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The shifting voice: Investigating accent and dialect training for West Australian actors

Luzita Fereday
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The Shifting Voice

Investigating Accent and Dialect Training for West Australian Actors

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ABSTRACT

This masters research examines accent and dialect training for actors in the Western Australian context and seeks an understanding about what aural, embodied and cognitive attributes an actor needs in order to move from one accent to another. In particular, this research explores the characteristics of Australian dialects as grounds for the acquisition of the Standard British accent or Received Pronunciation.

The purpose of this research was to identify the expertise required when teaching an accent to acting students in pre-professional levels of tertiary training. This practice-led approach to the research included interviewing, observation, the circulation of questionnaires, and my own reflective practice as a voice and dialect coach on several stage productions. The participants for this research included experts in the field of vocal and dialect training, students at two tertiary institutions in Western Australia, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and Curtin University's production of *Dear Charlotte*, in 2013.

This thesis presents an analysis and research findings of vocal awakenings spring-boarding from working on the play, *Dear Charlotte*, a practical component of this research. The research has confirmed the benefits of phonetics as an important aspect of accent acquisition. The discussion focuses on the techniques used and the challenges actors face when making the shift from their idiolects to Received Pronunciation. It outlines the importance of an actor's cognition, listening, and embodiment as facets of voice that need attention when making accent and dialect shifts. In addition to the process of enhancing and enriching my own practice as a voice and dialect coach, this research aims to contribute to understandings of accent and dialect training and the diversity of the needs from the perspective of Western Australian actors.

The declaration page
is not included in this version of the thesis

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In this thesis, participant responses are indicated with the use of italics. It is also standard American Psychological Association referencing style or more commonly referred to as APA 6th (2010, p. 91) to use italics to indicate the name of a production. Please note, in this thesis the play title of *Dear Charlotte*, includes a comma to show that it is the beginning of a letter. The inclusion of a comma in the title, makes certain punctuation throughout this thesis appear quite strange.

I reference the play *Dear Charlotte*, at the start however I assume later on that the reader knows the reference to avoid repetition.

DEFINITIONS

In addition, the terms accent and dialect are used interchangeably as in the industry they are often linked together.

Actor: is a term used to describe male or female performers.

Practice or Practise? These terms are used as either a noun or verb. Although common in the US to use practice for both noun and verb, I have chosen to adopt the Australian and English use of 'practice' as a noun or 'practise' as a verb.

USE OF SYMBOLS

The use of slant “//” and square brackets “[]” follows the practice commonly used by linguists, and helps to separate the two ways of differentiating pronunciation.

Square brackets [] enclosing a single letter are used when sounds are being discussed from a phonetic point of view, purely as sounds as in [p].

Slant brackets // are used when sounds are being discussed from a phonological point of view that is purely as part of the sound system. Slant brackets are used to show the phonetics as in screw /skru:/.

To indicate where the stress or emphasis is in certain words, I have placed the dominant stress into capital letters, for example CONjunction.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AusE: is a term used to describe the Australian English dialect.

BritE: is a term used to describe the British English dialect.

GenAm: is a term used to describe the General American dialect.

RP: is a term used to describe Received Pronunciation.

MT: is a term used to describe Musical Theatre students from WAAPA that participated in this research.

S: is a term used to describe a student from Curtin that participated in this research.

RADA: Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

RCSSD: Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

NYTGB: National Youth Theatre of Great Britain

RSC: Royal Shakespeare Company

ATS: Australian Theatre Standard

ECU: Edith Cowan University

WAAPA: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

WA: Western Australian

VADA: Visual Accent and Dialect Archive website

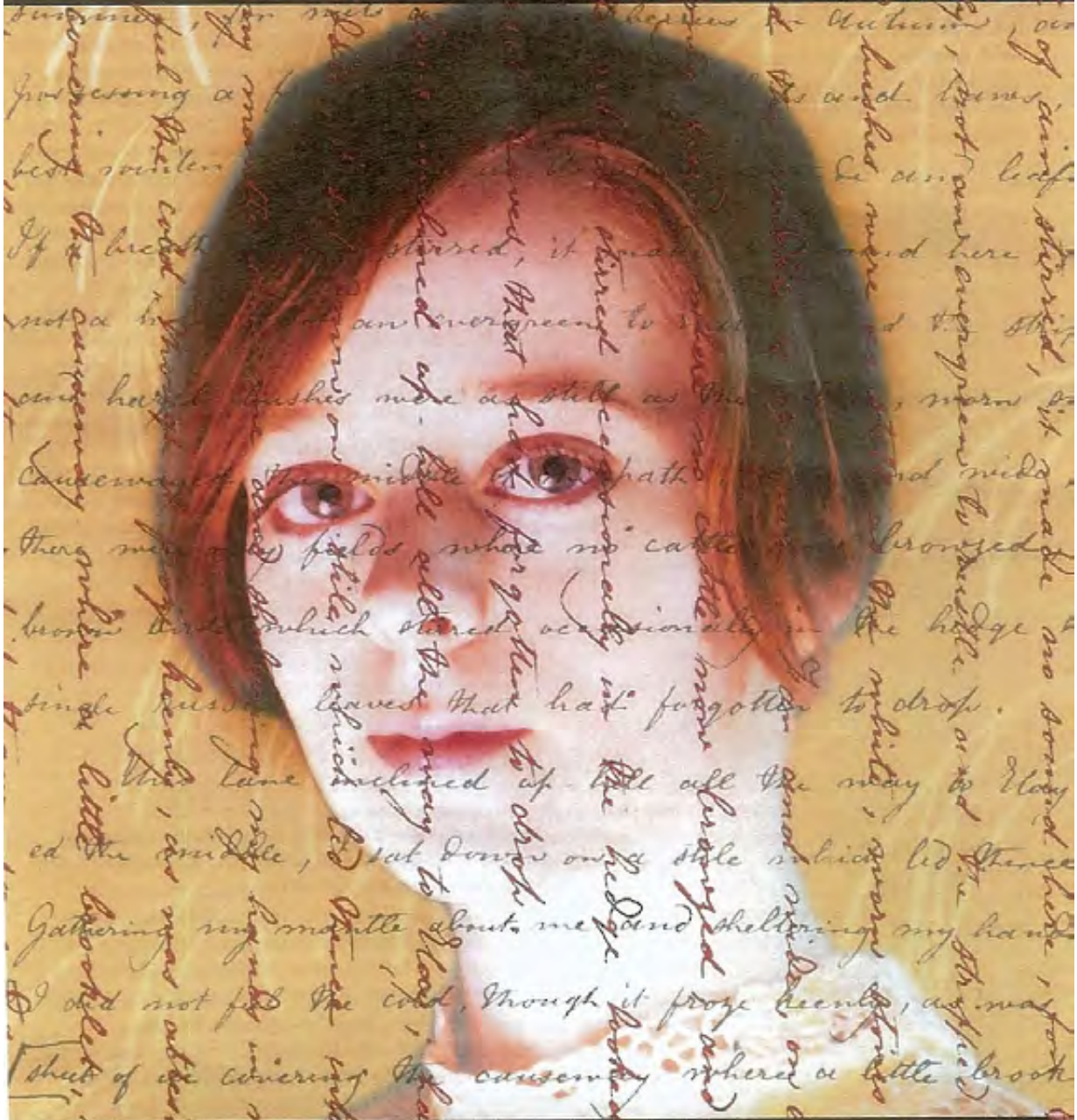
IPA: International Phonetic Alphabet

Introduction

Curtin's Performance Studies and
the Hayman Theatre Company
present...

Dear Charlotte,

By Joy Gregory



Directed by Leah Mercer
7pm, April 9-13, 2013
The Studio, Subiaco Arts Centre
180 Hammersley Road, Subiaco



Curtin University

INTRODUCTION

BEGINNINGS

I was drawn to researching accents and dialects because of a desire to help Western Australian and specifically Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) actors develop their vocal skills and, in doing so, I needed to understand the fundamentals that make up the Australian English (AusE) dialect. As a freelance voice teacher, I wanted to build on my existing knowledge and expand my skill set to include accent and dialect. My practice has changed as a result of this research as I have discovered the significance of an actor's idiolect before he/she can begin to understand new sounds and that, as well as the elements that make up a dialect, the whole person is involved in the process of accent and dialect acquisition.

One starting point of this research was to find out whether phonetics is a necessary part of accent training and, if so, can this system of symbols be taught in a more tactile/kinesthetic way so that the sound is better experienced by the students as opposed to memorising symbols on a chart. Traditionally accent training for actors has involved a triumvirate of listening to a resource recording, repeating back what has been heard and seeing phonetic symbols above the text. While teaching accents to second year students at WAAPA, they regularly stated that they found phonetics difficult and, consequently, they rarely used this system of sound differentiation. In addition to the exploration of phonetics, this research seeks an understanding of the needs of Western Australian actors when acquiring a new accent and dialect. In particular, the research strives to identify the expertise required and the main components that need to be taken into account when making the shift from one accent to another.

NEED

In order to test and observe what was required for accent acquisition, I needed a production to test and observe what would make a difference in the learning process. A critical moment to this end occurred during a phone conversation between myself and the director, Leah Mercer. I had emailed her early in the research asking if her performance students would be willing to participate in my research exploring the expertise that is required when teaching and learning a new accent or dialect. She responded, noting her forthcoming production of *Dear Charlotte*, (2003) a play by Joy Gregory based on the life of author Charlotte Bronte, and asked if I could assist with the accents. After a brief discussion about my involvement within the rehearsal process, a three-hour introductory workshop followed by attendance at rehearsals was agreed upon. The first workshop came about rather quickly and I decided to use several techniques, which I felt would be the most effective to provoke the students' learning and attention. I also devised a questionnaire to explore the students' perceptions on the expertise required to learn a new accent.

In order to explore accent and dialect training, I pursued various questions applying to perceptions of voice that awakened within my consciousness:

- How do attitudes of the Australian accent become manifest within the students without them being aware of that formative shaping?
- Are they aware of any social or psychological attitudes to their voice production?
- How does an awareness of such attitudes give them an advantage or disadvantage?

Through conducting this research, I have discovered that there is more to just learning the skills needed for a new accent and dialect and that different ways of being can involve the entire humanity of the actor. In other words, this research has guided me to pursue areas of the voice that involve more than imitating a different way of vocalising.

Previously, I assumed that voice and speech were the same thing and always claimed that I was doing research into the voice. However, as I continued to read and observe, it became clear that voice and speech are different phenomena. Voice work is about producing sound, vocal quality and timbre and covers alignment, breath support, vibration, resonance and placement and articulation for the production of an efficient and flexible sound. Voice is about the vibration of the vocal cords and the quality of the sound that may be breathy, raspy, creaky, smooth or thin. Speech, however, is “the breaking up of these sounds into recognizable units called words” (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 6). When taking on a new accent, breath and vocal dexterity are just as important as enunciating the spoken words and visa versa. Therefore, differences of pronunciation are not differences of voice, but differences in how the articulators are habitually used. Whatever the voice quality of a person is considered to be, if you come from a certain place, you have the same intonation and pronunciation as those around you.

INTEGRATED WHOLE

Speech is only one of the many elements that make up the discipline or process of voice as an integrated whole. Speech is the final part of the process of how the voice as a whole works. Accents and dialects sit within speech and speech cannot emerge without the foundational attributes of voice; as a result breath, resonance or alignment cannot be discounted when it comes to accents. Rodenburg defines speech as a “process [which] is done in the mouth with the lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate and facial muscles. It is very precise physical work and speech is one of the most balanced and complex muscular exercises the body performs” (1997, p. 104). In exploring the differentiation between voice and speech, I became aware of the difference between having a skill and accepting one’s own self and identity, whereby the whole person is embraced in the process. There are other parts of voice that can be researched, however, the scope of this research is limited to the necessary flexibility that needs to be found when shifting from a Western Australian English accent to a Standard English accent or RP (Received Pronunciation).

CHALLENGING OUR BELIEF SYSTEMS

My belief system has been challenged by this research. I became aware that I had preconceptions as a teacher about dialects, which made me think that students might also have preconceptions about

dialects. An actor cannot master a skill without accepting his/her idiolect (an individual's distinctive and unique use of language and speech) because a vocal fingerprint encapsulates the whole person. I needed to investigate how change occurs, in particular, how the thought process of the actor can change. Our brains are hardwired to habits and our thoughts run in patterns, unless we consciously decide to change them. As a dialect coach, I want to encourage change but I do not want to place any judgement on the individual's existing accent. Rather than negate the actors' existing accents, the vocal coach needs to build up actors' confidence to encourage exploration and change. The role of the vocal coach is to break down the cultural attitudes that imply some accents are superior (Received Pronunciation, RP) to others, Australian English (AusE). Actors' attitudes to vocal deliveries also need to be investigated when exploring the accents and dialects for a production. The main purpose in acquiring another accent or dialect is to find the sound that fits the character in the play.

CREATURES OF HABIT

One of the first discussions I have with my students at the start of the semester is to question where vocal habits come from. What are the main ideas behind habits? Is it about being socially acceptable and conforming to socialisation? How important is a desire to sound appropriate and/or have a sense of belonging? How do these habits affect or inhibit the voice? The answers to these questions are many and varied and include family, peer pressure and friends, criticism, expectations, physical or mental trauma, self-consciousness, environment (urban or rural), gender expectations, sounding appropriate or acceptable and sounds and fitting in to a professional ideal. These factors can be the foundations of habits which are bound up in individuals' belief systems. A parent may have criticised the child, forcing him/her to speak in a certain way. This conditioning informs the child from that point on.

Accent and dialect work can assist in breaking down these powerful habits to enable the exploration of new choices. In order to make a successful shift and embody an accent convincingly, the awakenings that need to occur happen in the listening, embodiment, and cognitive thinking. Awakening to the possibilities of change is the theme that I take into the chapters that follow. My research has revealed that if we can extend the flexibility of the voice enabling different sounds to be uttered, then the actor is taken out of his/her habitual pattern and new sensations and possibilities become open to them, giving choices to new ways of being.

MY BACKGROUND

The roots of my fascination with accents and dialects may have arisen from my own experiences. I am a mix of cultures, half eastern and half western. My parents are English (my Western heritage) and moved to Indonesia in the 1960s where I was born (my Eastern heritage). After graduating from an international high school in Jakarta at 17, I moved to London to pursue my dream of becoming an actor. My accent then could be described as Standard English with a mid-Atlantic twang. On arrival in the United Kingdom (UK), my older sister, who had moved to London ahead of me from Indonesia, insisted that I needed to get rid of my accent, because the establishment did not like Americans. It was then that I made a conscious decision to choose an English or Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, which was helped by attending the three-year acting course at Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), where time was devoted to learning accents and RP in particular.

My own voice work began in 1989 as part of my actor training at RADA in the UK. After working as an actor with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), my career moved from acting to teaching and directing. I was fortunate enough to be directing young actors at the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain (NYTGB), and gained a Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Theatre from the Central School of Speech and Drama in 2006. This experience led to employment within the School for Community and Professional Development at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD), where I learnt about the range of voice work that was being conducted within the community from working with women in business to prisoners in Brixton prison. I came to realise that voice work was the area about which I was most passionate and wished to pursue as a career.

Since moving to Australia in 2008, I have worked as a freelance voice practitioner teaching at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Curtin University, Notre Dame University, and John Curtin College of the Arts. While working with actors in Australia, I have become fascinated with the different soundscapes around me. Voice is profoundly personal and I, like all individuals, identify myself through my voice. Ironically, I cannot hear myself (the voice in my head is different to what others hear), I cannot see myself (the mirror image is all I see) and thus strictly speaking my identity is always 'other' to myself.

The voice you hear when you speak is conducted through the bones of your skull, while the voice others hear is conducted through the air. Consider the difference between those two substances-bone and air-and you'll understand the disparity in how we sound to ourselves and to the outside world. (McAfee, 2011, p. 57)

The mid-Atlantic twang I had constructed was designed to fit in with all the Americans at the International school I attended in Indonesia. When I moved to London to train as an actor, I changed to the Standard British accent because I wanted to identify with the people of that environment. I tuned into them like a "tuning fork" (a term used by Colaianni, 1994). I adapted to the environment like a chameleon. I watched and listened to the people I was surrounded by, and imagined myself as one of them. I wanted to belong. What I now realise is that accents and dialects provide common frameworks for the voice, which is inextricably involved in an individual's right to speak and sense of belonging. An accent is acquired and is about identity. I speak in the way I do because I belong to a particular group. Now that I live in Australia, my children aged ten and twelve speak with an Australian and not in my English accent.

Everyone has a unique vocal fingerprint: "No one pronounces sounds in exactly the same way as anyone else" (Crystal, 2009, p. 66). Even if a whole group of actors are speaking in RP, they will all sound different. Being able to adapt to a new accent and be convincing is a great skill. The reason some actors are not comfortable making the shift from one accent to another can be because their voice is intricately linked with their identity. They feel that, if they change their voice, they will change their identity. To assure students that this is not the case, a useful way of describing accents and dialects can be by using the analogy of a piano. Why would you only want to play one note when you can play many notes and make music? Extend your range as an actor and don't limit yourself.

Find the fun in discovering how many notes you can play. The aim of accent work is not to sacrifice individuality but to find freedom and adaptability.

I was drawn to researching accents and dialects because of a desire to help actors develop their vocal skills. When teaching student actors at WAAPA in 2011, I was aware that some students used the coded system of phonetics, “[p]honetics is the study of how speech sounds are made, transmitted and received” (Crystal 2006, p. 99), while others preferred to rely on their ear. This made me question the role of phonetics: is this system a necessary part of accent acquisition? What does having a good ear mean and can you rely solely on listening to create an accent for a character? I knew there was more to having a good ear and wanted to explore in more detail the elements needed to make a successful shift to another accent.

MY TRAINING

Before undertaking this research, my approach to teaching actors could be described as fairly traditional with an emphasis on Alexander Technique and encouraging physical release while working with text. While at RADA, I enjoyed voice and text classes with Helen Strange, where voice was linked with strenuous physical exercises including swings and breath exercises, development exercises which I continue to incorporate into my work today. Accent and dialect classes at RADA were run by Charmian Hoare in first year and Penny Dyer in third year. We did not cover the amount or range of accents that students learn today. The handful I remember studying were Scottish, Irish, Newcastle (Geordie), Liverpool, Welsh, Cockney, Received Pronunciation, New York and General American. At the end of the semester, we were given a phonetic test and asked to write out the phonetic symbols for a list of words. RP was the standard with which we worked and was reinforced throughout the year by my principal voice teacher, Robert Palmer, who I saw twice a week. In the early 1990s when I attended RADA, the belief was that RP would provide a desirable and acceptable accent for employment opportunities. I worked very hard at achieving my RP accent and I still cling onto it today. I realise that I do sound different to how I sounded when I was younger. I made a conscious decision to change my personal everyday accent because I wanted to belong and to fit in.

