diverse student. Since 2020 the implementation of the SA Higher Education Qualifications Framework[9] has led to changes being actioned in the acting training modules and new multi-disciplinary programmes being developed in the

4 S Ravengai 'The dilemma of the African body as a site of performance in the context of Western training' (2011) *Trends in twenty-first century African theatre and performance* 35.

5 As above.

6 P Pavis *Analyzing performance: Theater, dance and film* (2003) 65.

7 E Fischer-Lichte *The semiotics of theatre* (1992) 87.

8 Physical actions as primary focus in acting training, include methods from Chekhov, Brook, and Grotowski.

9 RSA *Government Gazette* (2013) South African Qualifications Authority Vol 578 August, No 36797.

Department of Performing Arts. The acting modules now no longer offer the compulsory performer supplemental support in independent voice and movement training. Instead, in conjunction with acting, students can currently elect to either specialise in voice and media studies, or physical theatre[10] in their second year of the diploma. For their final (third) year elective module, each student needs to select only one elective, namely, Acting, or Voice and Media, or Physical Theatre. These elective prescriptions have serious implications for supplementing performance skills within the acting modules. This chapter therefore argues for and encourages more inclusivity in acting modules which takes into consideration performance skills related to nonverbal communication, nonverbal behaviour, and which are attentive to cultural diversity. To this end, the chapter re-evaluates the outcomes of a case control study undertaken at TUT in 2016 towards identifying embodied acting training that advocates the inclusion of nonverbal communication techniques.

An embodied approach to actor training combines pre-existing psychophysical actor training methods with scientific knowledge about nonverbal communication. Considering that there has been an increasing interest and continuous awareness of nonverbal communication in domains such as neurobiology, anthropology and psychology, it has been established that nonverbal cues are more reliable and effective than verbal cues in communicating, expressing and stimulating emotion, thought, and feeling.[11] As a result, this chapter argues that contemporary actor training should integrate the scientific knowledge of nonverbal behaviour to enhance the actor's inherent understanding and portrayal of human emotions and behaviour patterns.

2 Case control study

With the aim of advocating more inclusive embodied actor training at the Tshwane University of Technology, a mixed methods case control

10 Or any one of the other electives, https://www.tut.ac.za/faculties/arts-design/departments/performing-arts/about (accessed 8 April 2022). For purposes of this chapter only voice and movement-based modules have been referenced.

11 R Kemp *Embodied acting: What neuroscience tells us about performance* (2012) 21; D Leathers & MH Eaves *Successful nonverbal communication: Principles and applications* (2016) 17.

study[12] was conducted in 2016. The study determined the corresponding and causal relationships between the selection of combined specialisation modules and the stimulation and communication of emotional and behavioural embodied nonverbal communication. The study investigated how a combination of the learned psychophysical techniques[13] and the scientific knowledge of nonverbal communication components of kinesics (posture and gesture), proxemics (spatial relationship) and breathing patterns (body) can stimulate an emotional response in the actor. The emotional response should be stimulated while simultaneously communicating conceptual thought and meaning through the creation and interpretation of a fictional character. To examine this phenomenon, the study primarily focused on a sample group of TUT BTech[14] drama students[15] who participated in the 2016 departmental productions directed by staff members. The diverse group of participant actors in training are all national citizens of South Africa and embrace a diversity of gender and cultures. The ethnicity and gender of the participants were not prerequisites for participation in this study.

All students participated voluntarily and signed ethical consent

12 Nel (n 1) 81.

13 Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was a choreographer, artist and scientist who developed a movement analysis framework termed 'Effort' which refers to the dynamic energy and quality of movement expression and consists of the four Effort qualities of flow, time, space, and weight; JK Amighi et al *The meaning of movement: Developmental and clinical perspectives of the Kestenberg Movement Profile* (1999) 89; C Baron 'The modern entertainment marketplace' in C Springer & J Levinson (eds) *Acting* (2015) 143. Alba Emoting is a system created by Susana Bloch which allows actors to stimulate emotions by using different breathing patterns, gestures, habitual patterns, and facial expressions. S Bloch 'Alba Emoting: A psychophysical technique to help actors create and control real emotions' (1993) 3 *Theatre Topics* 121. Viewpoints refers to an improvised actor training techniques which allows the actor to use different principles of time, space, duration, and tempo to communicate emotion and intention on stage; Nel (n 1) 71.

14 BTech is a Bachelor of Technology that was offered as a one additional year academic degree conferred after the completion of a three-year diploma at TUT. The RSA HE has done away with BTech qualifications nationally and replaced these with an Advanced Diploma option implemented since 2020.

15 The case control study was conducted in the Department of Drama & Film which since 2019 has amalgamated with other performing departments within the TUT Faculty of Arts and Design.

forms acknowledging their awareness of, and providing permission for, their performance being included in the study (ethical clearance reference REC/2015/12/015). Alongside acting, each participant actor was additionally enrolled in two elective modules as areas of discipline specialisation. The director-staff were also involved as performance and acting trainers towards inculcating and exposing the student actors to a knowledgeable, intuitive and constitutional training environment during the production processes. These assorted lecturers' productions were directly observed in the public domain, for data gathering purposes. The data was analysed and coded to adequately determine the way in which each actor utilised and embodied nonverbal behaviour and psychophysical acting techniques to communicate emotion, thought and feeling in fictional circumstances.