I hear my own intonation anew when I hear it through Australian ears. When I speak to someone who has a flat, laid back and minor pitch range, where the sentence or phrase is even and steady, occasionally I am struck by the mismatch of melodies: mine is more animated and has more rises and falls whereas theirs is more underplayed to fit in with the cultural notion of the ‘tall poppy syndrome’ where no-one wants to stand out from the rest. Modifying or adjusting my sound to close the communication gap makes communication easier. If I did not I would sound pompous and it would be an obvious display of Britishness.

AIM

The aim of this research is to reveal the characteristics and foundations that make up the Australian dialect and to develop a set of skills that are transferrable and teachable. From this knowledge, arguably it is possible to teach actors new skills that offer them greater choices when taking on a character or a role. My teaching emphasises voice as a means of communication, which is crucial in theatre. Some students think that voice work is about changing the way they speak, whereas my

emerging focus has centred on allowing people to retain their sounds but refine them so that they can communicate efficiently on stage or screen. There is a tension that exists between working from a place of ease and effortlessness to creating a character on stage, a tension that leads to awakenings in the teacher as much as in the teaching of voice.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this research is that it will benefit Australian student actors learning accents and dialects, adding to the scholarly research in this area. When asked whether she had witnessed much of an evolution in voice and speech training over the course of her career, Rodenburg responded: “the demands on the actors’ voices are increasing. The actor has to be more skilled vocally these days ... Authenticity of dialects requires greater skill—and we have to teach those skills; the demands are out there” (cited in Saklad 2011, p. 228). Not only are the demands out there but actors and voice and dialect practitioners today need a huge range of accents to work consistently. When an actor completes a three-year acting training, the aim is to find representation and gain employment. He/she is up against fierce competition, which means that being versatile and having a wide skill-set on graduation, including accent and dialect training, can add significantly to an actor’s employability. As the world gets smaller, authenticity of dialects becomes even more crucial to the actor, because the ease of air travel increases the different sounds and dialects around us. Accents increase an actor’s vocal repertoire and, thereby, can assist the actor in developing an authentic and believable character. Accent training can give an actor a new confidence to explore the different resonating spaces in the head, chest, and throat, which can all lead to greater freedom once an actor makes an accent shift.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two central questions drove the initial stages of this research:

- 1) What is the role of phonetics in accent and dialect training?
- 2) What are the needs of Western Australian actors in terms of accent and dialect training?

These initial questions evolved from my practice of supporting student actors in acquiring new accents and dialects. As the research progressed, it became apparent that the initial questions were too broad. As a consequence, the following third question emerged:

- 3) What are the awakenings that need to happen for an actor to acquire the expertise to make an accent and dialect change?

My research has investigated and explored the process of how accents are learned, from unconsciously acquired circumstances through to effectively and consciously learning a new accent for the stage. Furthermore, this research examines accent and dialect training mainly from a Western Australian tertiary context.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis includes seven chapters, including this introductory discussion. Chapter One presents a literature and practice review, which details the history of voice and gives a context to accent and dialect. The chapter also presents a review of my practice as a voice and dialect coach. Chapter Two outlines the Methodology used to undertake the research. The titles for Chapters Three, (Awakening the Actors' Cognitive Mind), Four (Awakening the Actors' Listening) and Five (Awakening the Actors' Embodiment) came from the themes that emerged from the interviews with leading experts in the field and from my immersion in teaching and voice practice. The metaphor of awakenings has been chosen to suggest that when an actor successfully makes the shift to a new accent they take on a new way of being, which may defy identification and yet mark transcendence or shift away from habitual patterns. The Conclusion (Chapter Six) follows, in which multi modal approaches and techniques are highlighted as significant contributions along with recommendations for actors and voice practitioners.

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CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

This chapter gives a summary of vocal training for theatre, from rhetoric in Ancient Greece through to contemporary teaching practice. Making a distinction between accents and dialects and offering definitions of Received Pronunciation and Australian English, the discussion turns to the features of dialect training in a drama school setting with reference to dialect training in a professional setting in order to explore the role of the voice teacher and dialect coach. Furthermore, this chapter examines the workings of the voice in relation to accent and dialect practices. In sum, the aim of this chapter is to contextualise voice training and its practices in which accent and dialect training sits.

VOCAL TRAINING FOR THEATRE

In order to contextualise the focus of this study, a brief history of the wider umbrella of speech and spoken voice in performance to date will be addressed. This reflection on the shifting tides of vocal delivery over the years will form a framework for the examination of current accent training. By examining the tension between rhetoric and the styles of acting and how these two factors have influenced one another over the years, it will become apparent that the function and purpose of voice and speech training has evolved and has changed in response to the expectation of acting in the theatre.

RHETORIC VS REALISM IN ACTING

Voice and speech training for an actor has always been an important part of developing their craft. In systemising the principles of speech and vocal delivery “effective speech on stage can be said to have originated around 400 BC with Aristotle,” who defined rhetoric as “that faculty by which we understand what will serve our turn concerning any subject to win belief in the hearer” (Martin, 1991, p. 2). Martin also suggests that

[a]n appropriate vocal delivery for an actor stemmed from rhetoric’s *actio*, which demanded that voice, facial expression, gestures and posture should be in harmony with the text and lift out its content and character. (1991, p. 2)

For the purposes of this research, this suggestion highlights the emotional tone, decorum and ‘appropriate’ sounds required of speech in Ancient Greece. The actors were judged on the content of their passionate delivery of their lines, the beauty of their vocal tone and their ability to match speaking to the mood of the character.

The first professor of rhetoric, Quintilian (AD 35-97) was a pivotal contributor to rhetoric and acting who “attempted to counteract the declamatory style which had flourished throughout the first century with Seneca” (Martin, 1991, p. 4). He had the foresight to make the distinction between true emotion and false emotion. Quintilian realised that there was a psychological inhibition that stopped

the actors from fully expressing themselves. When instructing students on good and appropriate delivery in theatre he stated:

The main thing is to excite the appropriate feeling in oneself, to form a mental picture of the facts and to exhibit an emotion that cannot be distinguished from the truth ... the voice is the index of the mind and is capable of expressing all its varieties of feeling. (cited in Martin, 1991, p. 4)

All these feelings needed to be expressed if the actor was to make any impact.

The arrival of the printing press marked a significant point in ensuring the works of Quintilian and Cicero were handed down and, with the Renaissance's renewed interest in the Golden Age of Greece, these writings became some of the earliest to have a significant impact, "rivalling grammar and dialectic, which had been so dominant in the middle ages" (Martin, 1991, p. 6). This shift of emphasis ensured that the belief of the voice being the index of the mind capable of expressing all its varieties of feeling was carried on.

By the Elizabethan era, "[v]oices were trained for declamation and for health, *actio* had a revival and actors were expected to be able to follow a clear channel from the ideas in the author's head to their manifestation in minutely correspondent details of voice and gesture" (Martin, 1991, p. 7). The dominant style was declamatory, however, voice and gesture and deliberate use of elegant language were still valued and appreciated.

During the early part of the 1700s, rumblings against this declamatory style began and an attempt to perform more truthful characters emerged. According to Martin, "many books began to appear at this time which treated acting as separate from the art of oratory" (1991, p. 8) and, by 1750, performances were supported by more realism in acting. By 1850, rhetoric lost its place as the major influence on vocal delivery style for performance. The next stage in vocal acting training did not occur until the beginning of realism at the early part of the 20th century when the work of Stanislavsky began to take hold. In America, influenced by the work of Stanislavsky, Group Theatre and the Actor's Studio moved actors forward in psychological and emotional exploration. According to Shevtsova, in Stanislavsky's writing there is a "continual emphasis on the actor as a constantly developing emotional and spiritual being" (2010, p. 173).

Thus vocal delivery became less about persuasion through words or the study of skills and more about filling out the words with the actor's own personal experiences. Rhetoric and passionate delivery and its objectives to persuade the audience to adopt particular moral positions waned and the focus shifted to discovering realism or 'truth' in acting. Therefore it seems that a crucial distinction was made between rhetoric and acting, in that rhetoric became associated with appropriate behaviour and acting became more about inappropriate behaviour, where the ugly as well as the beautiful sounds were acceptable.

WHEN DID ACCENT AND DIALECT TRAINING BECOME RECOGNISED AS A SKILL?

Although people throughout the ages have spoken with different languages and dialects, accent and dialect training as such is a fairly recent area of study and was not recognised as a skill until the 19th century (Personal communication, Crystal, 2014). There is no clear definitive answer as to

when accent and dialect training became recognised as a specific skill, however, the earliest records according to Saklad (2011) and Martin (1991), suggest that the skill of accent and dialect training has been documented since the days of Ancient Greece. One of the most telling tales is that of the Greek orator Demosthenes (384-22BC) who, in his youth suffered from a speech impediment and discovered that practising certain exercises, such as placing stones in his mouth, could change his way of speaking. The transformation or changes he made to his speech must have been successful as he went on “to become Greece’s greatest orator” (Saklad, 2011, p. 1).

Saklad (2011) further points out that in the early half of the 20th century, George Bernard Shaw adopted this same exercise in his play *Pygmalion*, (1916) where marbles were used instead of stones. His protagonist, Professor Henry Higgins tries to change the accent of a Cockney flower girl into a well-spoken upper class lady by putting marbles in her mouth to lower her jaw and work the muscles in the mouth and jaw to create more space in the mouth for the upper class accent.

From a European and American perspective, accent and dialect training began during the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, actors learnt their craft by “apprenticeship, observation, and elocution training” (Saklad, 2011, p. 2). This form of speech training was not about being authentic or truthful, but “instead, elocution” invited the listener to enjoy the “‘correctness’ and ‘beauty’ of the speaker’s tone, pronunciation, style, and gesture” (Saklad, 2011, p. 2). To this day, many elocution and speech training manuals promote communication as a “kind of spoken music that reveal[s] the characters’ state of being, as well as pleasing tone, clear articulation, and so forth” (Saklad, 2011, p. 2). This pleasing tone was taught along with pitch, pace, projection, pausing and inflection which assumed that the voice was like an “instrument [-] to be played to evoke a mood” (Saklad, 2011, p. 2). These elocution manuals included repetitive exercises to work the muscles of the tongue tip, the consonant sounds, and the vowel sounds. Skills are mechanically achieved, involving a lot of imitation and repetition. There was little in the way of expressing the inner life of the character that the actors were portraying because “[r]igid restrictions had made speaking a dull and deadly activity learned by rote” (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 114).

A significant shift came about when the 19th century European acting teacher, Francois Delsarte, spent his life investigating the relationship between emotion, physical behaviour, and language. In his book, *The Delsarte System* written in 1884, he outlined a systemised approach to acting training that included many areas of voice and ways in which an actor might develop the voice as an emotionally expressive tool. According to Martin, “Delsarte’s early psychophysical exploration might make him a forerunner to Michael Chekov” (2011, p. 4). This system was a significant development that would influence actor training in Europe and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Another fundamental shift in ideas about acting and the role of voice training occurred, as noted previously, with the work of Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre. Stanislavsky developed a ‘system’ wherein the so-called ‘emotional truth of acting’ became less about demonstrating and more about a true-to-life characterization. Stanislavsky describes acting as an art, in his book *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and outlines a system that tries to achieve transformations to realistic characters that came about through ‘doing’ instead of pretending or faking. This way of working meant that voice training had to go from being about persuasion through oration to a more personal expression of

the actors' emotions and thoughts. Therefore this new way of working with the voice moved away from elocution and became more about finding a liberated voice that is impulsive and responsive to thought as I aim to set out below under the headings: Liberating the actor's voice, The Natural voice and the Notion of the free versus locked voice.

LIBERATING THE ACTORS' VOICE

In our society, there are rules and expected behaviours when it comes to using the voice. Children are told to be quiet when their volume reaches a level that is considered too loud. These types of societal constraints tend to hinder the development of an actor and therefore voice teachers play an important part in liberating actors from these constraints. The role of the voice teacher aims to work with an actor to express a character's thoughts and move towards "inhabiting the language from the inside" (Cited in Saklad, 2011, p. 51). In today's actor training, the voice is viewed more holistically and represents an integral part of an individual actor so that the aim of voice work lies in opening up, liberating, and finding freedom and expression in an embodied voice. "Nothing is quite so freeing and enlarging as a liberated voice" (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 9). This more liberated way of working on the voice is encapsulated by the work of the Roy Hart Theatre whose founder, Hart, "insists on the 'humanity' of sound and not the 'beauty' of sound or 'sound for sound's sake'" (Martin, 1991, p. 65). These practitioners acknowledge that once the barriers of social conformity and appropriate, conventional sounds are broken down, the individual can fully realise his/her potential voice. Barriers that inhibit the voice include the expected sounds of socialisation and gender stereotyping. Vocal exploration lies at the heart of the Roy Hart Theatre, and includes extending the lower deeper sounds and the higher sounds to encourage range and challenge all the sounds available rather than relying on the single octave that can be the norm.

Recent voice training aims to give actors an understanding of "how the voice gets blocked, the different kinds of strain and tensions we make our voices suffer and how the voice can be released from all this anxiety and extended in range and colour" (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 62). Uncovering and releasing the anxiety and tensions that have built up over the years helps the actor achieve range and flexibility in vocalisation. This tension, for example, can include what society promotes as the ideal body. Popular magazines and media feed the public with images of rigid flat stomachs, however, when using the voice to its full potential, there is necessary movement in the lower abdomen and ribs at the side of the body, so there needs to be some activity in the lower abdominals (as I will explain further in the section on breath).

The teaching of voice in the 20th and 21st centuries has shifted significantly from the aesthetic 'beautiful' voice determined by elocutionary rules of the previous centuries towards a pursuit for a freed and natural sound that the literature seems to suggest is our birthright (Rodenburg, 1997).

When writing about the voice and speech work of the latter part of the 20th century, Rodenburg believes that:

the pendulum during the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's and 1970's had to swing naturally away from outside technical training of the voice to intense inner work that stressed changing the self before we could change our voice and our speech. (1992, p. 114)

As the analogy of the pendulum swings in one direction, the rule of physics suggests, it must return towards the origin. Ideas governing the teaching of voice are not static but move and change with the times. Thus today's voice training aims to give actors a psycho physical awareness rather than change an individual's sense of self identity. This is achieved through exploring habitual breathing patterns, identifying unnatural tensions in the body or speech organs, providing an awareness of vocal care and vocal maintenance and helping the actor to achieve range and flexibility "to find their own power and expression so they can fully communicate their thoughts and feelings subtly, flexibly and excitingly" (Houseman, 2002, p. introduction).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACCENT AND DIALECT?

In the theatre, the terms accent and dialect are often used interchangeably. An accent and dialect coach working on a performance is often given the title of 'dialect coach.' However, although they are both characteristics of speech, there is a difference between the two terms. Honey makes the distinction between accent and dialect in the following way:

If a regional speaker also uses the grammar, vocabulary, and idiom that are distinctive of his region, then we say he is speaking *dialect*. But if he uses the grammar, vocabulary, and idiom of the Standard English found in newspapers, books, magazines and news bulletins, then all we will notice about his speech is his *accent*—and possibly his intonation. (1989, p. 6)

Put simply, an accent is the way in which a language is pronounced, so one person may say the word 'task' as [tɑːsk] while another may say [tæsk] and a dialect is accent including the use of changes in vocabulary. Blumenfeld further describes accent in the following way;

An accent is a characteristic speech pattern, or, in other words, a distinctive system or mode of pronunciation, and consists of a system of particular vowel and consonant sounds and a characteristic pitch or intonation pattern (music) and a rhythmic pattern (stress and length of syllables), all of which together form the accent. (1998, p. 3)

A dialect however is a "complete version or variety of a language, with its grammar and vocabulary, as well as the particular accent or accents with which it is spoken" (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. intro). To give an example, although English is spoken in Australia, there are differences in word use to other varieties of English. In British English, the word used to describe what is worn when swimming may be called a 'swimsuit' or 'swimming costume' whereas in Australian English, you are more likely to find the term 'bathers' or 'togs' depending on the regional dialect. In General American the word used to describe the basket used for shopping is a 'shopping cart' whereas in British English you are more likely to find the term 'shopping trolley'. Each of the different varieties of English has their own accent, idiom and slang words, which are referred to as part of a dialect. Both accents and dialects convey information about a person's geographical origin.

This research began with exploring Received Pronunciation (RP) and Australian English (AusE), which entailed a dialect-coaching project on a production of Joy Gregory's *Dear Charlotte*, (2003). AusE, according to Honey (1989), can be categorised, as an English of the "Old Dominions" (1989, p. 8), or a

country where British settlers arrived before 1900 as is the case in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa where English is spoken as the mother tongue. In addition, each category has subdivisions due to regionalism and to the increase of immigrants who speak English with a foreign accent. The English spoken by settlers in Australia was similar in grammar and vocabulary to that of the mother country but the accent was different to British English. Since the publication of Honey's book, there have been many more subdivisions of dialects of English emerging in the Australian vocal register, each with its own recognisable accent.

British English encompasses all the accents of the UK, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. Standard English otherwise known as Received Pronunciation was the accent for educated middle class families, which is why this accent was chosen for the dialect on the play *Dear Charlotte* (2003). However, accents change over time and the current trend is moving away from RP (which is now defined as a variation) and the term Standard English is now changing to the Neutral Standard English Accent or NSEA. According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles,

The perception of what is considered 'standard' or 'neutral' has, of course, changed over the course of time. The voices we associate with early BBC broadcasts, for instance, now sound extremely old fashioned to most of us, and old 'RP' has strong resonances of authority, social status and economic power. (2012, p.8)

ORIGIN OF RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP)

It is important to realise that accents and dialects differ not only from region to region but also because of variance due to social contexts. Present day RP is not simply a regional accent but is a way of speaking which originated in a certain limited social group within the South of England region. This group consisted of the highest social class that included courtiers, gentry and academics, a group of people who had the education, political and economic power to enforce their views.

British English is divided into a number of dialects one of which has become known as Standard English or Received Pronunciation (RP). The origin of the term comes from the sense "of 'received' as meaning 'generally accepted' as in the term received opinion and received wisdom, especially by those who are qualified to know" (Honey, 1989, p. 7).

Historically

It is widely accepted that "[h]istorically the concept of a Standard English accent could have said to have begun when the term 'Received Pronunciation' was coined in 1869 by the linguist, A.J. Ellis" (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 1). This Standard English accent became associated with the "Education Act of 1870, pioneered through Parliament by W.E. Forster" (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2012, p. 9) which started a trend in English fee-paying schools where children were brought together from different parts of the country and educated with a standard accent. This standard accent was something that the middle classes in London, in particular, aspired to and wanted to emulate. This aspiration is very much the case still today in the UK.

Culturally

Honey states that by the time Shakespeare was born, "there was already a clear idea that there was a correct way of pronouncing English, that some forms of speech had already become a criterion of

good birth and education, and that it was deliberately fostered and taught” (1989, p. 15). This correct way of pronouncing English was meant to raise an individual’s social standing in society and was an indication of privilege in birth and education.

In a performance context, Sharpe & Haydn Rowles assert:

[A]lthough having a standard accent may not be considered a *social* necessity, having access to a Neutral Standard English Accent, free from indicators of gender, race, age, class or religion, is still considered to be an invaluable skill for an actor. (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2012, p. 9)

This criterion is also true for WAAPA actors, where part of this research was carried out. The use of Australian Theatre Standard (ATS) or the students’ own idiolects are encouraged when performing the classics. In addition to ATS, Detailed Australian English is a term that I use, as there is no judgement attached to it. However this Detailed Australian English includes the need for clear communication. Clear enunciation of sounds is also important when shifting to a new accent and dialect as speech needs to entail sufficient understanding and comprehension for communication to occur.

CLASS ATTITUDES

From a UK perspective, accents historically were used, as noted above, to make a distinction between classes and social groups as well as geographical places. Much of the literature from the last decade focuses on examples that highlight ways in which some dialects were considered inferior to RP. Even Chaucer made fun of northern English speech in his Reeve’s Tale. Restoration plays include instances where non-standard accents are used to “poke fun at individuals’ social origins” (Honey, 1989, p. 42) emphasising the distinction between country-folk and the more sophisticated and educated city dwellers. Consequently, vocal behaviour has been a marker of class distinction for a long time.

Rodenburg reports instances during drama school auditions “where regional speakers have suffered from the panel’s indifference or where doubts were raised about intelligence levels even though these candidates had qualifications galore from top schools and universities” (1992, p. 62). These prevailing attitudes to class need to be taken into account by actors when discussing the role of accents and dialects in characterisation for the voice transmits powerful signals about social position, which invariably play into the unfolding plot.

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO ACCENTS

Over the last fifty years, there has been a noticeable change in attitudes to accents in casting in British theatre. During my time at RADA (1989-1992), there was an undeniable prejudice towards the use of RP, particularly for Shakespeare (except for a servant or comedy characters). Today, non-standard regional accents, like the Beatles’ Liverpoolian “Scouse,” or Geordie accents (Fry, 2012) seem to be favoured due to the popularity of the speakers (pop singers and TV presenters) and the general shift away from the pervasive hold of the upper classes on what might be considered acceptable .

Although there is a long way to go with acceptance of these changing attitudes, there is a drive to re-educate the public and the industry to adopt a more diverse approach to accents in casting and

performance. This view is supported by Rodenberg who observes that, “[r]egional accents are only now being accepted by broadcasting companies. The BBC actively searches for presenters with rich regional accents” (1992, p. 62). The UK is a melting pot of these rich regional accents, which is why it makes sense to represent diversified speaking sounds rather than fixing on one purportedly ‘accepted’ delivery of sound.

In a recent article about accents in modern Britain, Muir (2014) cites research by the University of Manchester that revealed evidence of ‘accentism’, a term used to describe discrimination against people because of how they speak. The study by Baratta likened ‘accentism’ to racism. Participants in the study were asked why people changed their accents and how it made them feel. A third of the participants responded by saying they were ‘ashamed’ about flattening out their accents, however, they had no alternative. The desire to want to get ahead, for the most part, was the reason given for the desire to change accent, and the best way to do that was find the sounds which enabled people to fit into the group. In doing so, there is a price to pay. According to Muir “facing the world with a voice that is not your own can undermine your sense of being” (2014, p. para 3). In multicultural Britain, where a diverse range of accents exists, there is a need for tolerance and understanding. Accentism also exists in Australia. Actors wanting accent modification have approached me, because they had been informed that their accent did not match the casting requirements for a specific role and thus hindered their employment opportunities.

DEFINING AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH (AUSE)

An important part of this research has been looking at the needs of Western Australian actors, in the first instance to understand what vocal characteristics comprise the Australian English dialect. In this context, it is important to examine closely the term Australian English.

Historically

It is generally agreed by linguists that the first settlers to colonise Australia were of Anglo Celtic Heritage or English speaking descent (Crystal, 2010; Honey, 1997). The AusE dialect is defined as follows:

Australian English can be described as a regional dialect of English spoken by non-Aboriginal people who are born in Australia, or who arrive in this country at a linguistically impressionable age, and who spend their formative years interacting with an Australian English speaking peer group. (Harrington, Cox, & Evans, 1997, p. 155)

However this seems a very restricted view as Australia’s migrant population has come from all over the world and these influences make up the Australia we live in today. I agree with linguists Cox and Palethorpe (2007) who take a more inclusive approach and state that in Australia “speakers fall into three major dialect subgroups: Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English and Ethnocultural Australian English varieties” (2007, p. 341). Ethnocultural AusE is made up of the Englishes of recently arrived migrants from non-English-speaking countries in Europe and Asia (Clyne 2003; Leitner 2004), but I suggest it also includes migrants from the Americas, Africa and the Middle East.

Tri-cultural Australia

Australia could be considered a tri-cultural nation based on Cox and Palethorpe's (2007) classification of the major dialect subgroups. Such commentators and linguists writing about AusE from an Australian perspective have built on findings by Mitchell and Delbridge who conducted a survey on the speech of 7082 secondary school students, which allowed them "to postulate three varieties of Australian English", namely, Broad Australian, General Australian and Cultivated Australian (Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965; Shapiro, 2000). The majority spoke General Australian. However the two smaller groups, Broad and Cultivated, either side of the General, were defined in the following way. Broad was "characterised to a greater degree than the other varieties by excessive nasality, fusion in the segments, and a lack of clear structure in the prosodic features of stress and pitch" (Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965, p. 15). The smallest group they labelled Educated Australian due to the "higher level of organization-features like speech rate, fluency, stress, and assimilation, and other types of fusion" (Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965, p. 14). They do note, however, that one variety is not necessarily better than another and that the concept of the three varieties has no value judgement involving good or bad speech. They imply that any judgements are highly personal and come under the influence of education and various other social pressures.

Geographically

Australia is a country with a large land mass. It is interesting to note the relatively few variations of dialects and speculate on what might be the reasons behind the comparative uniformity of the three sociolects: cultivated, general and broad Australian. Mitchell and Delbridge propose that "Australia is, generally speaking, linguistically unified" (1965, p. 13). One theory of the reason why the variations between Australian dialects are subtle is because of migration and mixing which tends towards "fusion and levelling" in AusE (Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965, p. 28) rather than greatly divergent sociolects. Mitchell and Delbridge (1965) found that the accent was spread through massive internal migrations thereby eliminating most of the regionalisms, which had developed or were in the process of developing. The relatively recent fluidity of the population, in their view, brings about a uniformity of AusE in comparison to other older varieties of English.

In response to the needs of Australian actors, Shapiro in his book, *Speaking American*, agrees with Mitchell and Delbridge in that the differences between sociolects are subtle, because many Australians speak in combinations or in all three variations at the same time, depending to whom they are speaking. Shapiro (2000) adds a small footnote to highlight that Aboriginal English could be included in these variations. I would argue that there are more than three sociolects and that the Aboriginal, European and Asian varieties of AusE, at least, need to be acknowledged. What I did not realise before undertaking this research, is that Australian English does have a small degree of regional variation, and that there are derogatory nick- names for various migrant groups; like wogs, poms, and so forth, which indicates how prevalent those groups and their manner of speaking are in society.

Oral Muscular Configuration

When discussing the particular oral muscular configuration of the Australian accent Rodenburg asserts:

Many of the convicts shipped to Australia were cockneys from the East End of London. To punish them they were confined to the most inhospitable, fly-infested areas of the country. The resulting accent is cockney with the jaw shut to prevent the flies from getting in! (1992, p. 62)

Similarly, Berry asserts that:

A strong Australian accent is an extreme example of constricted jaw movement affecting the muscular movement of the lips, especially the upper one, and consequently the back of the palate. With this accent all of the vowel sounds take place in the middle to back of the mouth, and the back of the tongue has to work particularly hard to define the vowels at all. (1992, p. 140)

These quotations from the seminal texts in voice give an indication of the British view of the broad Australian accent. Both these authors' claims appear to be quite critical of the particular Australian muscular configuration and perhaps derive from a generalised perspective on the Australian accent made at a distance from its speakers. There are actors with whom I work who need to improve the mobility of their jaws, however, there are also actors who speak with released and relaxed jaws. There is no 'one size fits all' when working with a diverse range of actors and the variables of the human voice.

Attitudes to Australian English

Attitudes to Australian English have become more enlightened as Australia has found its place on the world stage culturally and economically, which in turn, has led to renewed interest in the indigenous languages of Australia and a reduction in the negative connotation associated with the Australian accent in general.

In the past in the UK, there have been negative connotations towards the Australian accent. In the class-ridden UK society, accent does matter and is still a significant indicator of social class and culture. With regard to the AusE accent, there was snobbery evident in the common view towards AusE which was seen as a colonial accent, born out of a lower class migrant population transported from the UK (from convicts to ten pound poms). It seems that this prejudice is diminishing as Australian has become a recognised dialect worldwide (Cox & Palethorpe, 2007; Kopf, 2003; Lane-Plescia, 2005; Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965; Stern, 1983).

Likewise attitudes to the Aboriginal English are becoming less prejudiced and more widely heard. An indication of this acceptance, particularly with regard to indigenous language, is evident in a move towards celebrating diversity. For example, Aboriginal actors from Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company (2012, p. 20) were invited to perform Shakespearean sonnets in Noongar (a Western Australian Indigenous language) at the Globe Theatre, London in summer 2013. In the same year, at a performance of Shakespeare sonnets at the Perth International Festival, by the Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, the company's Artistic Director was moved to tears when she admitted that their language has been oppressed and silenced for so long that it was a joy to hear her actors performing in Noongar. Being able to speak their mother tongue in and beyond their own country is an act of freely reclaiming their voices. After years of hardship the tide is now changing and indigenous languages are being celebrated rather than silenced.

In summarising the above information, accent concerns pronunciation, and dialect is a complete version of a language. What is interesting to note is that the definition of AusE has diverged from the three main original categories identified in the 1960s, to include the many voices of Australian English, including Indigenous English, Asian and European Englishes, and migrants from non-English Speaking countries. Another critical aspect identified in the literature is the tightness of the jaw in broad Australian English, more about which shall emerge in the ensuing discussions.

REVIEW OF VOICE PRACTITIONERS

There have been many contributors to the research into voice, however, three of the most influential voice practitioners who, in my opinion, have made a profound contribution in empowering the actor vocally include Cicely Berry (2000), Kristin Linklater (2006) and Patsy Rodenberg (2002). The focus now, according to their research, is on empowering the actor and making the mind/body/voice available to respond from impulse and to work towards the natural sound with which individuals are born. These seminal practitioners have made a big contribution to knowledge in the area of voice. Rodenburg's influence in vocal techniques, in particular, underpins the following discussion on the role of the voice teacher and in defining the natural voice.

Rodenburg believes that the role of the voice teacher is: "a) to explain clearly the workings of the voice; b) to identify specific problems; c) to prescribe exercises to free the problem; and d) to offer choices that open up further options to vocal freedom" (1992, p. 18). In the *Right to Speak*, Rodenburg aims to help the actor "to work with your own voice" to release "tensions that block effective communication," and "also to educate your ear" (1992, p. 8).

When defining a free or natural voice, Rodenburg asserts: "The natural voice (or what others term a 'free' or 'centered' voice) is quite simply an unblocked voice that is unhampered by debilitating habits" (1992, p. 19). This aspect of habits will be discussed later in the *Awakening the Actors' Embodiment* section of this thesis. The contemporary notion of the natural voice is said to be our birth-right, however, the term 'natural' has come under some scrutiny in recent years since there is little in human behaviour which is not influenced by culture. What then is this contemporary theatre notion of the 'natural voice'? Kennedy suggests, "there is no such thing, in theatre, as a 'natural' or even a 'free' voice" (2000, p. 70). Kennedy asserts that voice in performance is 'mediated' and is merely an 'illusion' of a 'natural' voice. This assumption of a natural voice has occurred because the actor imagines him or herself as a character that has been built up consciously through research and rehearsal. Therefore the actor's belief system will inform the sound he/she is making. The choices that the actor makes will "affect and inform the quality of the sound" (2009, p. 416). What is actually required "is an 'unlearning' by the actor to move beyond habits of self-control and acceptable behaviour that society and culture have embedded in [their] bodies, and this unlearning depends on training" (2009, p. 416). This sentiment stresses the importance of training and how difficult it is to move beyond the habits and "acceptable behaviour that society and culture have embedded in our bodies" (2009, p. 416). When discussing voice training for the actor, Linklater agrees that "[t]he first step toward freeing the natural voice is to develop an ability to perceive habits and register new experiences" (1976, p. 19). In order to find this freedom, students are taken through the workings of the voice to fully understand to process.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MY PRACTICE- WORKINGS OF THE VOICE

When teaching voice fundamentals at WAAPA, I begin with a physiological outline of the mechanics of the voice and a clear explanation of how the voice functions. There are several ways to approach the issue of function depending on the group. For example, while teaching the Bachelor of Performing Arts students at WAAPA, I used Linklater's (1976) brief outline of the mechanics of the voice, which consists of six sentences:

- (1.) There is an impulse in the motor cortex of the brain.
- (2.) The impulse stimulates breath to enter and leave the body.
- (3.) The breath makes contact with the vocal folds creating oscillations.
- (4.) The oscillations create frequencies (vibrations).
- (5.) The frequencies (vibrations) are amplified by resonators.
- (6.) The resultant sound is articulated by the lips and tongue to form words. (2006, p. 13)

These six sentences were cut into separate strips, mixed up, and given to the students to put into the order they believed was correct. The exercise was undertaken in small groups as a challenge to see which group could complete the task first and provided a starting point for discussion about how the voice works. In another approach, I ask groups of students to physicalise the mechanics of voice in a non-naturalistic way and to perform this task to the rest of the class. The basis of this exercise is to encourage the students to think about the mechanics of voice intellectually and then to physicalize the process by bringing voice and body together. By doing the exercise, the students are able to recognise the sequence of events that make sounds happen.

I have also used the familiar analogy of a guitar when introducing the workings of voice, explaining how the body of the guitar is like our body, which houses spaces within us: "the head, the mouth, the nose, the neck, the chest, the stomach, the pelvis and finally the legs and feet that earth us" (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 39). The vocal chords resemble the strings of the guitar and the fingers that pluck and strum the strings are equivalent to the breath that "gives the voice power and propulsion" (Berry, 2000, p. 43).

THE NOTION OF THE FREE VERSUS LOCKED VOICE

Tight shoulders, a tight jaw, and a slumped spine are all "physical habits that, along with tension, can limit, block and suppress the voice from doing its work" (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 18). As an illustration of such tensions, I ask the actors to walk around the room, taking them on an imaginary journey, which begins in a state of relaxation and moves to a state of tension and anxiety. At the end of the exercise, discussion focuses on how the voice functions when individuals are stressed, which includes raising observations about performance anxiety and the physiological fight or flight response or upward pull of tension experienced when under pressure. We then engage in a discussion about what inhibits vocal freedom and flexibility; how different situations demand different uses of voice; and how the voice can be changed. Voice lecturer, Donald Woodburn, talks about what actors change vocally in expectation of or in response to different audiences. So for example, when a student is outside talking with friends they will use a dynamic, robust voice and then when the student comes into class and delivers a monologue the voice is held and clamped down because they feel they are being judged.

Prior to conducting this research, I used to take the students through a warm up that includes each of the five components of vocal education (alignment, breath, resonance, pitch and articulation) and, once this is learnt, future classes would be dedicated to concentrate on just one area in a particular session. Currently, informed by the research, my approach consists of watching students deliver a speech at the start of the semester to identify their habits before suggesting areas in which they need to find release from habitual tension. After that activity, I then move on to teach them technique. Shewell's definition of a free voice, adapted from a workshop I attended in 2009 (included in the appendix), gives the students a solid understanding of what is needed for a healthy and well-functioning voice. This work develops the actors' technique so that they can perform in any number of situations and be heard.

It is crucial for actors to have an understanding of how their voices work so that they can take on board the individual feedback that is given. By having Shewell's checklist (Shewell, 2009b), they are able to see what the core components are that make up a free voice. The freeing of the conditioned habitual sound, involves becoming aware of habits that inhibit the voice. Specifically, the workings of the voice consist of a "chain of physical relationships which help us produce sound" (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 5). This chain consists of: body, breath, vibration, resonance, and articulation. Shewell's checklist (Shewell, 2009b) on developing an actor's technique which incorporates each of these five components guides the discussion below.

Knowing your Body

Alignment underpins the vocal apparatus and is essential for healthy and efficient voice use. Voice work often begins with a sense of knowing the body and becoming aware of tensions that need to be released in order to attain ease in posture and in breathing. The voice and body are interconnected as a single creative instrument for the actor; or phrased differently by Houseman "[t]he efficiency of the vocal apparatus depends on the alignment of the body and the economy with which it functions" (2002, p. intro). If the body is not functioning efficiently, according to Rodenburg, there is a knock on effect with the voice and this "chain of physical relationships which help us produce sound" (1997, p. 5) is put into disorder.

In order to assist with alignment and help the actor to find balance and release useless tensions, I introduce the Alexander Technique explaining that FM Alexander (as cited in Laurie, 2012) made his discoveries about posture and movement behaviour in response to injuries caused by his own misuse of his vocal apparatus. Through self-experimenting and observation, Alexander discovered his tendency to push his head back and down, thus compressing his larynx when speaking. This discovery led him to examine in more detail his physical movements in general and to apply conscious control to overcome any inefficient or harmful habits that he detected. The process resulted in what is now known as the Alexander Technique which "directs our thinking to mobilize the 'primary control'" (As cited in McEvenue, 2002, p. 18). Conscious thought is ultimately the primary goal, which can modify and redirect alignment. Alexander's principles, if followed, assist the body in moving with greater ease, which in turn, helps to unlock the voice. Shifting the actor's attention from external to internal factors can often bring a sense of rebalance back into the body and leads to a change of consciousness.

For example, in order to emphasise correct alignment and counteract physical habits of either “leading with the chest” or collapsing and “contracting the body” (McEvenue, 2002, p. 20), I invite students to lie down on the floor with knees bent up towards the ceiling and feet planted firmly on the floor (semi supine or constructive rest position — a fundamental Alexander technique position) with their head supported by a book in order to keep the neck lengthened. This position offers a chance to actively reflect upon and subsequently undo tensions in the body through lengthening the entire spine from the coccyx (the base of the spine) to the occipital point (where the top vertebrae of the spine meets the skull). By allowing the spine to relax in this position, a new sensation of breathing without pushing or collapsing is experienced. This new sensation of placement can then be recreated when standing, thereby “allow[ing] the head to release forward and upward, to allow the back to lengthen and widen” (McEvenue, 2002, p. 11). Another benefit of floor work is to stretch the muscles to “release any tension in neck, jaw, shoulders, upper chest and abdominal area” (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 25).