The participants were further required to participate in semi-structured interviews in order to eliminate bias and substantiate what was configured by the observation study. Moreover, because Hatch[16] asserts that some individuals are more comfortable expressing thoughts and feelings verbally, the interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to verbally describe their emotional and physical character creation process for the performances. The data accumulated from these semi-structured interviews was also coded to analyse and determine which combination of participants relied more on the syncretic combination of nonverbal communication elements (referred to as behaviours) and learned psychophysical acting techniques to perform an embodied interpretation of a character.

3 Nonverbal communication as an analysis model

The embodied expression of nonverbal behaviour is essentially inherent and, therefore, frequently occurs instinctively and below the level of consciousness.[17] As a result, Dale Leathers' codification system for Nonverbal Behaviour was used as a lens through which each participant's

16 JA Hatch *Doing qualitative research in education settings* (2002) 141-142.

17 MS Remland *Nonverbal communication in everyday life* (2016) 6; D Matsumoto, MG Frank & HS Hwang *Nonverbal communication: Science and applications* (2013) vii; V Manusov & ML Patterson *The SAGE handbook of nonverbal communication* (2006) xv.

nonverbal behaviour could be identified and analysed to establish that various emotions can deliberately be generated and embodied for fictional purposes.[18]

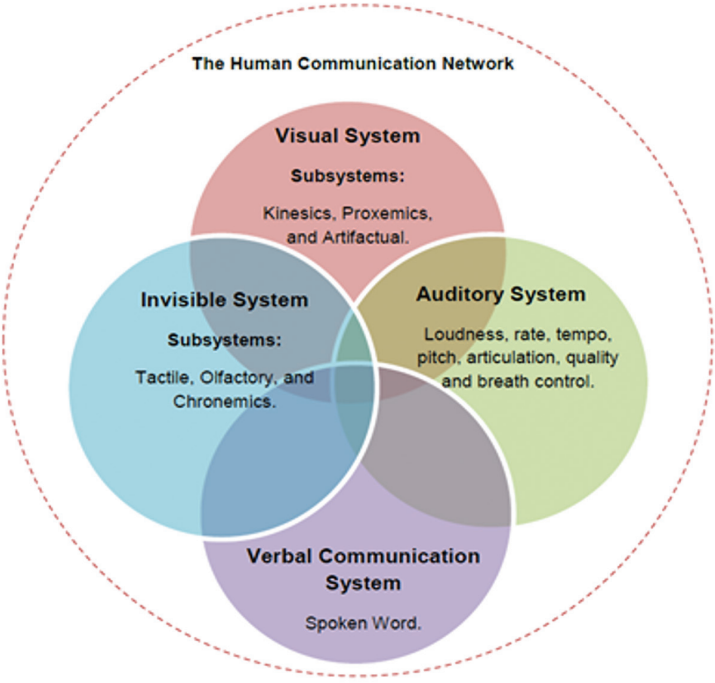

Figure 11.1: A conceptual framework depicting the complete human communication network and nonverbal systems as proposed by Dr Dale Leathers

This codification system (Figure 11.1) depicts the complete human communication network which consists of three interconnecting systems, namely, the visual system, the auditory system and the invisible system. These interconnecting systems are further integrated with the verbal communication system which, consequently, reinforces the intent and

18 D Leathers & MH Eaves *Successful nonverbal communication: Principles and applications* (2016) 13; D Leathers & MH Eaves *Successful nonverbal communication: Principles and applications* (2008) 12; Kemp (n 11) 26.

understanding of conceptual meaning, emotion and thought through a combination of both verbal and behavioural expressions.[19] This suggests that the utilisation and embodiment of vocal and behavioural expressions interact with each other, rather than function independently, to convey meaning and emotion.

The study acknowledged the significance and validity of the invisible, verbal, artefactual and auditory systems, and subsystems within the overall transmission of human communication. However, the primary focus was placed on the affecting nonverbal behavioural systems and subsystems which activate an intuitive emotional response within the actor and character. Dr Leathers's conceptual framework encompassing the nonverbal communication behaviours of kinesics, proxemics and breathing patterns was therefore utilised as the lens. These nonverbal communication behaviours (referenced in the study as 'behaviours') were further investigated in the study along with the university's original drama programme's voice and movement coursework offerings of Bloch's Alba Effector Patterns and Laban's Effort qualities and elements.[20] These methods are integral as an intervention to establish a meta-communication[21] system through which the overall creation and expression of emotion and meaning can be communicated, embodied and analysed. Moreover, the interconnection between these performance skills and nonverbal communication principles will further support the aim of promoting a holistic multimodal acting training environment through embodied learning[22] where actors embody human behaviour in a more

19 Leathers & Eaves (2016) (n 18) 7.

20 In 2016 the methods of Bloch and Laban were compulsory topics taught within the voice and movement modules in the TUT undergraduate Diploma: Drama programme. These methods are not currently taught as a compulsory element to all Theatre Arts and Design students within the Diploma: Performing Arts. Instead, they are included only within the elective of Voice & Media from the second year. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter Bloch and Laban's methods are vital in advocating a holistic embodied acting training.