When describing the importance of alignment for vocal efficiency, David and Rebecca Clark Carey observe that “[w]ithout kinesthetic knowledge, our bodies may become stuck in postural habits that can restrict our vocal and physical expressivity” (2008, p. 4). Awareness of postural slippage can be acquired through a number of body practices to achieve a ‘reawakening’ and Carey and Carey Clark note that experience has led them to “use a combination of Alexander Technique, Chi Kung or Qi Gong and Yoga” (Carey & Carey Clark, 2008, p. 4). By working on releasing and undoing habitual tension in the body, the next stage, breath, can be addressed.

Developing Breath Control

All of the authors discussed above explore the crucial role of breath in the vocal process. According to Linklater;

Natural breathing is reflexive, and the only work you can do to restore natural breathing is to remove restrictive tensions and provide it with a diversity of stimuli, these stimuli will provoke deeper and stronger reflex actions that are normally exercised in habit. (1976, p. 25)

This stimuli can involve exhaling on a sustained ‘S’ or ‘Z’ sound which are known as “continuant consonants in which the passage of sound is channelled down the centre of the tongue” (Berry, 2000, p. 47). By exhaling on a voiceless alveolar median fricative, the breath and sound escapes slowly therefore increasing the length of the exhalation. Placing the effort on the exhalation provokes deeper and stronger reflex actions and engages the transverse abdominal muscles needed to support vocalisation.

When describing where these lower abdominal muscles of support are located, Rodenburg asks us to picture the image of a baby crying: “As it screams all the action of screaming is visible around the centre of the body and not in the shoulders or upper chest. What you see is really a pumping action born in the abdomen” (1997, p. 39). These big supported abdominal breaths are required to be engaged when the actor is speaking with projection and volume because: “to speak passionately,

fill a space, serve a character, think at different rates, speeds and length, an actor needs to have a strong, flexible, extended and yet organic breath and support system” (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 145). Thus Rodenburg acknowledges the complexities of breath and voice production that can affect an actor’s performance. Once breath has been addressed, the next link in the chain of the vocal process is resonance.

Developing Resonance

Developing resonance and vocal projection provide another step in enhancing the actor’s technique. Resonance is the amplification of the initial sound made by the vocal chords. According to Houseman “[r]esonance brings substance and energy to the voice. When the voice is fully resonant it is fully alive. You can feel the resonance in your body” (2002, p. 163). The body houses resonating chambers in five main areas, namely the chest, throat, mouth, nose and head. The unique and specific quality of the voice is determined by the shape of the actor’s throat and mouth spaces. Houseman explains that “[s]maller spaces reinforce higher sounds while larger spaces reinforce lower sounds, so if the areas in the throat and mouth are reduced there may well be an accompanying loss of lower resonance” (2002, p. 163). Ideally actors work towards keeping the body released, as “vibrations are murdered by tension” (Linklater, 1976, p. 41), while they explore a balance of sound between head/oral and chest resonance and a full and forward placement of sound for projecting the voice into the needs of the space. According to Houseman, “[f]ocusing the sound forward is very important in two ways. Firstly it moves the attention away from the throat, so less strain is likely. Secondly, it makes the sound more present and alive and committed” (2002, p. 168). Once resonance has been addressed the next link in the chain of the vocal process is speech.

Developing clearer, stronger speech

The final step in the vocal process is speech and the shaping of words by the articulators. This concerns the muscularity of the lips, tongue, jaw and the soft palate, also known as the active articulators. Rodenburg suggests that “[w]hatever the text the actor has to find the specific measure of the words he is using and relay them with clarity and accuracy in whatever space he is in, so that they can be heard without strain” (1997, p. 39). To develop this clarity, specific exercises are given to the actor to encourage crisper consonants and energised diction. Berry states that when executing exercises focussed on articulation, “rapidity is not important, it is the firmness of the muscular movement which is essential, and the vibration on the consonant, because the tone must come to where the words are formed” (1973, p. 140).

My understanding of the needs of Western Australian actors which grew through the research revealed that accent and dialect acquisition builds within the development of these four techniques of body, breath, resonance and articulation.

REVIEW OF ACCENT AND DIALECT PRACTICE

Much current accent and dialect study pivots on having an understanding of the phonetic alphabet. “Phonetics is the study and classification of these sounds, with the use of symbols” (Dyer & Strong, 2007b, p. 20). This approach is useful for some actors and is a structured and quasi-universalised system of symbols, which encapsulates the multiple ways of pronouncing vowel and consonant sounds. However, some actors find learning the complex linguistic assignments tedious and often forget the

sounds that go with the symbols. In addition to this phonetic approach, most accent training manuals contain CD audio resource recordings, such as those of Penny Dyer (2007), Gillian Lane-Plescia (2005), David Alan Stern, PhD (1983), and Paul Meier (2002) to name a few. These CDs offer a recording of a native speaker, a breakdown of the vowel and consonant changes, stress and rhythm use, and intonation. They are a compact and accessible resource for actors learning a new accent and dialect. Alternately, authors of *How To Do Accents*, Sharpe and Haydn Rowles use a new approach “intended to master the way to learn accents in general” (As cited in Barton & Dal Vera, 2011, p. 315). Their method “brings to the surface the underlying structure of accents, to give you the insights, tools and confidence to work with any accent” (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 9). They encourage a three-fold method: “See it, looking at an illustration, using your mind’s eye or looking in a mirror, Feel it, focus on physical processes and feelings, Hear it, to listen to a track on the accompanying CD, or listen to yourself” (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 13).

Sharpe and Haydn Rowles insist that, when learning an accent, “[i]ntuition is essential, but so is structure” (2007, p. 9). By learning the essential structure inherent in all accents, the actor is more likely to listen specifically and remain consistent. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles argue that understandings of the structure will keep actors on track so that, when it comes to performance and nerves kick in, the accent does not vary.

Weate supports the three-fold method by asserting that learning an accent,

takes time and a process of in-depth analysis/practice. This will help you to **understand** how the accent works, **hear** it in your ear and **feel** it in your mouth. Only then will you be able to adjust it to meet the demands of a character and a text. (2014, p. 1) (original emphasis)

Five main areas identified by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) that make up the architecture of an accent or “the principal points of change from one accent to another” (2007, p. 13) include the foundations, rhoticity, the bite, the shapes, and the groove. The first point of change (which I refer to as a shift) includes the foundations, namely “the Zone, Tone, Setting and Direction of sound”. The second shift concentrates on whether an accent is rhotic or non-rhotic. The third shift concerns the consonant sounds, which they call the “bite”. The fourth shift is directed to the vowels or the “shapes”. The fifth shift is the intonation or the “groove.” According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles, these shifts “define the principal points of change from one accent to another ... the patterns demonstrated will apply to any accent” (2007, p. 9).

One can appreciate Sharpe and Haydn Rowles’ (2007) desire to make learning accents fun for actors. They call intonation “the groove”, the vowels “the shapes” and so forth to appeal to the new generation of actors. However, the sheer volume of the book is a clue to appreciating that the process of learning the “structure inherent in all accents” (2007, p. 9) is complex (not unlike phonetics) involving a lot of detail and accuracy in order to be consistent.

Ginny Kopf (2003), in her turn, provides a step by step process on creating an accent for a role and believes that the expertise and skills required includes; an ability to mimic, an understanding of

phonetics, a passionate curiosity and that “[o]verall, learning dialects will take discipline and patience” (2003, p. 14). While Blumenfeld (2013) gives a breakdown of the elements for each accent in his manual, Kopf (2003) manages to approach it from an actor’s point of view, listing movies to watch for research and giving a sample work sheet on dialect acquisition for the actor to complete which lists cultural characteristics and character choices as well as the physiological elements of change.

Although the accent and dialect texts vary, the literature suggests that the main components or elements that work together to form an accent include architecture or vocal setting, point of resonance, phonetic changes, pitch and intonation, stress and rhythm, and body language (Blumenfeld, 2013; Dyer & Strong, 2007b; Kopf, 2003; Lane-Plescia, 2005; Meier, 2002). These are discussed in the next section.

Architecture or Vocal Setting

The architecture or vocal setting is the “[g]eneral positioning, placement, and use of the mouth muscles (lips, tongue) during speech” (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 3). The position of these active (lips, tongue, jaw, cheeks and soft palate) and passive (teeth and hard palate) articulators during speech is learnt automatically and unconsciously as an individual learns to speak his/her native language and determines the sound produced. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles describe this “[a]s a baby you dedicated hours to hearing the sounds around you, playing with the shape of your mouth, until the sounds you were making matched the sounds you were hearing and/or seeing” (2007, p. 114).

The importance of this “shaping of the mouth” is further reinforced by Stern who states that:

Much of my research, teaching and performing experience has taught me that the most important part of a dialect’s authentic essence comes from a characteristic shaping of the throat, nose, mouth, tongue and soft palate. The many available configurations, in turn, give many different resonances or ‘timbres’ to the overall sound. (1983, p. 4)

Uncovering an actor’s habitual setting or how he/she shapes the sounds in the mouth is the starting point from which to begin any project to shift or accumulate sound. Active and Passive Articulators are indicated in the diagram of the mouth taken from Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) (Figure 1).

Point of Resonance

According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles, “[e]ach accent has a resonant focal point, or placement, in the mouth” (2007, p. 35) and this point of resonance is “how the voice feels in the mouth and where you feel it is focused” (2007, p. 35). Sharpe and Haydn Rowles map out the mouth into seven zones, ranging from the very front of the mouth, down to the throat and then back up right inside the nose. This mapping of the mouth is useful as it gives the actor an image of the specific point of resonance for a particular accent. Below is a diagram that outlines the seven zones that map the mouth (Figure 2).

Phonetic Changes

The phonetic changes concern the specific sounds of vowels and consonants. “Every accent has its own distinct vowel shapes. Some accents have only 5 vowel shapes, some 12, while others have as many as 19” (2007, p. 35). Specific vowel shapes are “conditioned by the positioning of the mouth muscles, which differs-however slightly-from accent to accent” (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 3). Blumenfeld (2013) and Rodenberg (1992) provide versions of the phonetic alphabet to outline the vowel sounds for American

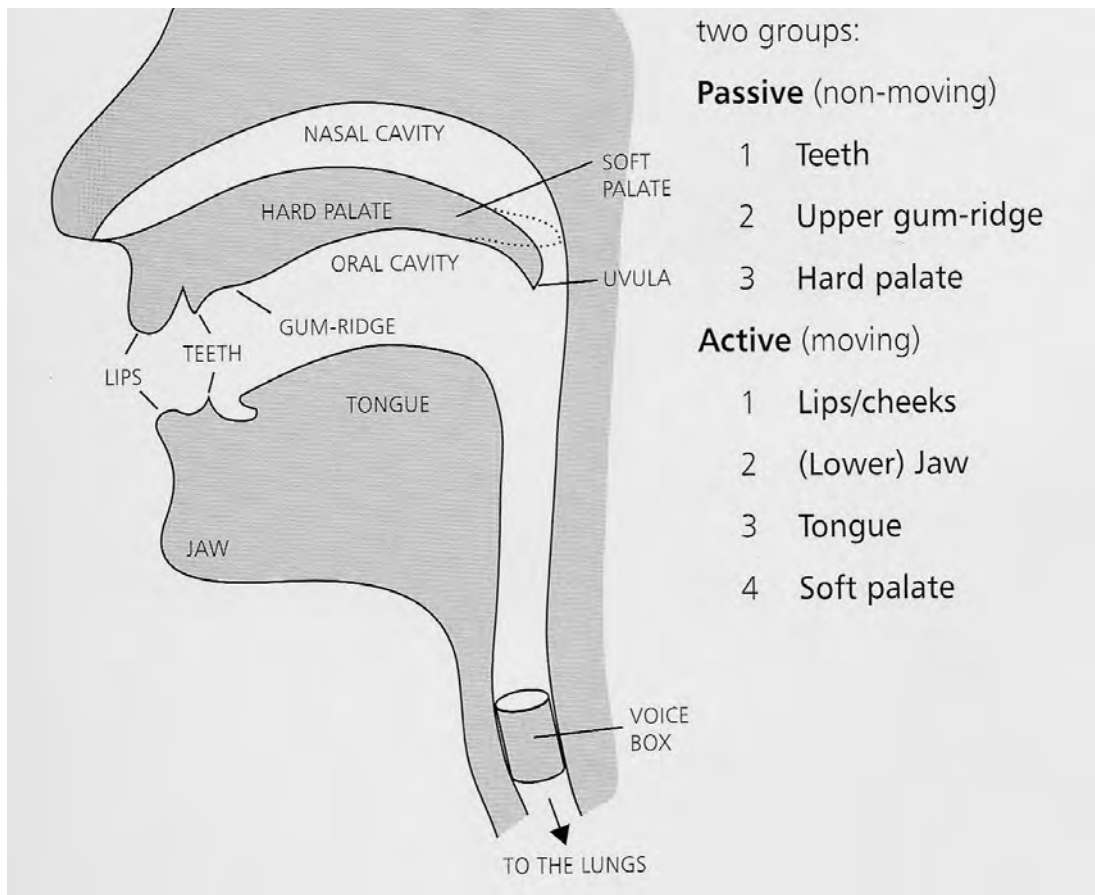


Figure 1. Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007), *The Articulators*.

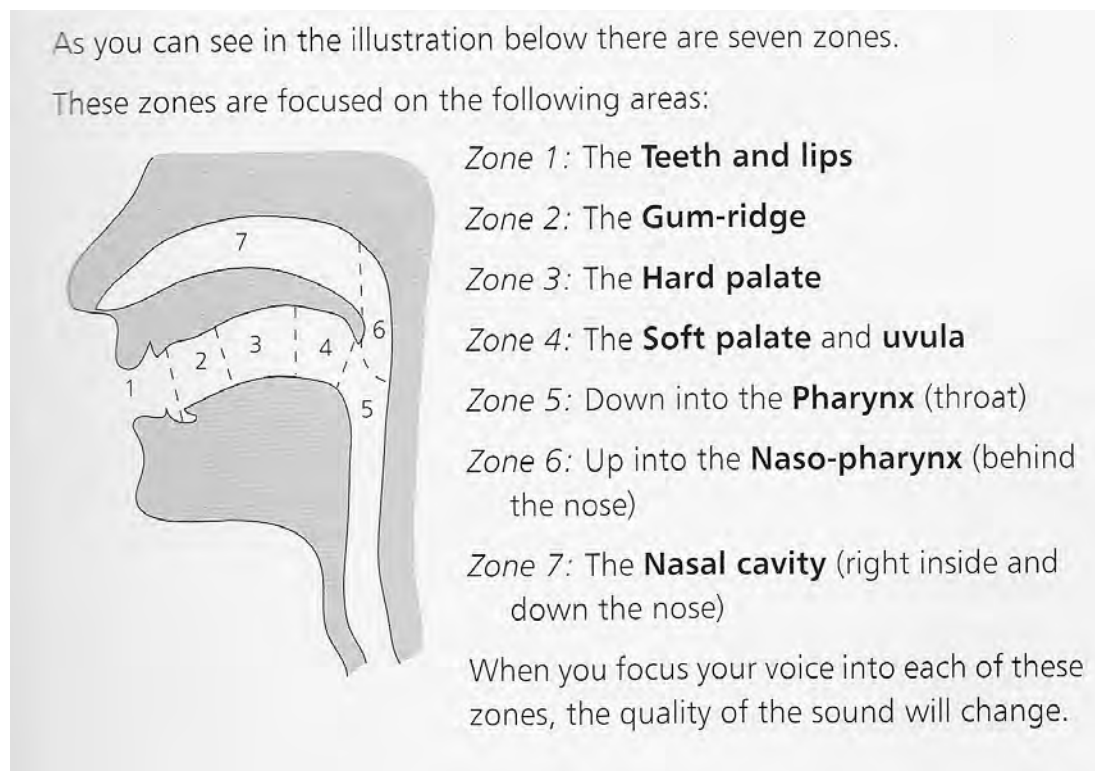


Figure 2. Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007), *The Zones*.

1	KIT	7	NURSE	13	CLOTH	19	PRICE
2	DRESS	8	TRAP	14	THOUGHT	20	CHOICE
3	STRUT	9	BATH	15	NORTH	21	MOUTH
4	FOOT	10	PALM	16	FORCE	22	NEAR
5	GOOSE	11	START	17	FACE	23	SQUARE
6	FLEECE	12	LOT	18	GOAT	24	CURE

Figure 3. Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007). The Kit List.

The Major Players

So here they are, introducing those five make-or-break sounds...

R – tapping, bending, curling or bunching?

L – light, dark, or not at all?

H – to drop or not to drop?

NG – are you running, runnin’ runn’n or runningk for the bus?

TH – are you with it, wivvit, widdit or wizzit?

Get these wrong and you risk your whole accent going down the pan!

Figure 4. Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007). The Major Players.

and RP. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) use a “KIT LIST” (Figure 3) which was devised by the phonetician J C Wells. This list of words helps the actor to know how they compare their own vowels with the new accents. Wells decided that isolating the sounds using individual words made it is easier for the brain to detect the sounds. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) identify the “Major Players” (Figure 4) or key consonant shifts that need to be substituted. These include the consonants R, L, H, TH and NG in a new accent.

Intonation

The intonation is the tune or melody of a specific dialect, which like music is “determined by pitch and intonation patterns” (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 3). Intonation is further defined as “[t]he specific combination of rhythm and melody across a phrase of speech” (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 114). The intonation is one of the things an actor consciously attends to when listening to a resource recording. For example, does the melody go up at the end of the phrase or does it drop down.

When listening to a speaker, there is an underlying rhythm and melody which provides the attitude

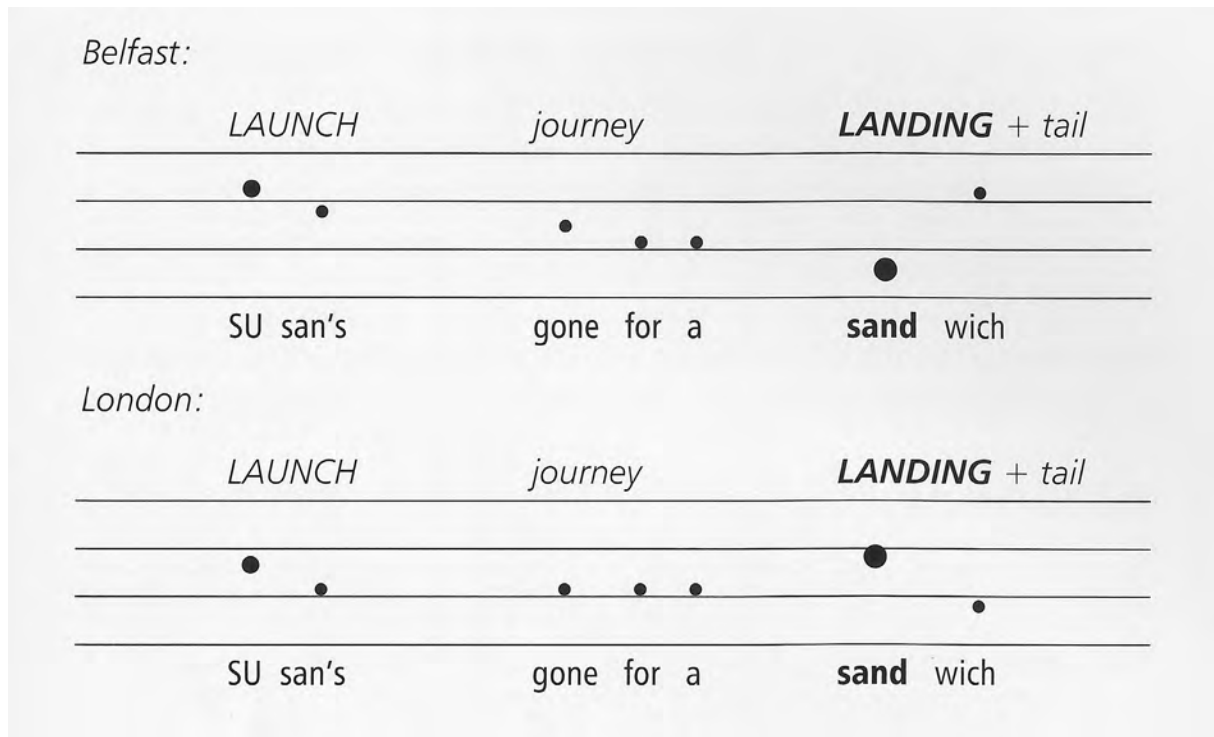


Figure 5: Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007), Sample of Belfast and London musical score for melodic patterns.

of the accent (Figure 5). A pattern can be labelled as a High Rise Terminal (HRT) with an intonation that rises at the end of phrases like some Australian accents where every statement sounds like a question. Other examples could involve a flatness of pitch as in the case of Midwest American or large pitch variation like RP and Italian. Accents operate within different pitch ranges and either having a major or a minor quality in the musical sense. I will discuss intonation in more detail later in *Awakening the Actors' Listening*.

Stress and Rhythm

Another element that needs to be examined is rhythm and stress patterns in the dialect the actor is exploring. When discussing stress timing, Sharpe and Haydn Rowles observe:

English is a stress-timed language. The stress determines the length of the syllable. Syllable timing, on the other hand is quite different. Although a syllable may be emphasized using a change in loudness or pitch, the syllable lengths will not change. Each syllable is the same length regardless of emphasis or stress. (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 156)

On the other hand, Indonesian is a syllable timed language because they give weight to every syllable. English speakers will place emphasis on certain words as in *da dum da dum* whereas Indonesian speech can be described as more continuous, as in *rat ta ta tat*. To do any accent well the "ear needs to be develop[ed] to hear for rhythm and melody and how to connect this to thoughts in different patterns" (2007, p. 160). These rhythms can often be very different from the actor's own speech

rhythms and landing points in speech can vary greatly from one accent to another. For example in the North of England the word ‘conjunction’ may be stressed with the emphasis at the start of the word ‘CONjunction,’ whereas in the South of England the emphasis would be on the second syllable in the middle of the word ‘conJUNction.’

Embodiment or Body Language

According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles:

The body has an instinct for rhythm and tune that your mind may struggle to interpret. The voice likes to take its lead from the actions of the body. If you want to speak in a new groove, move your body or even just your arm in that groove and the voice will follow. (2007, p. 170)

This theory of the voice taking its lead from the “actions of the body” covers how a dialect is distributed through the whole body and not just concentrated within the speech muscles in the mouth. Movement and communication of the dialect are as crucial as the sound itself. Actors’ abilities to move their bodies differently, to change their physicality, can help with the dynamics of their speech. Having a physical awareness of the actions of the body during speech can influence the accent pattern or the dynamics of the dialect the actor is trying to assimilate. According to Foglia and Wilson, “no fracture [operates] between cognition, the agent’s body, and real-life contexts ... the body intrinsically constrains, regulates and shapes the nature of mental activity” (2013, p. 319). Therefore embodiment of the accent contributes to the various aspects of mental activity and must be taken into account as part of the holistic awakening in accent assimilation.

These elements or principal points of change form the structure of all accents and are therefore critical for the aspiring actor to understand and practise rather than simply relying on being intuitive. The role of the dialect coach is to ensure that actors comprehend all of the above elements without taking shortcuts of any sort. This process is time-consuming, however the resulting accent will be more consistent and reliable during a performance if attention is paid to that accent’s structure and specific characteristics. During the last decade, accent training has progressed from a breakdown or list of the elements of change to techniques that explore embodiment and a more holistic approach (Kopf, 2003; Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2012).

THE AUTHENTICITY TRAP

When teaching accents and dialects for the stage, it is useful to note that a completely authentic sound may not be the aim of the exercise. There are some accents and dialects that are very difficult to understand, for example, in an English context, Liverpool or Scouse or Glaswegian. If the actor was to replicate the exact accent of the character being portrayed, the audience may not understand what is being said. The overall objective is to tell the story to a listening audience and, if the accent and dialect goes against this objective, impeding spectators’ comprehension, then accent and dialect usage are not doing their job. The purpose of accent and dialect within a play is to give identification, “so we know where the person is from and what socio economic class an individual belongs” (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 1). The aim is to get a realistic sense of an accent but without making it unintelligible.

One example of this is a recent student production at WAAPA of *The Crucible* (A. Miller, 1953) where some of the accents diverted the attention away from the story. During rehearsals, the director decided that the actors should use a variety of different accents. This was a perfectly reasonable idea on the surface of things as the play was set during the early years of American colonisation when the new migrants on the East Coast of America were likely to have been a mixture of Scottish, West Country, Irish, along with many others. The actors chose their characters' accents depending on which part of the UK they decided that their characters had come from.

While watching the production, I found it difficult to adjust my ear while listening from one accent to another. I was working so hard to make sense of the different sounds and what was being said that it diverted attention away from the story itself. At one point, one of the actors said a line that included the word 'house'. The word came out as 'hoose' (as in moose), making my brain stop and question this pronunciation instead of concentrating on the rest of the scene, which marked a vital turning point in the play. In this instance, I felt that the actors were playing the accents, not the role, and this emphasis became an impediment to the communicative process. The degree of accent can involve a fine balance and it is one that needs to be considered early on in the rehearsal process. Blumenfeld states that "[a]s an actor, you should make sure that any accent you do is clearly understood, however thick the original may be in real life" (2007, p. 153). Similarly, Kopf believes that, "[t]he audience should focus on the action of the play and its characters, not on your interesting dialect!" (2003, p. 13).

On a more positive note, in the same production, the actors who had chosen subtler or less noticeable shifts delivered the most convincing and believable performances. One actor adopted a soft Irish lilt to his voice and was consistent with the intonation, while another, had acquired a subtle west county accent with just a slight rhotic [r] sound, just enough to take her away from the Australian non rhotic sounds. Sometimes all that is needed is a subtle shift of vowel or consonant sounds, or intonation as these two cases demonstrated. Any accent on stage needs to be clearly understood and the aim of the actor is to give a realistic sense of the accent without making it unintelligible or distracting from the story or play itself.

DIALECT TRAINING IN A DRAMA SCHOOL SETTING

In Australia and in the United Kingdom, accent training for actors comes under the wider umbrella of voice. The acting course at WAAPA is a full time, three-year training program based on a British conservatoire model. The three years cover an intensive program dedicated to the study of acting, movement and voice. The first year lays the foundations in basic acting, movement and vocal skills. The second and third years are made up of performances to the public, which constitutes the training alongside classwork. In third year there is a continuation of foundation classes as well as performances to the public and industry professionals. Accent and dialect training comes under the banner of voice work and happens throughout all three years (ECU, 2015).

In the second semester of first year of the actor-training course at WAAPA, students are taught a simplified version of the phonetic alphabet. In the second year, they have weekly accent and dialect classes on a broad range of accents. The current resource pack used by students at WAAPA is the

Andrew Jack Accent and Dialect Kit (2013, p. 27). Jack's kit (copyrighted to WAAPA) contains a CD of 22 accents and dialects and phonetic notation for each of the sample sentences. For both acting and music theatre students, the accent and dialect work culminates in a presentation for staff and students toward the end of the second semester of the second year. Although a lot of classes are similar for both acting and musical theatre students, the difference is that there is more focus on singing, dancing and acting for the musical theatre students and more emphasis on character study for the actors.

By third year, the students are involved in productions and a voice and dialect coach is assigned to work with the students alongside a director. Typically this might involve a one or two-hour session with the entire cast early on in the rehearsal process to introduce the accent/s for the specific production. Alternatively, the visiting director might wish to run concurrent coaching alongside rehearsals individually or in small groups, while the actors are not needed in the rehearsal room. The expectation in terms of accents and dialects is that when a graduate leaves and finds employment within the industry they have an understanding of the key elements that make up accent variation and have gained enough knowledge in order to research for themselves their characters' accents before rehearsals on a production begin.

DIALECT TRAINING IN A PROFESSIONAL SETTING

When working with professional actors, there is a certain amount of information that a dialect coach will assume the actors know, such as having an understanding of technical speech terminology and the basic symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Different dialect coaches may use different methods. However the basic understanding of speech terminology is assumed. For example, the difference between a vowel and a consonant, and the different types of consonants, i.e. 'unvoiced and voiced consonants'. To enlarge on the above examples, sounds without vibration, like the first consonant in the word 'thin' /θɪn/ involves only breath (voiceless) and sounds with vibration, like the first consonant in the word 'this' /ðɪs/ involves the striking of the vocal folds to produce vibration (voiced). Raphael observes that ideally an actor is "already familiar with the general characteristics of and the specific sounds associated with a particular dialect" (1984, p. 44). Although written twenty years ago, Raphael's article paints an accurate description of working as a dialect coach on professional productions. The dialect coach will also assume that the actor has a basic knowledge of anatomy, and can locate their alveolar ridge, soft palate and hard palate.

A more contemporary context is provided by an actor friend of mine, who performed in a play in the West End of London. The actor said that as part of the rehearsal process, she spent half an hour with a dialect coach who guided her "through the individual phonetic sounds for the new accent, then watched some sample speakers on YouTube." (Personal Communication, 10 July, 2013) This initial meeting with the accent and dialect coach took place at the start of rehearsals and any further research would be conducted independently. A similar process is applied here in Australia. A dialect coach in the professional world has to work with many accents at one time sometimes within one production. Time becomes a limitation, so it is up to the actor to practice and listen to the recordings at home.

Following the initial meeting with the actor, it is common for the dialect coach to attend a rehearsal or dress rehearsal to see how the actor is progressing with the dialect. In a rehearsal room, a skilled accent and dialect coach identifies whether an actor has successfully made a shift simply by listening and observing the actor. After the rehearsal, feedback will be given to the actors during notes session with the director.

WHY DO VOICE TRAINING?

Accent training forms a significant part of voice work, which in turn, constitutes an important part of an actor's training. Rodenburg asserts "[t]o rehearse a part all day and perform on stage each evening is, vocally, an athletic feat" (1997, p. intro). Vocal technique helps the actor face the challenging physical demands of generating a performance night after night. According to current voice and speech research, "Women's vocal folds (sometimes called vocal cords) perform more than one million oscillatory cycles a day. Men's accomplish around half a million in the course of a day" (Karpf, 2006, p.18). An actor performing a two hour play would perhaps use their vocal folds more than the average estimate, making voice training not only an essential part of an actor's training but a demanding part of the vocation overall.

The vocal demands of different theatre spaces, including indoor and outdoor venues, can take their toll on the actor. Vocal fatigue and loss of voice are common problems; consequently, learning how to prevent and overcome such debilities is another aspect of voice work. Vocal technique is acquired so that an actor can find his or her vocal potential in a safe and healthy way and, subsequently, assist them as he/she prepares to enter the acting industry.

DEFINING SHIFT

Barton and Dal Vera describe how accents can be an exciting way to increase the actor's vocal repertoire and assists the actor in "finding new sounds from unexplored places" (2011, p. 306). These unexplored places are what voice teachers strive to instil in the actor. The different resonating spaces in the nose, mouth, head, chest, and throat can all lead to greater freedom once an actor makes a shift to a different point of resonance or placement. The term 'shift' is used to describe when an actor makes the 'sound shift' from their usual sound to the new sound of the accent and dialect. For example, an actor might go from saying the word 'bath' /bɑ:θ/ (with a long ah vowel) to /bæθ/ (with a short a vowel). This is what is known as a sound shift. Marking a script with each word that has this sound can help the actor when going from one accent to another and can involve a consonant or a vowel shift. The expression 'they had a successful shift' is often heard in rehearsal when an actor has successfully embodied an accent for character.

A mind shift (in consciousness) and/or a shift in the body (a physical shift) can accompany these sound shifts. In May 2012, the Centre for Voice in Performance at The Royal Conservatoire in Scotland in collaboration with The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, hosted a conference titled *Shifting Landscapes* (2012). The title of this conference sparked my imagination and influenced the choice of title. For the purposes of this research, I am interested in the full range of shifts an actor makes in the course of taking on a character for performance.

Habitual Setting of the Articulators

As noted previously, in growing up and learning to speak, we inhabit a specific setting of the jaw muscle and lip, cheek and tongue formations to make up the sounds that are specific to us. We may not think we have an accent but we do. Our accent and dialect is created by many factors including our environment, our family, our class and our friends. When discussing accents, Linklater asserts “[m]any accents owe their definitive regionality to a configuration of mouth muscles which trap the voice in one particular place ... All these are habits of mind and muscle developed under the limited conditioning of one environment” (1976, p. 145).

Blumenfeld also believes that:

[y]ou unconsciously learn your accent from the people you go to school with and who surround you, even more than you do from your parents. If your parents speak with a foreign accent ... you will nevertheless speak with the native accent that you hear constantly, at least if you have been born in a place, or arrived there when you were not yet twelve. (2013, p. 3)

It is critical for actors to identify and be aware of their habits relating to accent and dialect, and of their idiolect. This awareness enables actors to be flexible and porous and deliver a range of different voice choices. By engaging with accent and dialect training, the actor becomes aware of the elements that make up his/her idiolect and realises there are many ways of being with their voice and this awareness is like an awakening for the actor. The shift from slumbering to a new accent provides an awakening in areas that have previously lain dormant or have been asleep. According to Linklater, voice work can “recondition your habitual way of communicating” (1976, p. intro) and “develop the ability to perceive habits and register new experiences” (1976, p. 19). As discussed earlier, by identifying where the actor’s particular habits of the mouth muscles are, the voice teacher has the capacity to guide the student in making a shift in sound because tension can be released and flexibility found. By reconditioning habitual ways of communicating, the possibility of a newfound freedom and awakening may occur. There is a multiplicity of different ways of being with our voices and we have access to many different ways of speaking. In my awakenings chapters, I discuss how to make actors aware of or overcome their habits.

SUMMARY

This background chapter has outlined a brief history of voice in theatre to give a context for accent and dialect training. It has defined the difference between accent and dialect, discussed the origins of AusE and RP, reviewed the literature and discussed a review of practice. Literature related to the main elements of voice training and accent and dialect training have been identified. This chapter has also examined dialect training in a drama school setting as well as in a professional setting, and concludes with an introduction to the concept of habits and social conditioning that form our accents. Now that the background to the research has been established, the next chapter, Chapter 2, will discuss the methodology used for this research.

Methodology



CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH

In order to address the expertise required when teaching an accent and dialect, I have adopted a practice-led research methodology. Carole Gray's definition of practice-led research is the most comprehensive and useful definition for my particular research. Gray observes that practice-led research is:

research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of the practice and practitioners: and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to ... practitioners. (1996, p. 3)

The seeds of this inquiry emerged because, as a freelance voice and text practitioner, I wanted to deepen my knowledge and understanding of accent and dialect training for actors in an Australian context and to further my practice and the general pedagogy of accent and dialect training. As a practitioner, I was drawn to finding a technique or a combination of techniques that would outline the key elements needed for accent and dialect acquisition which link the study's structure closely to Gray's (1998) outline on practice-led research. From my own experience of teaching, I was aware that students absorb knowledge in a number of ways, some relying on listening and on aural intuition while others preferred to be guided by the technical applications of phonetics or following a pre-determined structure or technique.

Having migrated to Perth from London, I also questioned the fundamentals that make up an Australian accent. Crucially, the reason for choosing a practice-led research methodology became about finding the right channel initiated through practice to answer challenges that I faced as an immigrant as well as practitioner. I wanted to "make inquiry through practice in a way which acknowledges and encourages the richness and complexity of those practices" (Gray, 1996, p. 13). The complexity lay in the meeting of research and practice so that "with regard to epistemological issues the practitioner is the researcher; from this informed perspective, they identify researchable problems raised in practice, and respond through practice" (Gray, 1996, p. 13).

My research is couched in a philosophical exposition and pedagogical development of the nature of voice. I sought to find out what processes actors need to pursue in order to access their 'voice' and to determine what I, as teacher and coach, needed to do to cater for such processes. To expand my practice, I needed to be in the studio or on the stage, actually engaged in the practice of teaching voice. In other words, the research involved guiding a class or professional actors through a set of exercises and, then, reflecting on the actions and results, which led to a refinement of methods and strategies for trialling in subsequent classes or one-to-one encounters. This process was emergent and, in time, my practice became more structured and formalised as my reflections fed into different ways of approaching instruction on the vocal activities that were happening around and to me. Constant questioning "formed by the needs of the practice and ... through the practice" (Gray,

1996, p. 3) also formed an integral part of my practice-led research as a voice practitioner. Each performance and each actor I encountered raised a new set of questions and challenges. When discussing practice-led research strategies, Haseman states that, practice-led “research strategies re-interpret what is meant by an ‘original contribution to knowledge’” (2006, p. 3). My research does “contribute to the intellectual or conceptual architecture of a discipline”, however it is more concerned with the “improvement of practice and new epistemologies of practice distilled from the insider’s understandings of action in context” (Haseman, 2006, p. 3).

Practice-led research has specific relevance to my investigation as my approach was obtained through the action of being in the rehearsal room or the classroom. I wanted to “not only place practice within the research process, but to lead research through practice” (Haseman, 2006, p. 3). Haseman puts it succinctly when he says that “Practice-led research is intrinsically experiential and comes to the fore when the researcher creates new artistic forms for performance” (2006, p. 3). It was necessary for me to be engaged in the practice to undertake my research into the teaching (or acquisition) of accents and dialects for student actors.