21 J Lewis & K Lemmer '*Re atumela phetogo*: Africanisation in embodied actor-training performance platforms incorporating multimodal learning' (2018) *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa* DOI:10.29086/2519-5476/2018/v25n2a6.

22 M Munro 'Principles for embodied learning approaches' (2018) 31 *South African*

applied syncretic cultural and authentic manner for application in both film and theatre.[23]

4 Discussion of syncretic behavioural communication design

The study primarily focused on a sample group of BTech drama students who participated in the following lecturer's productions:[24] *Ubulution*, performed from 24 to 27 February 2016; *Mosioua*, performed from 15 to 18 March 2016; and *Bremen Freedom*, performed from 11 to 14 May 2016. Due to a cancellation on 13 May, *Bremen Freedom* only performed for three days. Therefore, only the first three performances of *Ubulution* and *Mosioua* were considered for observation and data analysis. Moreover, there were only 17 BTech drama students who were cast by the lecturer directors among larger casts inclusive of performers from all undergraduate year groups.[25] From this estimated sample group of 17 the casting was represented in the following division.

Theatre Journal 14.

23 Acting methods can successfully be applied to both stage and onscreen acting modes requiring only a differentiation between the application intensity and portrayal of character.

24 *Ubulution* was performed in the Breytenbach Theatre in February 2016. Ubulution speaks to the continuation and recurrence of the Ubu tales as started by Alfred Jarry (1896) and referenced in such seminal pieces as *Ubu and the Truth Commission* by Jane Taylor (1997). This new twenty-first century South African version of the Ubu tradition was devised and directed by Prof Janine Lewis (dramaturgy), Katlego Chale (playwright) and the cast. *Mosioua,* an African adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* performed at the Breytenbach Theatre in March 2016, was directed by Dr Karina Lemmer.

25 The Tshwane University of Technology performing arts programme has a colour-blind, open casting policy for all their annual student productions. This results in a simulated workplace practice exercise akin to where everyone has an equal chance at an audition in the industry. The actors or performers deemed most appropriate are therefore selected on their ability and suitability to the production. This may result in a conglomeration of students from various levels pitted together in one cast. The process hereby acknowledges adult students' prior knowledge, and further enriches the peer-learning where students in practice learn from working in conjunction with other performers with a variety of skills.

Title of production	Number of participants from sample group
Ubulution	6
Mosioua	4
Bremen Freedom	7
Total participants in sample group	**17**

Table 11.1: An illustration of the study's sample group of BTech drama participants who participated within the 2016 departmental productions

As BTech Drama students, each participant in this sample group was required to enrol for compulsory modules in Acting, Arts Administration, Performance Techniques and Research Methodology. In addition to these compulsory modules, they were required to take two elective modules that were indicative of their discipline specialisation. Therefore, the focus group in the sample group comprised of students who had enrolled for Acting and the additional performance-orientated specialisation disciplines of voice and physical theatre or had taken a combination of both. All other sample group members were designated to the control group, as they each had enrolled for Acting and two other discipline specialisations (this selection is inclusive of Directing, Scriptwriting, Applied Theatre and Children's Theatre).[26]

However, during the data collection process it was disclosed that two participants from *Ubulution* were additionally cast in *Bremen Freedom.* Also, in *Bremen Freedom* another two participants merely served as voiced figures and extras who occasionally appeared throughout the performance process. Therefore, considering that only three performances of each production were meticulously observed and analysed, the data gathered from the two cast participants in both *Ubulution* and *Bremen Freedom* proved

26 This bouquet of specialisation elective modules was offered within the BTech Drama programme, which has since been replaced by the AdvDip Performing Arts since 2020 (refer to n 14). Whilst these listed discipline areas of specialisation are within the gambit of theatre, they are focused more on the making of or the application of theatre and acting principles. Here, the knowledge of acting serves as a creative tool as opposed to the performative intention. Specifically of interest to this study were the students electing to take voice performance and physical theatrical performance modalities towards themselves being well-rounded actor-performers.

problematic to compare with the remaining sample group. Moreover, no characteristically relevant data pertaining to the nonverbal communication components other than breathing patterns could have been documented and observed from the two participants who participated as extras in *Bremen Freedom*. As a result, these four participants were not considered for the study as the data gathered would have deteriorated and it would be impossible to correlate said data with the remaining sample group. The sampling framework of the study, therefore, primarily focused on the following BTech drama student distribution across these electives.

Acting and specialisation combination	**Participants specialising in the indicated combination**
Voice and Physical Theatre	U1; M1
Voice and *x*[27]	B3; M2; M3; U3
Physical Theatre and *x*	U4; M4
Control Group	B1; B2; B4; B5; U2
Total participants in sample group	**13**

Table 11.2: An illustration of the sample group categorised according to their individual electives. Each participant was coded to correlate to their role (for example U1 for Ubulution participant 1 and B2 for Bremen Freedom participant 2).