As an actor and theatre practitioner, my methods of creative practice were based on pre-existing knowledge built up through many years spent as a performer and teacher through embodied and tacit knowledge sets. As Gourlay makes clear, “[t]acit knowledge is a non-linguistic non-numerical form of knowledge that is highly personal and context specific and deeply rooted in individual experiences, ideas, values and emotions” (2002, p. 2). This ‘highly personal’ knowledge creation is often something that can be taken for granted. Gourlay argues that tacit knowledge can be created by direct experience and “acquired through apprenticeships, or learning by doing, but does not require the use of language” (2002, p. 2).

The learning and doing that Gourlay mentions takes place when I am in the rehearsal room analysing an actor, I listen, diagnose, and then suggest exercises to assist the actor. Gourlay acknowledges that “seeing involves a part-whole relationship whereby parts are integrated into the whole that is perceived. This applies to all forms of perception, not just vision” (2002, p. 8). In the case of accent acquisition the auditory perception is just as important as the visual.

Embodied tacit knowledge provides a useful conceptual tool for thinking about ‘knowledge’ and ‘knowing’ in relation to my practice. To give an example, my knowledge is experienced through the research in the following way: if an actor is working on RP and although they are making the sound shifts correctly, I can hear that there is not enough breath engaged in speech, I suggest exercises to stimulate the support muscles to encourage greater reflexes so that the actor finds the required breath quality, when making the shift from AusE to RP.

REFLECTION

MERCER’S ‘FLYING AND PERCHING’

Reflection formed a pivotal aspect of my methodology. In her chapter on the physics of practice-led methodology, researcher Leah Mercer draws on the principles of psychology and “compares consciousness to the flight of a bird: a journey alternating between flights and perchings. The

'perchings' represent resting places occupied by sense impressions, and the 'flights' are thoughts which form relations between the impressions" (2012, p. 125). Mercer uses this analogy of birds flying to describe the making of her play where "the co-writing, devising, rehearsing, and directing were the 'flights'. While the reflections on the creative work ... which included the official production of 'Confirmation Seminar, Framing Document, Final Seminar and Exegesis ... were the 'perchings'" (2012, p. 126). This pattern of flights and perchings seemed particularly apt for my research as the planning and piecing together of the workshops for the production and the rehearsal processes moved at high speed like a bird in flight. During rehearsal processes, time is precious and accent training is only a small component of the overall picture when the performance date is imminent. Reflection occurred though it was constrained by the immediacy of problem-solving situations. The data analysis and writing up seemed to take place in a slowed-down time as I perched and pondered and reflected on what had taken place. In other words, once the production had finished, time became available to begin the process of unpacking my processes. "Practice-led research is simultaneously generative and reflective" (Gray, 1996, p. 10), the two strands inform each other, which meant that I was generating work and reflecting on it in an alternating cycle.

During the process of the research, I struggled with "the apparent duality of the role - subjectivity versus objectivity, internal versus external, doing versus thinking and writing, intuition versus logic" (Gray, 1996, p. 7). Similarly, I became so lost within the 'doing' at times that I was unable to see the bigger thought picture and what the notion of voice meant to me. I became frustrated as I searched for a philosophical exposition in which to couch my research. Needless to say, along with frustration came pleasure. Reading the work of voice practitioners was always a delight, and interviewing experts in the field was a particular highlight of the journey.

My experience thus corresponds to an important concept developed by Donald Schon (1981) and Gray and Pirie's observation that practice-led research involves reflection 'in' and 'on' action.

Within this field the researcher reflects-in-action and reflects-on-action and is adaptive. ... Gray and Pirie identify arts based methodologies as pluralistic, holistic, hybrid, anarchical and that creative processes are governed by inclusive, non-linear complex systems. (as cited in Adams, 2008, p. 17)

The angles of reflecting 'in' and 'on' action provided me with a way of thinking pluralistically about my work with students. While teaching, elements of change were outlined and discussed with the students who then took turns to speak their texts in order to investigate shifts to new accents, while I listened carefully, took notes and documented what I heard, simultaneously giving feedback. These methods acted as reflection 'in' action as opposed to the dress rehearsal when I filmed the students, watched the video and gave notes. In a further reflective distancing, I examined the footage after the rehearsal and was able to see if my notes corresponded to what was seen in the documentation. My teaching methods were refined as a result of the constant analysis and reflection.

Feedback

I was aware that some students were happy to take on the feedback or suggestions arising from my reflection 'in' action. However responses varied. In one example, when I mentioned to an actor that the vowel shift was not quite there, he responded defensively and was not open to receiving feedback. The note was to be aware of the final vowel sound in the word 'letter.' Instead of saying

letter [ə] for RP he was using the AusE [ʌ] letta. To overcome his defensiveness I asked the actor to feel where the vowel sound was created in the mouth, and what the position of the tongue was. In this case the RP, sound [ə] is more central than the back position of the tongue in the AusE [ʌ] sound. By bringing the actor's attention to the physical shift of the tongue the actor, he was able to feel the shift and his defensiveness dissipated.

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

I consciously adapt to the play I am working on or adapted my approach to the needs of the individual student in any given context. To give an example, when I was working with young actors on a production of *Annie-The Musical* (1977), the actors playing the part of the orphans had no previous training on accents and dialects and were unfamiliar with the phonetic alphabet. I adapted by guiding the actors through sentences that contained the essential sounds required for the General American accent without the use of phonetic symbols. I asked the young actors to repeat sentences that included the phonetic sound, for example; for the symbol [i:] which featured in the practice sentence "please feed the bees". I did not go into the rehearsal room with an assumed understanding of their knowledge. On another occasion while working on a professional production, I was faced with the challenge of finding more chest resonance for an actor who favoured nasal colouring, where all the sound was concentrated in the nasal passage. I suggested that she try speaking in a Yorkshire accent to lift the soft palate, sensing a yawn, to find more space in the oral cavity.

Much of my work is concerned with coaching actors individually and this can vary from production to production. I may work with an actor on improving his/her audibility in the performance space taking account of its acoustic qualities. If the play was to be performed in a very large space such as the Studio Underground at the Western Australian State Theatre Centre, then I would listen to the actors in the space and give individual feedback. The constantly changing nature of voice work and my need and ability to adapt to those altered circumstances maintain my interest and drive my professional development.

REFLEXIVITY

I locate myself within the research with the use of a first-person singular voice. In the words of Gray and Pirie, "[r]eflexivity is acknowledged and interaction of the researcher with research material is recognised" (Cited in Adams, 2008, p. 17). Reflexivity was acknowledged in that I was aware and sensitive to the complexities of human interaction, in my relationship to sections of the research. It is important to remember that I am observing Australian speech in contrast to my own. I have a subjective position and acknowledge that there is bias in my research.

Ellis and Bochner suggest that the distinction between "the personal and the cultural" (Cole & Knowles, 2007, p. 5) are often blurred in artistic research. Patti Lather raises the question: "How do we explore our own reasons for doing the research without putting ourselves back at the centre?" (Cole & Knowles, 2007, p. 6). From my perspective, voice is very personal and I instinctively move towards being "back at the centre" of my research because "the reflexive researcher hopes to claim

the power of the ‘inside’ through introspection” (Cole & Knowles, 2007, p. 5). My desire to do well and to find answers to my questions may have caused some disruption and/or interference in the research.

FENTON’S DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING

After reading David Fenton’s (2012) research methods’ chapter on Double-loop learning methods, I became aware that his processes coincided with mine.

Fenton adapted Argyris and Schon’s (1974) Double-loop learning model (Figure 6) which draws on theories of action research defined as “a systematic way of assessing effective practice” (As cited in Fenton, 2012, p. 36). Fenton’s adapted model (Figure 6) was modified for his creative practice “by changing its core objectives to ‘playfulness and reflection’ so that it better accommodated the complexities and vagaries of contemporary performance making” (Fenton, 2012, p. 36). Figure 6: is my adapted chart outlining the Double-loop learning approach and a step-by- step breakdown of the process of accent acquisition. In the teaching process, each actor is taken through the model step-by-step as follows:

- an exploration into the individual idiolect of the actor (the existing behavioural pattern);
- an exploration into the shifts or elements of change needed for the new accent (the new behavioural pattern); and finally,
- a reflection in action while the actor speaks text in order to investigate the shift to a new accent.

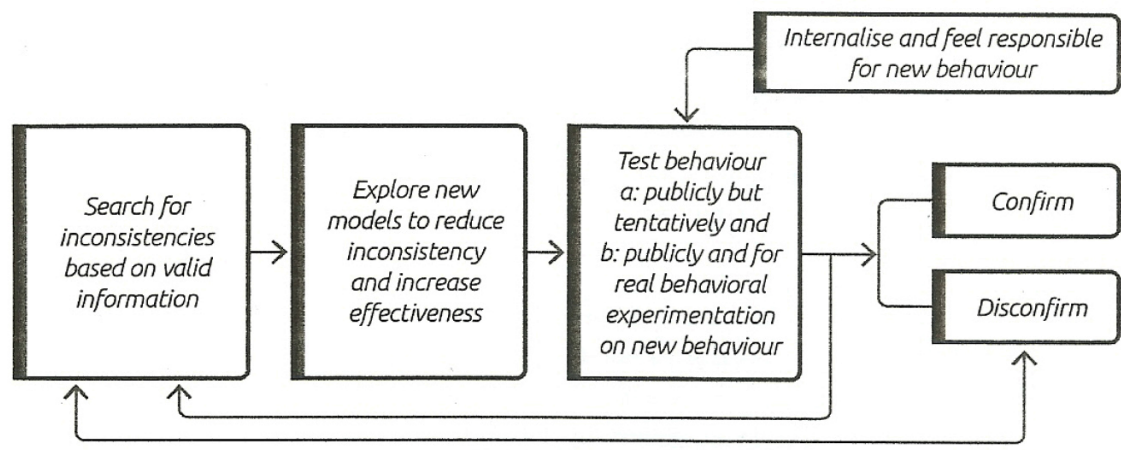
A process of trial and error with individual feedback given to the actor assists in meeting the individual’s needs by exploring different creative choices. My model, although similar to Fenton’s, has an extra stage to outline the process of accent and dialect acquisition, which I needed to include before introducing the new accent and dialect with students.

A HYBRID OF RESOURCES

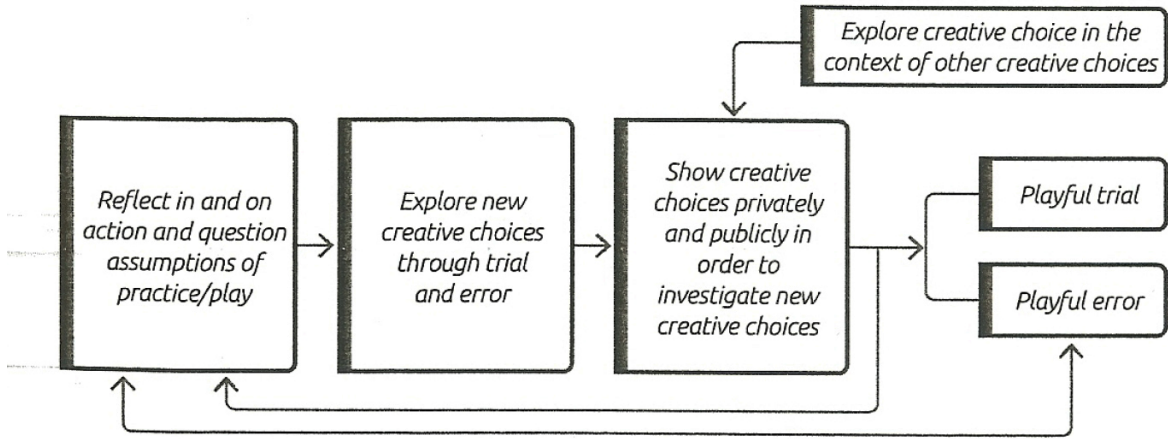
My teaching practice consists of resourcing ‘hybrid’ techniques, as I use not just one but various techniques, including ideas from Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, (2007, 2012), Dyer (2007), Moody (2008), Blumenfeld (2002, 2013) and Shapiro (2000) to respond to individual students or actors’ needs.

Teaching techniques utilised include:

- A kinaesthetic/auditory/visual approach by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007). A chart was used to build a profile of the fundamentals that make up an actor’s accent and uncover the fundamentals of the new accent;
- An auditory approach with recordings from the internet “where you listen to people who naturally speak in the accent” (Barton & Dal Vera, 2011, p. 312) and an instructional CD by Dyer (Dyer & Strong, 2007b) on the specific vowel sounds of the new accent so the actors could listen and repeat the phonetic changes.
- Sharpe and Haydn Rowles’ approach (2007) uncovering the foundations in the You/New chart and for the RP intonation and embodiment to find the physical dynamic of the new accent found in the chapter on Awakening the Actors’ Embodiment;



Testing established and new behavioural patterns with double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 135).



The adapted double-loop learning model for creative practice (Fenton, 2007).

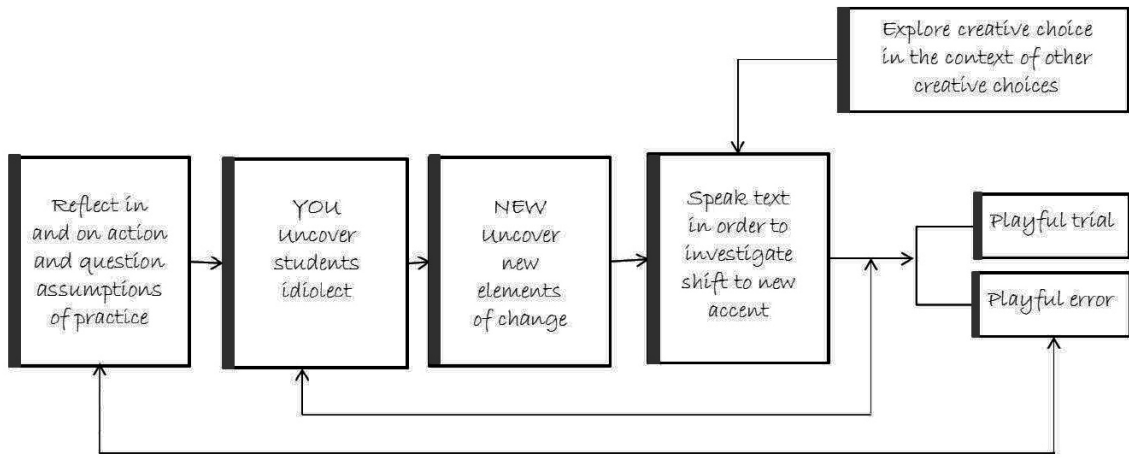


Figure 6. Double-loop learning model for accent training . Adapted from *Live Research*. Mercer, Robson and Fenton. (2012) Double-loop learning model.

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- Moody's (2008) visual/auditory approach when identifying the vowel sound shifts and rhythm from AusE to RP;
 - Dyer (2007b) for the consonants and practice sentences, Blumenfeld (2013) for the placement and Shapiro (2000) for the phonetic changes for the acquisition of General American. I used Barton and Dal Vera (2011) and Rodenburg (1997) for an overall approach and to develop the practical needs of the students.

It is worth noting that I had considered using only the Sharpe and Haydn Rowles' (2007) technique, however when working on *Dear Charlotte*, (2003) the limitation of time meant we would not have been able to go through the entire KIT LIST of words for each individual vowel sound. I chose Dyer (2007b) for the individual phonetic sound shifts as the sentences contained key sounds and the actors could repeat the sentence to find the right sounds in the scarce time available.

FAILING IN ORDER TO SUCCEED

An inherent element of accent and dialect training is to continually try and continually fail in order to find the different muscle configurations, zones, intonations and elements that make up an accent. This process is succinctly put by O'Gorman and Werry who observe that:

Performance practice teaches us how to live with and as failures, finding possibility in predicament and embracing the vulnerability of moments of failure that may also be moments of profound discovery in which we remain open to what transpires, rather than measure it against our intentions. (2012, p. 4)

Actors regularly experience these moments of vulnerability both on stage and in rehearsal. In these predicaments, the actor finds him/herself embracing the unaccustomed feelings, which can lead to profound discovery in the precise configuration of the different elements. Accent and dialect exploration and investigation "generates a reflexive understanding of the inherently agonistic space of learning and change" (O'Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 4). This agonistic space of learning and change can produce emotions such as frustration, despair, as "feelings run high and stumbling and flailing are a productive inevitability. Performance attunes us to this" (O'Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 4). The approach that I used in the classroom and rehearsal room emphasised that failure is part of the accent acquisition process and the actor was encouraged to fail. I invited the actor to be bold and set up a safe environment where the actor was given permission to step out of his/her comfort zone to experiment and play.

As a starting point, the actor was invited to immerse him/herself into the transformation. In the words of Barton and Dal Vera, I encouraged the actor to "(a)im to be the most Spanish Spaniard or Germanic German who ever drew breath" (2011, p. 311). This approach which advocates to "start big as you can find the subtleties later on" (Barton & Dal Vera, 2011, p. 311) removed any inhibitions the actor may have had. My approach encouraged embracing the "stumbling and flailing" (O'Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 4) by trying out new sounds that were unfamiliar, unrecognizable, and at times uncomfortable. This meant that the actor was moving away from a familiar habitual setting of the active articulators and entering into the "agonistic space of learning and change" (2012, p. 4) that O'Gorman and Werry mention.

MULTI-METHODS

“So a characteristic of ‘artistic’ methodology is a pluralist approach and use of a multi-method technique, tailored to the individual project” (Gray, 1996, p. 15). This pluralistic approach was necessary for my research because I wanted to capture data, analyse it and write about my individual project. I acknowledge that a practice-led research strategy borrows methods taken from the “qualitative research tradition” (Haseman, 2006, p. 8).

The multi-methods of my research included:

- Classroom observation and data collection;
- Coaching on professional productions;
- Teaching practice;
- Practical Workshops;
- Journal Writing;

These were informed by the following methods:

- Participation in professional development;
- Student questionnaires;
- Interviews and personal communication with expert voice coaches;

Classroom Observation and Data Collection

Classroom observation of first year acting and musical theatre students took place at WAAPA. Observations, documented in note-form, video and images, are data that feed into critical reflection (‘on’ the action). “(O)bservation is an important means by which we come to understand our world” (Burton & Bartlett, p. 130). Burton and Bartlett observe that “whilst observation is a very useful means of gathering data on what is happening in classrooms, the researcher needs to be continually sensitive to the ethical issues” (2005, p. 130). With this in mind, I was aware that my presence had an impact on the participants and that by simply being in the room the dynamic changed. Consent for the Human Research Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University had been obtained from teachers and students participating in the research.

Observation and some filming focused on the teachers’ approaches and the students’ responses to the various tasks at hand. The classroom observation at WAAPA included the following:

- Visiting Lecturer (Voice Practitioner and author of *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice*) teaching the acting students at WAAPA;
- Julia Moody (Senior lecturer in Voice at WAAPA) teaching a Dublin accent to the second year acting students;
- Ros Barnes (Speech Pathologist) teaching phonetics to first year acting and musical theatre students at WAAPA.