The sample description above (Table 11.2) illustrates that from the comprehensive sample group of 13, only two participants specialised in a combination of both the performative specialisation disciplines voice[28] and physical theatre.[29] The quantity of participants who specialised in at least one of the performative electives is two in physical theatre and *x*; and two

27 For the study, the mathematical variable 'x' represents an unknown number(s) of additional elective modules.

28 Voice is a didactic module in which can be specialised at the Tshwane University of Technology and focuses on various voice acing principles embedded within actor training techniques. Within the new Diploma: Performing Arts, this module has been renamed as Voice & Media Studies.

29 Physical Theatre is a didactic module in which can be specialised at the Tshwane University of Technology and focuses on a variety of contemporary dance, mime, puppetry, and acrobatic principles that can be used to create theatrical performances.

in voice and *x*. The remaining five participants primarily specialised in the undetermined combination of specialisation modules. To further ensure the participant's anonymity, the modules were identified according to the departmental production in which they engaged, for example, participants who participated in *Ubulution* were identified by distinct codified systems such as U1, U2 and U3.

The study's purpose in focusing on performance-orientated modules as the essential instruments through which the data was accumulated and measured is because of the orientation towards behavioural communication and emotional stimulation that may serve as supplemental training for actors. These aspects form the crux of the training found in the performance-oriented modules where the methodologies and techniques embraced feature nonverbal behaviour such as breathing patterns, gestures, spatial orientation, dynamics and posture that are essentially inherent in the overall communication of emotion and meaning in interpersonal relationships.[30] Moreover, the combination of verbal and physical actions reinforce the overall communication, expression and stimulation of meaning and emotion. This is affirmed through neurological research that the neural networks for both physicality and cognition overlap through interconnectivity between cortical and subcortical neural activations, emotion and embodiment.[31]

The speciality of performance voice, for example, enables the actor not only to achieve a thorough understanding of bodily awareness and integration, but also to explore the interconnection between movement and voice, prosodic elements, breathing patterns, the Alba Effector

30 Remland (n 17) 6; Matsumoto et al (n 17) VII; Manusov & Patterson (n 17) xv.

31 Schlegel et al 'Network structure and dynamics of the mental workspace' (2013) 110 *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences* 16277; MD Lewis 'Bridging emotion theory and neurobiology through dynamic systems modeling' (2005) 28 *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 169; J LeDoux *The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinnings of emotional life* (1996); AR Damasio *Descartes error: Emotion, reason and the human brain* (1994); JM Fuster *The prefrontal cortex* (2015); V Nedelko et al 'Age-independent activation in areas of the mirror neuron system during action observation and action imagery: A FMRI study' (2010) 28 *Restorative Neurology and Neuroscience* 737*;* N Marshal, M Andric & S Small 'Motor and nonmotor language representations in the brain' (2012) *The handbook of the neuropsychology of language* 276; D Kemmerer *Cognitive neuroscience of language* (2015).

Patterns[32] and how the actor can combine this understanding to embody the words of a text. Correspondingly, the discipline of physical theatre enables the actor to physically form, morph and shape the body into a variety of narrative styles and fictional characters by deploying the movement principles of the likes of Paxton, Lecoq, Bogart, Suzuki, Marceau and an array of different postures, gestures, spatial relationships and weight distribution. The explored combination of these physical principles and components not only enable the actor to create a variety of distinct fictional characters imaginatively and physically, but also actuates a biological stimulus of emotion throughout the entire human organism. As a result, the data gathered from each participant's combined utilisation of embodied techniques was analysed and investigated to determine which participants depended more on a syncretic combination of nonverbal and psychophysical techniques to embody and communicate emotion, thought and meaning in fictional circumstances.

5 Data collection and analysis through a mixed-methods approach

A sequential mixed-methods approach was utilised, indicating that the data gathered from qualitative methods was obtained and analysed before quantitative data methods were employed to compare, evaluate and validate all data gathered during the research process. The qualitative methods that were utilised for data gathering consisted of a comprehensive observational case study by the researcher of each participant actor. The narrative recordings of the participant's personal habitual embodiment[33] within the characterisation, alongside the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with each participant, served to determine the way in which the actor embodied behavioural and emotional responses in the fictional circumstances of the production.

32 Bloch (n 13).

33 Habitual embodiment aligns with Bourdieu's (1993) notion of *habitus* which is a term that he uses to refer to dispositions that generate and structure human actions, behaviours, and practices. Further, *habitus* develops through a long process of conscious and unconscious learning from childhood and becomes second nature thus allowing the body to act in particular ways. This presupposes those performers act out of habitus; Ravengai (n 30).

The data gathered from these qualitative methods was further integrated and analysed through quantitative data methods to determine the corresponding and causal relationships between specialisation modules and behavioural embodiment. This served not only to summarise the qualitative data gathered and analysed from each participant who engaged in the study, but also to strengthen the validity of the data gathered and provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