Coaching on Professional Productions included:

- *Annie The Musical* – Australian Tour 2013;
- *Driving Into Walls* – A collaboration between Barking Gecko Theatre Company and Perth International Arts Festival;

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- *ONEFIVEZEROSEVEN* – A collaboration between Barking Gecko Theatre Company and Perth International Arts Festival –the second instalment of a trilogy of work by John Sheedy and Suzie Miller;
 - *Jasper Jones*- A Barking Gecko Theatre Company production based on the novel by Craig Silvey, adapted by Kate Mulvany and directed by John Sheedy.

Teaching Practice involved:

- Black Swan State Theatre Company, regional voice workshops for the community in Kalgoorlie, Esperance, and Perth;
- John Curtin College of the Arts, Dialect coach on a student production of *The Laramie Project*;
- Notre Dame University, Dialect coach to second year theatre studies students working on *The Laramie Project*;
- Curtin University, Dialect coach to performance studies students on a production of *Dear Charlotte*, and *Orlando*;
- Filmbites, 2 day workshop with young actors on General American and RP;
- Perth Actors Collective, Voice Workshops for Actors;
- WAAPA, Bachelor of Performing Arts first and second year students. An introductory workshop on the foundations and elements of accent and dialect training;
- WAAPA, Dialect coach on *Great Expectations*, a third year production directed by Andrew Lewis.

Practical Workshops

One practical component of the research involved developing and facilitating an initial two-hour accent and dialect-training workshop based on the findings established from the classroom observation. The workshop established a framework for what I found to be the key components required for accent acquisition and critical reflection on what future training might look like.

This workshop was offered to the nine Curtin University students who completed questionnaires before and after the workshop. This workshop was also offered to the second year Bachelor of Performing Arts students at WAAPA and second year theatre studies' students from Notre Dame University.

The process of refining the workshop was important because my understanding of the elements broadened. Interviewing experts, for example, affected my practice and challenged my assumptions.

Journal Writing

During the course of this research, a journal and in some cases, recorded voice memos were used to self-examine and reflect on my practice. As time went on, I became more disciplined at writing down impressions of the challenges I faced. Each professional production was a journey of self-discovery. I recorded the challenges my students faced and how I might help them overcome these challenges. In some cases I was successful and in some not so. Writing in my journal gave me the opportunity to reflect on the similarities and differences I encountered when observing and listening to the position of the lips, tongue and soft palate of all the many accents which I worked on with students.

During the dress rehearsal of *Dear Charlotte*, I recorded the students in order to gather data from the performance. This video data was analysed in order to best define what the needs of Australian actors are when shifting from an AusE to RP dialect. In chapter four, *Awakening the Actors' Listening*, I include video clips to illustrate my findings.

The challenge with part of the research is that the limitations became apparent while reflecting on the action. Because of the immersion in the process of being a voice coach and teaching at the first workshop, I was not able to film and scrutinise every single moment as I was immersed in that moment, actively working with the students, which made it difficult for me to be objective and subjective at the same time. On reflection, I would have liked to film the students in the first workshop however I decided to film the students in the dress rehearsal so that I could analyse it further at a later date.

Participation in Professional Development Workshops led by:

- Visiting Lecturer, Osteopath and specialist in laryngeal manipulation;
- Visiting Lecturer, Movement and Sound Therapist;
- Linda Wise, Leading Voice Teacher and founding member of the Roy Hart Theatre.

Student Questionnaires

To provide student perspectives on certain strategies or base knowledge questions, questionnaires, employed, in Trobia's words, "in order to collect individual data about one or more specific topics" (2008, p. 653). In particular, I sought to distinguish which of the phonetic symbols the students found hardest to learn which involved generating "data on a number of predetermined response sets" (Buchanan & Bryman, 2009, p. 146). The questionnaires were administered on several occasions. The first targeted the learning-stage of phonetics and was given to the participants after I had observed their classes in the second semester of first year. The number of participants included 19 (from the first year acting course at WAAPA) and 18 (from the first year musical theatre course at WAAPA). These students ranged in age from 18-24 and are from various parts of Australia and further afield. Responses obtained from the individuals were compared and analysed to see what could be taken into future workshops.

In addition to direct responses about what worked and what didn't, in the second questionnaire, the students were asked to number and name the various Australian dialects to see what distinctions they made.

A different questionnaire was gathered from nine performance studies' students from Curtin University, after a workshop on the shift from a current AusE dialect to a RP dialect. Each participant was asked 10 questions before the workshop and 13 questions after the workshop. Before the workshop, they were asked whether they were aware of the fundamentals that made up their own accent and dialect. After the workshop, they were asked questions on how effective the technique had been. This questionnaire was used to compare the responses before and after the workshop which helped in evaluating how effective the technique had been.

Personal Communication and Interviews with Experts in the field

Face-to-face conversations with a Speech Pathologist in Perth and a Senior Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA also contributed to the gathering and analysis of ideas. Moments of insight often occurred when conversing with people about my research. Such contacts forced me to articulate ideas and tended to provoke alternative views or revealed anecdotes from my colleagues. Casual talk, informed by specific professional backgrounds proved useful in understanding and learning about different techniques and approaches to accent and dialect training. Interviews with experts in the field were aimed to situate my work as a voice practitioner and to assist in drawing together the multiple approaches to accent and dialect training. Letters of introduction were sent out by email to professional voice and/or accent and dialect coaches in the UK, France and the USA, with five agreeing to be interviewed. The experts were asked semi-structured questions such as “What role does listening play in voice and speech work?” and, what did they believe were “the expertise or key skills required when teaching a new accent or dialect?” My aim for the interviews was to analyse other experts’ approaches and incorporate them, if appropriate, into my own practice. Brinkmann asserts that “research interviewing involves a ‘one-way dialogue’ with the researcher asking questions and the interviewees being cast in the role of respondent” (2008, p. 471). However, my intention was to leave the interview questions fairly open, as I wanted to analyse what would emerge (See appendix for list of questions). For Shiner and Newburn, using semi-structured interviews

minimised the extent to which respondents had to express themselves in terms defined by the interviewers and encouraged them to raise issues that were important to them. It was thus particularly well suited to attempt to discover respondents’ own meanings and interpretations. (Cited in Rapley, 2001, p. 3)

This quotation highlights the need for an interviewer to be sensitive to the unfolding discussion and be aware that the interviewer as well as the interviewee is *active* in meaning construction rather than Brinkmann’s “one-way dialogue”.

Two of the interviews were conducted on Skype, one over the telephone and later confirmed by email and two were in person, face-to-face. The interviews were also useful in assisting me to reflect on my role as a practitioner, drawing on my experience of teaching and perceptions about the material and techniques available.

The experts interviewed as part of this research included:

- Beth McGuire - Lecturer in Acting: Speech and Dialects at Yale School of Drama, based in New York;
- Linda Wise – Leading Voice teacher and member of the original Roy Hart Theatre based in the South of France;
- Hilary Jones - Lecturer in Voice at the Royal Conservatoire Scotland in Glasgow;
- Dr Melissa Agnew – Voice and Speech Teacher/ Coach based in Queensland;
- Richard Hollingworth – Freelance Voice and Dialect coach based in London.

During the dress rehearsal of *Dear Charlotte*, I recorded the students in order to gather data from the performance. This video data was analysed in order to best define what the needs of Australian actors are when shifting from an AusE to RP dialect. In chapter four, *Awakening the Actors' Listening*, I include video clips to illustrate my findings.

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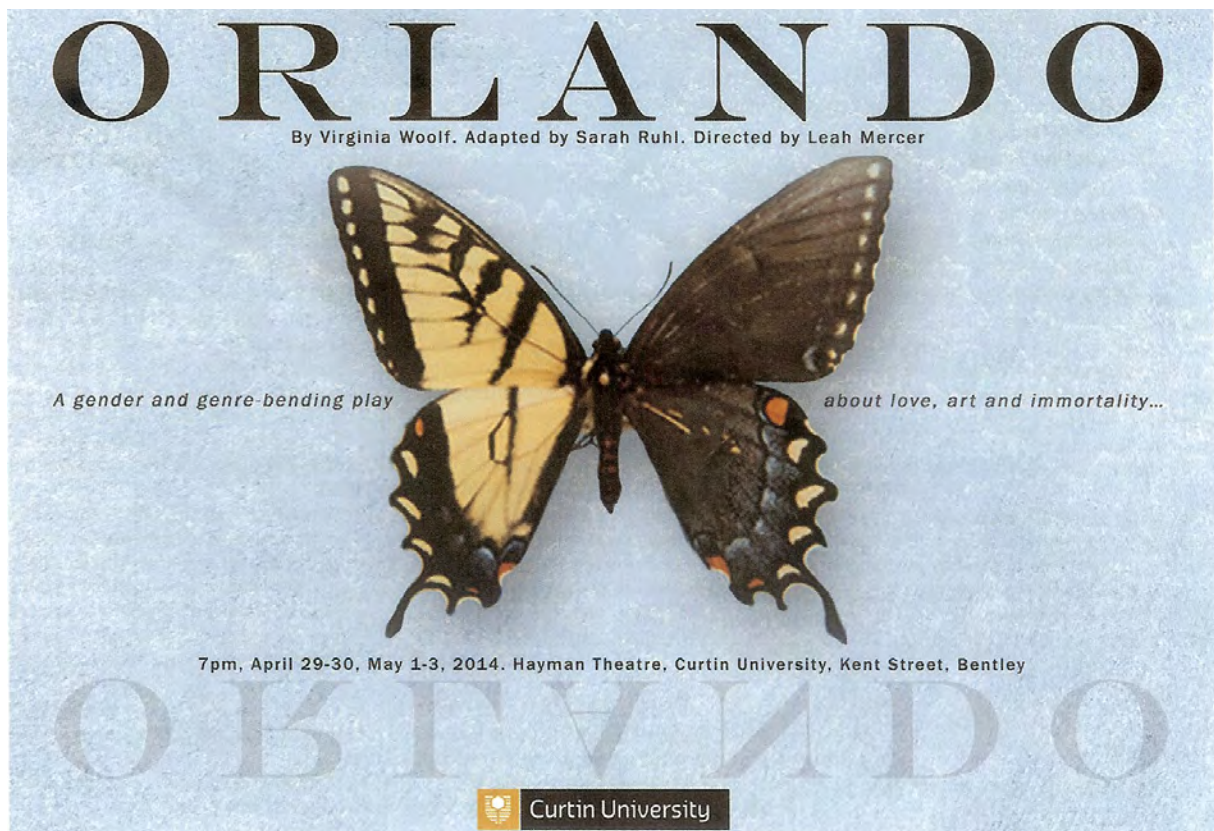
In summary, this chapter has detailed the necessity of my active involvement 'in' and 'on' the research practice for voice coaching in order to research the major components of my practice-led research. As discussed above, the multi-methods were varied and the process of refining the workshop was important as my understanding of the acquisition of accents broadened.

To clarify the awakening themes that follow in the next three chapters:

The chapters that follow discuss the specific psychophysical awakenings and the themes that emerged from the research. The key metaphor of awakening informs my work. My concept of shifting from one accent to the other is a transformative experience involving body language, breath and mouth shape formation. My argument throughout this thesis is that the process of accent acquisition can help to enhance and/or free up an actor's range and/or physicality and/or breath. An accent can be a key to unlocking an actor's habits and can lead to transformations or awakenings. Awakenings is an umbrella term divided into three interrelated aspects across three chapters; *Awakening the Actors' Cognitive Mind*, *Awakening the Actors' Listening*, and *Awakening the Actors' Embodiment*.

The following awakenings are not prescriptive and cannot happen solely through technical aspects of accent and dialect training. When an awakening has happened, the actor is able to transport the audience to an imaginative country represented in a film or on the stage. These awakenings apply not only to the student actor but also to myself, as a teacher, who aims to guide the actors in their acquisition of accents and dialects. Changing the way an actor sounds can be a great joy and delight for both learner and teacher, bringing about new sensations and new awakenings to possible ways of being.

Awakening the Actors' Cognitive Mind



CHAPTER 3. AWAKENING THE ACTORS' COGNITIVE MIND

This chapter will discuss the awakening of the cognitive mind, which needs to happen for the actor to achieve a successful accent and dialect. In particular, I will outline what happens when a new language is learnt and trace the building of new structures and pathways in the brain.

BRAIN ACTIVITY

Haring goes as far as to say that “when you wake up the ability to shift gears in your speech, you wake up your mind” (as cited in Saklad, 2011, p. 122). What this quotation highlights is that by speaking in a way that is different or non-habitual, brain activity is stimulated as an individual experiences conscious engagement in working towards the acquisition of a new dialect. Working on dialects is about finding access to different parts of the voice. In this respect, there is a mental effort involved and, therefore, the brain is active.

Sydney based singing teacher, Wilson, supports the notion that the brain is activated during vocal training. Callaghan (as cited in Wilson, 2013, p. 301) believes that “[t]he work of spoken-voice teachers and singing teachers is, in essence, practical psychomotor training.” Wilson acknowledges that vocal training changes performers’ behaviours and bodies and that “recent research quantifies the nature and amount of structural and functional changes due to the brains of participants in any neuromuscular skill acquisition tasks” (Wilson, 2013, p. 301).

Research by Mithens and Parsons’ (Cited in Wilson, 2013) scrutinised the function of the brain during singing to investigate the brain activity required when learning to sing as an adult. They argue that our brains are a by-product of the society and culture in which we live and that “the anatomy and function of the brain can be deliberately manipulated in much the same manner that one can mould a piece of clay” (as cited in Wilson, 2013). The experiment involved participants singing two songs, along with some technical exercises, while their brain activity was monitored via an MRI scan. After twelve months of attending regular private singing lessons with a singing teacher, the experiment was repeated and the findings suggest that significant increases in brain activity had occurred when compared with the scan from the previous year.

Participation in the *Dear Charlotte*, workshop enabled the students or actors to think consciously about their own idiolect and to stimulate discussion and introspection about their identity, corresponding to Kennedy’s observation that “[k]nowledge resides in what I believe to be integral to my sense of self, just as it is informed by my culture, society, family and education” (2009, p. 416). This is a significant issue for me as the teacher but also for the actor when learning a new dialect. By inviting the students to observe and become aware of their own idiolects, a cognitive awakening or a higher level of critical thinking was taking place. This concept of awakening is strongly linked with Guichard’s (2006) notion of engaging the actor’s critical thinking skills.

Actors engage, delight and uplift an audience when the shift to a new accent is mastered. The actor's senses are alive, the body and voice are aligned and the brain is said to be concentrated in an effort to acquire the new accent. When writing about accent training for actors, Kopf claims that learning dialects involves both your right and left brain-intuition as well as logical analysis. She writes that learning a new accent is like "learning dance steps for the mouth" (2003, p. 15) and this involves repetition and muscle memory so that the dance steps can be recalled.

MUSCLE MEMORY

Cuthbertson-Lane asserts that habits or patterns of body use which occur over a prolonged period of time involve what we generally understand or refer to as 'muscle memory.' Muscle memories

become ingrained in the system via two separate but mutually supportive processes. In the first process, the brain *learns* about the new way of being/moving and forges new neural pathways throughout the brain and central nervous system and their neuromuscular connections to support and facilitate the new architecture of the body-as well as dissolving old neural pathways that are now obsolete. (cited in Boston & Cook, 2009, p. 76)

This is particularly useful to consider when teaching accents and dialects as the body will become habituated to the new ways of moving the articulators and the new neural pathways which support the new behaviour (Cited in Boston & Cook, 2009, p. 76).

An area of growth in recent years is the Neuroscience of Accents. Researcher and voice practitioner, Hilary Jones, writes about this specialised strand of the discipline in an article on the Nadine George Technique. Jones suggests that,

Neuroscience is currently unlocking some of the most extraordinary facts about the human voice, we now know that the whole of the human brain lights up when we speak in an accent and that the motor cortex of an actor's brain is completely engaged when text is spoken (even if the actor is completely still). (2013, p. 39)

This engagement of the brain highlights the complexity of the senses and the significant increase in brain activity when making a shift to a new way of being for an actor. This evidence is based on the work of four experts in the area of brain function in relation to voice (Scott, Overy, Rothwell, & Reby, 2011). With advances in science and technology, we now know a lot more about the neuroscience of the brain. This study provides valuable insights into the belief that the actor's quartet of intellect, emotion, body and voice is engaged when speaking text. When discussing the cognitive engagement needed to work beyond habits, Linklater asserts that the "conscious mind has an alarming capacity for subverting new experiences, either confusing them with something familiar and safe, or leaping ahead to the result and by passing the process" (1976, p. 19). Thus the actor needs to repeatedly go through the various stages of learning to create the new muscle memory and neural pathways to which Boston and Cook (2009) refer.

MENTAL TRAMLINES

When theorising how children learn to speak, influential and widely recognised linguist of the 20th century, Noam Chomsky, posited a theory that children acquire language due to the child's having inherited genetically a piece of complex fixed mental machinery, "a set of mental tramlines programmed into our brain since birth" (Cited in Honey, 1997, p. 42). These mental tramlines develop over time as the child learns to mimic the sounds of the language around them. Once these tramways are set, they are flexible up to the age of about twelve and usually after that time, they begin to become set into place. If a child migrates to another country before the age of twelve, they will take on the new accent and fully embody it. However, if migration occurs after the age of twelve, it is likely that an individual will keep his/her original accent. This is a general rule with, of course, exceptions. Making conscious adjustments to develop a new set of "mental tramlines" or "sense memory" is an important part of learning a new accent. Practice is essential and, as with changing to any new habit, there is a lot of hit and miss involved. By practising speaking with a larger mouth opening for example, the body becomes familiar with the new sounds and sensations and can retain this new setting to help keep the accent consistent. Forging the new neural pathways in the brain to "facilitate the new architecture of the body" (Boston & Cook, 2009) is a significant part of the accent and dialect process and requires repetition and constant practise.

REPETITION AND PRACTICE

If an actor tries to by-pass the repetition and practise process or does not have a grasp of the foundations or components that make up their own accent and dialect as distinguishable from the new accent and dialect, accuracy and consistency of acquisition will not be achieved. Accent training is a challenge but, with practice and patience, it can be transformational and very rewarding for an actor. There is no surprise then that accent training can act as a tool for opening creativity and banishing self-consciousness for an actor. "*Through using the voice differently they descend into their creativity new... Doors start opening into the self*" (Personal Communication, Isherwood, 2013).