5.1 Observation study

The observation study occurred during the public performances and encompassed comprehensive descriptions of the way in which each individual actor participant utilised a syncretic combination of behavioural and psychophysical techniques to embody emotion and communicate thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. This suggests that the physical behaviour of each participant embodying a fictional character was analysed and investigated to determine the way 'internal' thoughts, meaning and emotions were communicated under fictional circumstances. To analyse this phenomenon and diminish researcher subjectivity, a systematic codified rubric was utilised, drawing from the psychological, behavioural, and theatrical research and practices of Dale Leathers' Codification of nonverbal behaviour, Susana Bloch's Alba emoting and Rudolf Laban's Effort life practices.[34] This codified rubric further enabled the researcher[35] to focus on several gestural, postural, spatial and breath pattern behaviours and categories graded by a numerical grid which fluctuated from 0 (not present at all during performance) to 5 (constantly present). However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the performance aspects of each kinesics, proxemics and breath pattern category were further integrated with Laban's Effort elements of space, time, weight and flow to illustrate and describe the way in which the embodied gesture, posture, breathing pattern and spatial relationship were executed.[36] This specific codification system, therefore, not only reduced the probability

34 Refer to codified rubrics in the study by Nel (n 1) 72.

35 The case-control study used for the purpose of this chapter was conducted by an independent Master's student, who was neither teaching nor involved with the training of the BTech student participants at the time.

36 Nel (n 1) 72-77.

of subjectivity in the data analysis, but also disclosed which participants depended more on the syncretic combination of behavioural and psychophysical acting components to embody human behaviour on stage, thus encouraging the argument of incorporating nonverbal disciplines in embodied multimodal actor training practices.

5.1.1 Analysis of data

After analysing the data gathered from the observation study, the mode was calculated for each nonverbal communication component from the three individually-observed departmental productions. Subsequently, the average of the determined modes was calculated to categorise, analyse and present the extensive amount of data gathered in a controllable manner. The calculated average of each nonverbal component from each individual participant was then projected in a clustered column chart (refer to Figure 11.2). The calculated average determined which participants and adjoining combination of elective modules depended more on a syncretic combination of psychophysical and behavioural techniques to portray and embody emotion and communicate thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. This, therefore, will then provide proof to support the advocating for the importance of nonverbal communication in multimodal actor training.

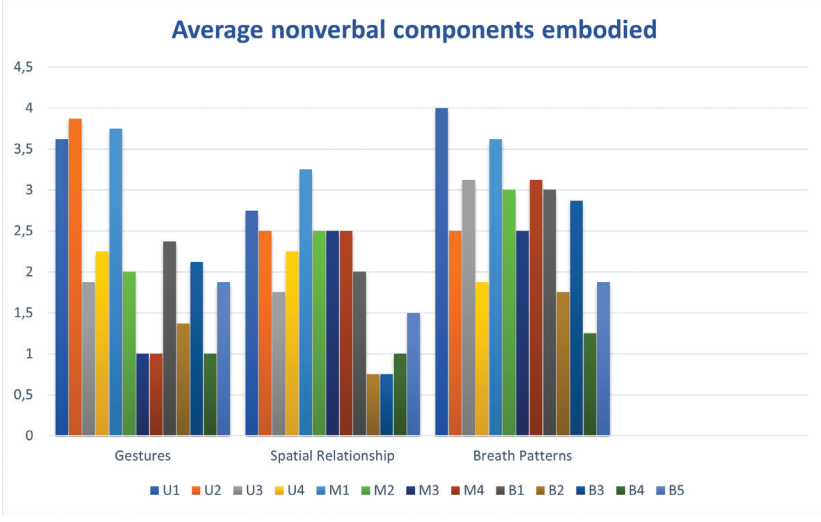

Figure 11.2: The average nonverbal components embodied by each individual participant

It is evident that the two participants, M1 and U1, who specialised in the combined performance-orientated specialisation modules of voice and physical theatre, mostly depended on the syncretic combination of psychophysical and behavioural techniques to embody emotion and communicate thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. However, the data further exhibited an exceptional increased demonstration of gestures embodied by participant U2 who primarily specialised in the analytical theatre-orientated modules of directing and script writing. It is important to note that *Ubulution* was directed by the physical theatre lecturer whose disciplines advocate a synthesis between physicality and the communication of thought in performance circumstances. Therefore, the exceptional increase in kinesics activity embodied by U2 could be determined by both the habitual embodiment and undergraduate training, as well as the physical performative departure through which the lecturer directed the production. This ontology could further validate the increase in data gathered from the average breathing patterns embodied by participants U3, M2, and B3 who specialised in voice, as the lecturer directing *Mosioua* exclusively focuses on the academic disciplines of voice production and vocal performance. The overall average of nonverbal components embodied by each participant, therefore, effectively revealed the differentiation of combined specialisation modules and the participant's dependence on a syncretic combination of behavioural and psychophysical techniques (refer to Figure 11.3).

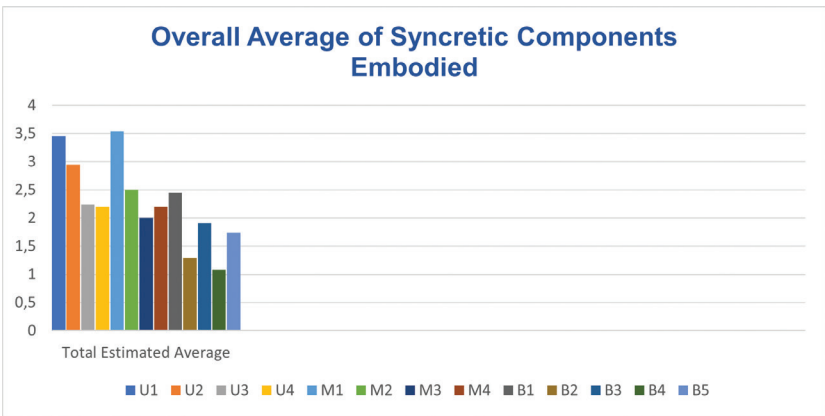

Figure 11.3: A clustered column chart depicting the overall average of syncretic components embodied by each participant

5.1.2 Case control study results

The data analysed and delineated from the observation study (refer to Figure 11.2 and Figure 11.3) comprehensively demonstrates that the participants U1 and M1 who specialised in the two performance-orientated elective modules of voice and physical theatre depended more on the syncretic combination of behavioural and physical techniques to stimulate emotion, and communicate thought, feeling and meaning in fictional circumstances. Moreover, the data further revealed that the participants who specialised in at least one of the two performative modules (such as B3, M2, M3, U3, U4, and M4) predominantly depended on either breathing patterns or physicality rather than a combination of behavioural and psychophysical acting techniques to communicate thought and emotion in performance. Additionally, the data illustrated that the participants who primarily specialised in analytical theatre practices (such as B2, B4 and B5) occasionally depended on behavioural and psychophysical techniques to stimulate emotion and communicate thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. However, an exceptional increase in the overall average of behavioural and psychophysical techniques embodied by participant U2 was established. As a result, this would suggest that either participant U2's embodied characterisation was influenced by the physical perspective through which *Ubulution* was directed, or that participant U2 was subconsciously and invariably engaging both mind and body in the overall expression of meaning and human emotion. This in turn would imply that participant U2 made use of embodiment characterisation principles obtained in her undergraduate studies to present the fictional character.

5.2 Analysis of habitual characterisation (coded narrative recordings)

Considering that an individual's habitual embodiment affects the entire manner through which the human body shapes itself around the spine and expresses emotion and meaning through behavioural patterns (kinesics, proxemics and breathing patterns) the habitual embodiment of each fictional character was meticulously recorded. These narrative recordings proved to be problematic, not only because each character was directly observed by a single researcher which, therefore, could have

entailed some subjectivity or prejudice, but also because the fictional characters embodied by the actor participants had different temperaments, personalities, emotional reactions, backgrounds and motives. Therefore, these characters each communicated emotion, thought and feelings in various ways. This suggests that the syncretic combination of preferred and utilised behavioural and psychophysical techniques depended on the fictional character's temperamental personalities. However, because every human being (and, therefore, every fictional character) communicates and experiences an infinite number of emotional reactions and feelings towards other individuals and objects within the environment,[37] the syncretic amount of utilised Laban's Effort qualities was identified.

The coded data accumulated from the narrative recordings and estimated embodiment of Laban's Effort qualities illustrated that the participants who specialised in at least one of the performance-orientated modules utilised more effort qualities to communicate emotion, thought and meaning through the nonverbal communication components of kinesics, proxemics and breathing patterns. Specifically, M1, who specialises in the combination of voice and physical theatre, utilised and depended on all the Effort qualities of flow, weight and time in space to communicate meaning and emotion in fictional circumstances. However, the data further revealed an exceptional embodiment of all four Effort qualities utilised by B2 who specialised in the analytic theatre-orientated modules of directing and scriptwriting (refer to Figure 11.4).

37 AR Damasio 'A second chance for emotion' (2000) *Cognitive neuroscience of emotion: Series in affective science* 16-17; S Heshmat *Addiction: A behavioural economic perspective* (2015) 79; T Nishida 'Modeling machine emotions for realizing intelligence: An introduction' in T Nishida *Modeling machine emotions for realizing intelligence: Foundations and applications* (2010) 7; D Sander & KR Scherer *The Oxford companion to emotion and the affective science (*2009) 395.

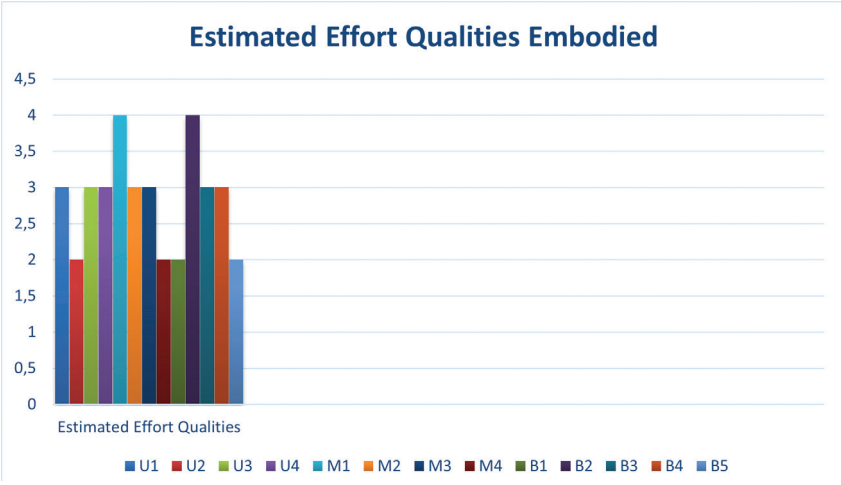

Figure 11.4: A clustered column chart depicting the estimated Effort qualities embodied by each participant

The data depicted in Figure 11.4 illustrates that participants M1 and B2 mostly depended on the Effort qualities to communicate intent and emotion, whereas participants U2, B1, B5 and M4 depended the least on the Effort qualities to communicate meaning and emotion in fictional circumstances. This implies that the participants who specialised in a combination, or at least one of the two performance-orientated specialisation modules, utilised and depended more on the Effort qualities within fictional circumstances as opposed to the participants who specialised in analytical theatre orientated modules. However, participant B2 who also specialised in two analytical theatre orientated modules illustrated an increased embodiment of all four Effort qualities. Considering that participant B2 has severe scoliosis and is physically restricted, this exceptional increase in embodied Effort qualities could suggest that participant B2 distanced himself from their habitual embodiment boundaries and rather explored alternative actor training techniques reinforced by the undergraduate disciplines of movement and voice.[38] This hybrid combination of actor training techniques explored in the undergraduate modules of movement and voice would have enabled

38 Both movement and voice training were compulsory modules for all undergraduate drama students within the TUT Diploma in Drama, which has been phased out since 2020.

participant B2 to utilise alternative psychophysical approaches to embody and explore with different weight distribution, spatial relationships, time and flow qualities to create and embody various distinct characters. Moreover, compared to the average of nonverbal components embodied in the 2016 departmental productions (refer to Figure 11.2) B2 did not essentially utilise or depend on a syncretic combination of psychophysical and behavioural patterns to embody emotion, thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. The data, therefore, reinforces the view that because of habitual embodiment participant B2 solely depended on psychophysical approaches as opposed to habitual patterning to embody thought and emotion in fictional circumstances.

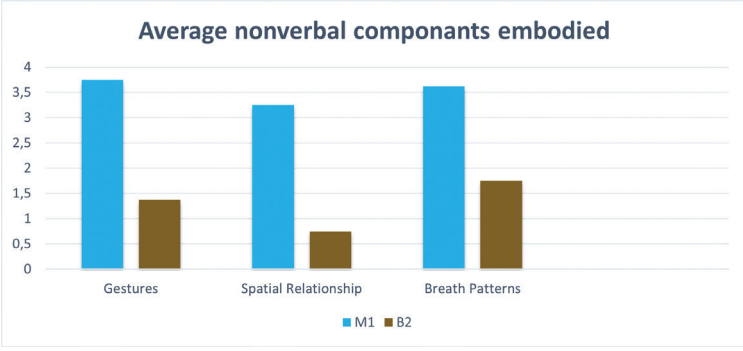

Figure 11.5: A comparison between the average nonverbal components embodied by participant M1 and participant B2

The data illustrated in the clustered column charts (refer to Figure 11.4 and Figure 11.5) consequently suggests that although a combination of Effort elements was utilised and embodied, participant B2 infrequently depended on a synthesis of habitual embodiment and psychophysical elements to convey emotions and meaning through the behavioural aspects (kinesics, proxemics and breathing patterns). Contrariwise, participant M1 depended both on the encompassing Effort qualities of flow, weight, time and space and a synthesis of behavioural and psychophysical techniques to embody and communicate emotion, thought and meaning in fictional circumstances. This not only suggests that the meaning and emotion conveyed and embodied by participant M1 were more transparent and effective to observe, but also that it is imperative for the actor to acknowledge, explore and implement a synthesis of embodied approaches

to effectively stimulate and communicate emotion, thought and meaning in fictional circumstances.

5.3 Assessing the semi-structured interviews

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews was audio-recorded on the TUT arts campus after the concluded performances of all three productions. After the semi-structured interviews with each individual participant had been conducted, all audio-recorded data was transcribed and coded. This served not only to validate the knowledge and data gathered from the observation study, but also to meticulously code the information obtained for further analysis.39 The data gathered from each participant's audio-recorded description of their fictional character's personality and temperament validated the systematic data gathered from the observed behavioural embodiment of the characters portrayed and analysed through Laban's Effort elements. Moreover, the coded data obtained and analysed from each audio-recording of the semi-structured interviews further illustrated which participant actors depended more on a syncretic combination of embodied approaches to stimulate emotion and communicate thought and meaning in fictional circumstances.

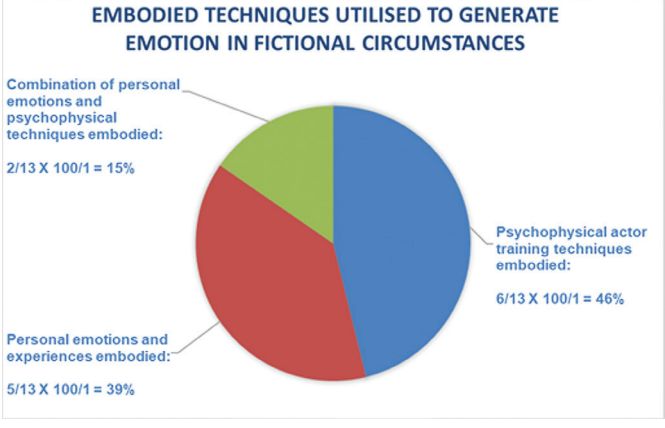

Figure 11.6: The embodied techniques utilised to generate emotion in fictional circumstances

39 Nel (n 1) 111.

The coded data gathered from the semi-structured interviews affirmed that six of the 13 participants consciously utilised and explored more than one psychophysical technique to generate emotion, whereas five of the 13 participants depended on their personal emotions and experiences to generate emotion in fictional circumstances. The data further illustrated that only two participants explored a combination of psychophysical and emotional recall techniques to stimulate the required emotion for the performance. This suggests that 11 of the 13 participants essentially depended either on emotional recall or psychophysical acting techniques to generate, express and embody emotion for a fictional character. From this sample group of 13 participants, the data further clarified which participants encountered difficulties when generating emotion in the overall creation and embodiment of a fictional character (refer to Table 11.3).

Emotional stimulus difficulty: *Yes*		**Emotional stimulus difficulty: *No***	
Participant	**Specialisation module**	**Participant**	**Specialisation module**
U3	Voice and *x*	U1	Physical theatre and voice
M2	Voice and *x*	U2	Control group
M4	Physical theatre and *x*	U4	Physical theatre and *x*
B1	Control group	M1	Physical theatre and voice
B3	Voice and *x*	M3	Voice and *x*
B4	Control group	B2	Control group
B5	Control group		

Table 11.3: An illustration of the estimated number of participants who encounter difficulties when generating emotion for performance

The data demonstrates that seven of the 13 participants encountered difficulties with generating emotional responses for performance, whereas six of the 13 participants expressed their ability to effectively and comfortably embody, articulate and generate emotion for fictional characterisation. From these six participants, it is evident that the majority (four) of them primarily specialised in either physical theatre or voice, or the combination of the two specialisation modules. However, participants U2 and B2, who functioned as part of the control group, exhibited an

exceptional emotional stimulus during characterisation and performance. This would suggest the way in which both participant U2 and B2 embodied a syncretic combination of psychophysical and behavioural techniques. This combination enabled both participant actors to effectively stimulate, express and embody emotion in fictional circumstances (refer to Figure 11.3, Figure 11.4, Figure 11.5, and Table 11.3). The data, therefore, validates and reinforces the synthesis of embodied approaches towards the importance of nonverbal communication in multimodal actor training.

6 Conclusion

To determine the efficacy of performance skills-transfer and behavioural embodiment for multimodal actor training, the 2016 case control study results discussed in this chapter advocates to underscore the importance of integrating nonverbal communication in multimodal actor training. The case control study codified nonverbal communication systems of kinesics, proxemics and breathing patterns that were observed in performance in conjunction with the applied psychophysical actor training techniques. The quantitative and qualitative data accumulated from both the observation and semi-structured interviews illustrated that the participants who specialised in the two performance-orientated electives of voice or physical theatre depended more on a syncretic combination of behavioural and psychophysical techniques, rather than predominant cognitive acting methods to embody and stimulate meaning on stage. The data further affirmed that the two participants who specialised in the combination of voice *and* physical theatre significantly utilised and embodied a greater variety of psychophysical and behavioural techniques. This suggests that the embodiment of nonverbal behaviour reinforces the actor's psychophysical ability to embody and affectively portray human behaviour in character portrayal. Therefore, this study recommends that actors should be provided training in both psychophysical acting methods as well as nonverbal communication principles, as this would not only serve to enhance the actor's inherent understanding of emotions and human behaviour, but also enable the actor to design and establish an embodied syncretic vocabulary of nonverbal behaviours that will reinforce the actors' technical repertoire of behavioural skills. These, in turn, will support the actors in their ability to embody an infinite number of distinct

fictional characters which repeatedly express a variety of emotions in performance.

Lutterbie[40] and Munro[41] affirm this recommendation and explain that technique should be considered as a hybridity of theatrical methodologies, rather than a single entity explored and utilised in isolation in performance. Therefore, the chapter advocates the introduction and combination of Leathers's nonverbal communication systems with the current implementation of psychophysical actor training methods explored in the TUT praxis training environment and various performance art and acting courses in a multicultural South African theatre training context. By integrating these approaches, the actor would be enabled to fundamentally understand and decode human behaviour and emotions in advance. Understanding these systems (exploring and developing the actor's sensibility to proxemics, kinesics and breathing patterns within performance) in conjunction with acting methods will further ensure that the student employs and embodies believable gestures, postures, and mannerisms for character creation.

An inclusive multimodal acting training approach acknowledges the habitual embodiment the student brings into the training environment. By combining this multimodal training with the student's tacit and formal knowledge implies that they themselves will be able to take responsibility for building their unique syncretic embodied practice. The actor would further master the ability to express and stimulate believable emotions repeatedly throughout a performance process without experiencing mental and emotional fatiguing and exhaustion.

Multimodal acting training incorporating nonverbal interconnecting communication approach serves as a guide to evaluate current actor training applications, more specifically within TUT's Department of Performing Arts. It advocates bridging the gap between theatrical art and contemporary scientific discoveries to enable the actor to create holistic embodied characters that emulate human behaviour and emotion in a sustained authentic manner in fictional circumstances, while retaining their unique offering as a performing artist.

40 J Lutterbie *Towards a general theory of acting: Cognitive science and performance* (2011) 132.

41 Munro (n 22).

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