During an interview for this research Jones, stated that it takes

three days minimum of sheer physical practice – talking constantly in the new accent, checking that I have sounds right, listening to clips, listening back to myself etc. before I feel I've got it in my system. I think using texts that are written in that dialect becomes very important too and I get my students to use monologues really quickly – practice sentences for isolating certain sounds, monologues for finding and embedding rhythm, tune and flow. Then it's up to everyone to practice constantly until they are 'wired'! (Interview, 9 September, 2013)

LEARNING PHONETIC SYMBOLS

Practise and repetition was also a factor when it came to the students learning the phonetic symbols. When the WAAPA students were asked how they learnt the phonetic symbols and how often they studied them, the range of responses was significant, producing more diversity of answers than any

other of the questions posed. This result indicates the many different ways through which students learn. Half of the musical theatre students replied that they used the practice sheets given by Barnes (lecturer) to practise and half of the acting students used repetition to ensure retention. The responses varied from making up stories to learning the individual symbols with flash cards, drilling and using phone apps to aid memory.

Getting the students to understand their own dialect – where it comes from, its cultural context, including history, geography and politics — or essentially their vocal identity requires full immersion by the actor. Knowing where his/her accent comes from and even where it is going will enable him/her to make informed choices about what to do and how to make changes. Finding out what has influenced the vocal fingerprint or where the actor grew up and what kind of music and culture the actor was brought up into will give clues into the way he/she speaks. Questions that arose from this research included whether the actor's voice has changed over the years, and whether it was due to peer or other forms of pressures. If peer pressure is the determining factor then it is interesting to contemplate at what age the change might have taken place. Contextualising an actor's accent is a vital step towards owning it and making it real.

Once the idiolect is established and the elements of the new shifts are introduced, it is necessary to engage the actor in a multi-dimensional way by seeing the articulators (visual), hearing the sound shifts (aural) and feeling (kinaesthetic) where in the mouth the changes are made. These three approaches engage the whole actor. This discussion will be continued in detail in the next two chapters on listening and embodiment.

One of the awakenings for me was to discover that alternative methods of teaching phonetics exist; in particular the discovery of Colaianni's (1994) phonetic pillows, a method involving a tactile way of learning the phonetic symbols. Another awakening was reading Rodenburg's advice when learning RP to "breathe all the sounds" (1997, p. 128). This key unlocked two aspects of my work as a vocal coach and I began to see how each area could inform the other. For example, I could bring breath into accent training and I could bring accents into voice fundamentals. This multi modal approach was reinforced by McGuire:

I teach voice, and I teach speech, and I teach dialects, and I teach Shakespeare. When I teach one modality I just keep all of the other modalities right behind it so that my purpose is to give always a full sense and always the acting. (Interview, 26 November, 2013)

This quotation emphasises the need to keep the acting and the characterisation for performance as the priority while other aspects of voice are explored because each area can inform the other.

THINKING AND BREATHING IN AN ACCENT

According to Colaianni, "[a]cting in an accent requires your body's deep acceptance of new ways of saying words – thinking and breathing in an accent is just as important as speaking in it" (1994, p. 67). Colaianni supports the mind and body connection through the "body's deep acceptance" of "thinking and breathing" (1994, p. 67). For an actor a new accent has to be learnt consciously like learning to whistle.

If one area of the mind and body is not in relationship or in polyphony, then disaster can strike and accent acquisition can be impeded. The actor needs to ask him/herself, what is causing the problem? Am I accepting this change or am I blocking it? My research has highlighted that psychological thought and personal beliefs can sometimes get in the way and inhibit the actor from playing freely. For example, if an actor has to play a character with a very different resonance, a strong nasality, for example, he/she may associate the nasality with harsh, ugly, dullness, lifeless droning sounds and resist its acceptance. Alternatively, perhaps RP is felt to be too animated for an Australian actor, influenced by the tall poppy syndrome (whereby the actor may not want to seem to be better than anyone else). He/she may not feel comfortable doing the big swoops and pitch inflections needed for RP and may not want to appear false and pretentious if aiming for an emotionally exposed performance. Being able to overcome these inhibitions is a necessary part of learning a new accent. The brain activity and the setting of the muscles in the mouth are integrated in producing the new sounds of the accent and are crucial to the thinking and breathing with the accent that helps the actor maintain the accent for long periods of dialogue. The actor's task is to bring the character's words to life using an accent. In real life, when communicating with different people, we usually change pitch without thinking. Karpf asserts that "[o]ur brain circuits are charged with the extraordinary task of continuously adjusting the mass, length, and tension of the vocal folds, so as to produce the variations in intonation patterns we want to convey" (2006, p. 35). This continuous adjustment is also true of the soft palate, which lifts or drops to convey expression of each new impulse or thought.

THE ACCENT AND DIALECT PROJECT OR ASSESSMENT

In a drama school setting, students are often set an accent and dialect project to put into play what they have learnt.

The students are also set a project at the end of their accent training in which they choose a dialect that interests them – not previously covered in class – and create a handout defining the shifts phonetically. They are then asked to 'teach' it to their classmates and perform a monologue in the new accent to demonstrate embodiment. (Interview, Jones, 9 September, 2013)

The assessment presentation in the second year at WAAPA includes a five page written document outlining the elements for change and the background of the dialect. Students are given the task to research and interview an individual with a specific accent and write up notes on the various elements that make up that accent, choose a monologue and then perform in this accent/dialect for assessment. The musical theatre students have to teach the class while speaking in the accent and, in addition, have to sing a song in the language. Guichard (2006) writes about a similar assessment procedure for her tertiary students where the emphasis is on engaging students' critical thinking skills in the classroom and applying them to accents and dialects. In Moody's (2014) case, the accent or dialect is chosen to specifically address a vocal challenge that the student actor is facing. Moody,

a Senior Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA, has collated the accent samples in a website called Sandbox (http://sandbox.ea.ecu.edu.au/projects/accent_dialect), which I discuss further in the following chapter (Awakening the Actors' Listening).

This technique of asking students to learn an accent and teach it to their classmates seems to be a common exercise when it comes to teaching dialects in drama schools in the UK, America and Australia which, of course, relies on their cognitive skills.

ANALYSING NEW SOUNDS

By engaging with accent and dialect training, the actor becomes aware of the elements that make up their dialect and realises there are many ways of being with his/her voice and this awareness is like an awakening for the actor. The shift to a new accent initiates an awakening to areas that have previously lain dormant. Voice work can “recondition your habitual way of communicating” (Linklater, 1976, p. intro) and “develop the ability to perceive habits and register new experiences” (2013, p. 3). By identifying where particular habits of the mouth muscles are, the capacity to make a shift in sound becomes easier as the area of tension is released and flexibility is found. By reconditioning habitual ways of communicating, newfound freedom and awakening may occur.

My argument is that acquisition of an accent or dialect can help the actor become more conscious of the sounds around them and what makes up their own sounds. There is a multiplicity of different ways of being with our voices and we have access to many different ways of speaking. This engagement of the cognitive mind is also a part of the Alexander technique. As mentioned in Chapter One, FM Alexander was an Australian actor who developed a technique of finding ease through the body. His self-observation revealed that he had a habit of pushing his head back and down when he came to speak. The consciousness of a habit “offers the tools to enable him to make choices to use the body efficiently and freely” (As cited in McEvenue, 2002, p. 18). By acknowledging his habit, he was able to consciously self-direct his head to be positioned in an upward and forward position, lengthening the back of the neck rather than shortening it. Alexander devised a series of seven principles that offer the actor new ways of being with his/her body. “1. Recognition 2. Inhibition 3. The ‘primary control’ 4. Giving direction 5. Recognition of faulty sensory feedback 6. End-gaining and 7. Non-doing” (McEvenue, 2002, p. 12). The first two principles in particular can be applied to accent and dialect acquisition as the recognition of the habit is the starting point and the inhibition or pausing offers the actor to make a new choice or form new “dance steps in the mouth” (Kopf, 2003). Again, the Alexander technique depends on cognition to be effective for the individual.

CURIOSITY

The passionate curiosity described by Kopf (2003) in the literature review is what Moody (2014) also exploits in her chart which outlines a process of investigation encountered in training in accents and dialects. Her paper “The Vocal Detective” indicates the role of curiosity in finding the key components required. This is accomplished by being curious about how the accent differs from the speaker’s own idiolect, phonetic changes, as well as historical, environmental, physical, social, geographical, political and spiritual factors that influence the inflection, placement, key, tune and rhythm of speaking. Curiosity can bring together the sum total of environmental and physiological factors, which enable

the skilled actor to move between accents. Further details of this approach are discussed when working with the actors in *Dear Charlotte*, in Chapter 4, *Awakening the Actors' Listening*. Moody (2008, p. 1) also believes that “consistency and understanding” are key factors when it comes to accent acquisition.

Moody's (2014) engaging and playful approach, influenced by drama in education's advocacy of the “teacher in role” (Ackroyd, 2004; Bolton, 1986; Heathcote, 1990; O'Neill, 2006) involves Moody assuming a character and accent from the country/region the actors are learning about. This drama technique is used to get students thinking inside the action of the story while making discoveries along the way. For example, while teaching a Dublin accent, Moody and the students will spend the hour-long class speaking the entire time in the dialect. This technique makes learning more active and helps the students plunge in to the accent. Ackroyd-Pilkington (2001) deduces that there are similarities between a teacher in role and what an actor does in performance. When teachers and students explore, in role, a story in a drama classroom context, they are pretending and, at the same time, learning. “What has been central to [t]his teaching, [is] the value of dramatic playing” (p. 11). Similarly, Ackroyd-Pilkington notes “the actor and audience give mutual consent to sharing in a pretend” (p. 9).

Moody even regards accent slippage positively, positing that student actors can address their vocal problems in a non-threatening way and gain new levels of insight into their habitual vocal use and that “mistakes are treasured because the slippages between dialects are the trail that needs to be followed to accuracy” (Moody, 2014). For example, when an actor is acquiring an Irish accent with a rhotic [r] but slips into Indian with a retroflex [r] then the deliberate effort required to regain the Irish accent, supplements the positive understanding of how the accent is acquired. Once the new sounds are in place, the actor has to become “aware of how the whole accent that you have gradually built up feels in the mouth, and you can then make all of that into a habit” (Moody, 2008). Effectively, muscle memory and the tramline effect are in operation.

Additionally, according to Moody (2008), accent training gives the actor a mask that can act as a release towards greater freedom in exploring the full range of their voices. Accent training allows the actor to play with rhythm and learn the musicality inherent in different accents. Another key significance is that learning a new accent can assist in training an actor's ear to recognise how minute shifts in the tongue or mouth can affect the sounds that they make.

On the flip side, an accent can act as a mask for the actor to hide behind. In this instance, an actor plays the accent and not the character and there is no real person there. In an interview with McGuire, she confirmed this by saying “*People hide behind dialects all the time. You can hear it, it's very easy to do*” (Interview, 26 November, 2013). In this case, the accent can be affected or the actor can become a talking head rather than an embodied character full of the complex behaviours that make up a human being. When an actor has not mastered the elements of shift, they can sound affected or “*if it's not in the body, it is plucked on*” (Personal Communication, Woodburn, September 2013) and not believable. The audience will be too aware of the accent rather than seeing the whole character.

Seeing Speech

A recent collaboration between five Universities in Scotland, the University of Glasgow, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, the University of Strathclyde, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Aberdeen, resulted in a creation of a teaching oriented audio-visual website for learning about phonetics titled 'Seeing Speech'. According to the website and launch description:

This resource will augment traditional Phonetic, Linguistic and Speech Therapy training, by showing the inner workings of the vocal tract. Both MRI and Ultrasound video are used, with single sounds performed by trained phoneticians, as well as whole words and spontaneous speech drawn from a range of English accents. (McLeod & Singh, 2008, p. 1)

Ultrasound tongue imaging makes visible the position and shape that the tongue makes in the different English dialects. The tongue, as I have mentioned earlier is an active articulator and a crucial organ for speech production for all vowels and some consonants. The advantages of this visible approach come about by the student seeing the placement and movement of the tongue in the mouth when different accents are spoken. In AusE, the back of the tongue is more active than in some other accents because of the zone that AusE is spoken from.

INTEGRATED WHOLE

Through reading core texts on voice, in particular Saklad (2011) and Linklater (2006), the relationship between the mind and body as an integrated whole again emerges to be an important factor in vocal training and acting. Gist notes that "good voice work is an awakening of your humanity through your voice" (cited in Saklad, 2011, p. 110). Moreover, in the context of performance, dialect training is a part of an integrated whole. The acquisition of dialect is one of many elements that need to be integrated in the formulation of a character. This discussion on mind and body themes is explored further in the later chapter *Awakening the Actors' Embodiment* because of this important link between the mind and body. The cognitive cannot be eliminated from embodiment.

Helen Sharpe talks about this "interrelationship between mind and body shifts" (2012, p. 91) and argues for the pleasure gained from sensing the breath experientially and feeling the expansion of the perceptual field. Breathing is a sensual and physical act and Sharpe's description of the sensory relationship between the "visual perception, spatiality, proximity, auditory play" (2012, p. 89) is defined as a "perceptual polyphony" (2012, p. 89). In the case of an actor rehearsing for a part, there are many performance elements that the actor needs to assimilate, learning lines, remembering blocking, character choices, being in relationship with other actors, being comfortable in their costume, handling props and the accent which incorporated together become this "perceptual polyphony". The accent is not a separate discipline from acting: it is part of the perceptual polyphony linking of all the elements of a performance together. Rather than focusing on one small area, the actor is urged to expand his/her attention to take on the "sense of the whole" (2012, p. 89).

This 'sense of the whole', is the ability to hold simultaneous attention on various layers of perception as defined by theatre practitioner Shannon Rose Riley who employs Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of polyphony to describe the actor's process:

to think and problem solve with his/her entire organism, and an increase in the ability to hold simultaneous attention on various layers of perception, from a fine tuning of attention to various psychophysical processes, to perception of one's being in relationship with others and the environment. This creates a state of what I will describe as perceptual polyphony that allows both expansion and clarity of focus for the actor. (2004, p. 449)

This expansion and clarity of focus fits closely with my notion of awakening the actor and in particular awakening the actor's cognitive thinking. In that the ability "to hold simultaneous attention on various layers" (Riley, 2004, p. 449) is essential if an actor is to fully embody the accent into the character they are portraying.

AWAKENING OF THE ACTORS' IMAGINATION

This section will discuss the awakening of the emotions following the argument that the intellect and emotions are difficult to separate. Linklater comments; "[i]n the technical work you carve out paths from the mind to the chosen muscles: in the imaginative work you know those paths are there and you run along them" (as cited in Shewell, 2009a, p. 1). Expanding this notion, Linklater underlines the need to balance technical and imaginative approaches, advising that too much technique can impede the imagination. "If, in working on your voice, you focus on that anatomical truth, you will end up with monochromatic, forced voice production or at best, a voice devoid of personality" (2006, p. 14). This statement is elaborated to stress the "power of the imagination, [which when] properly used, can stimulate breathing on a profound level and enhance the function of the voice to maximum effect" (2006, p. 15). Likewise, the actor's imagination must be stimulated to enhance the shift to another accent. There can be a danger of being too mechanical and not fully embodied if the imagination is not properly used.

Jerzy Grotowski believed that theatre had to go beyond literature in order to discover its own language, which was not a language of words but "the score of human impulses and reactions. The psychic process, revealed through the bodily and vocal reactions of a living, human organism. That is the essence of theatre" (As cited in Kumiega, 1987, p. 12). It is this living breathing "human organism" that makes up the actor and therefore what the actor brings to the performance is not just the role but his or herself as well. Linklater reinforces Grotowski's view by stating that her aim is:

to produce a voice that is in direct contact with emotional impulses, shaped by the intellect not inhibited by it.... The natural voice is transparent, it reveals, not describes, inner impulses of emotion and thought, directly and spontaneously. The person is heard, not the person's voice. (Linklater, 2006, p. 2)

Farrell believes that Linklater's "holistic approach is exciting for philosophers, precisely because it refuses to sacrifice any one quality or aspect of the human being for the sake of another" (2011, p. 113). The body and the imagination are linked and "If the body is encouraged to move in new directions, to break conditioned, habitual movements, it is not because the mind has been left behind" (2011, p. 113).

When writing about the negative factors that can cause a locked voice as opposed to a free voice, Linklater believes that “[b]locked emotions are the fundamental obstacle to a free voice” (1976, p. 16). When working on a new accent, the habitual can be bypassed and emotions can be unlocked. Carey and Carey Clark believe that “[e]motion is a primary element of voice and speech work. It’s part of an impulse connection to speak ... Emotion causes us to want to express something” (2008, p. 18). By changing breathing rhythms, body movements or accents for example, the actor can respond in new ways. When an actor can tap into his/her emotions and communicate them freely, the audience can be transported. These new ways of being can free and unblock an actor from self-consciousness as they tap into the new feelings.

My experience is that accents colour the actor’s imagination and inspire a range of different choices. For some actors, who have not travelled to other countries, the leap to a new accent is more challenging than for others. Visualisation can help such actors by examining native speakers on YouTube or in films. In Dyer’s CD on Received Pronunciation, she suggests that actors “think of hard pavements and manicured lawns” (2007b). These images encourage the actor to get a feel for the formality and hard surfaces that reflect the urban sounds of RP. As the play *Dear Charlotte*, was set in two locations, London and Yorkshire, I have included images below of the countryside (Figure 7 and Figure 8) in contrast to the urban environment of London.

As a further example of involving the imagination, one actor I worked with, was finding an accent challenging. When I asked him to describe what it felt like his tongue was doing he said it felt like his mouth operated like a washing machine, however that made me realise that he was doing too much and that image had not enabled him to produce the lightness that the accent required. I suggested that he try to imagine butterflies coming out of the mouth, which assisted him in finding the release in the active articulators that was necessary to make the shift.

Rodenburg proposes that the actor “think up” (1992, p. 254) and into the forehead to encourage moving the sound out of their throats. Rodenburg also encourages actors to intone or chant so that they feel there are more resonating spaces than just the larynx or asking actors to imagine they are drunk when speaking. Alternatively, Houseman advocates feeling really bored to counteract pushing and over-effort on an actor’s part. As well as visualisations in the body, Linklater (2006) uses colour to elicit different vocal tones. A voice practitioner in London once relayed a story where she was asked to speak as if she had a blue light pulling her backwards from her lower back. The image forced her to not only think about the text that was being spoken but also brought focus to a different area in the body and this extra focus allowed her to lower her centre of gravity and feel more embodied. The imagination can have a powerful effect on the voice.

Our vocal register is extensive and by making a shift into a new accent, the actor’s creativity is unleashed: “*Through using the voice differently [actors] descend into their creativity anew.*” (Personal Communication, Isherwood, 2013). This descent into creativity is like an awakening to an unexplored place.



Figure 7: English Countryside courtesy Google images. The guardian.com



Figure 8: Yorkshire Dales Courtesy Google images. bbc.co.uk

ENERGY OF A VOCAL COMMUNITY

Performing another accent is like travelling into another place in the world which offers a new way of being or seeing for both the actors and the audience watching. Accents within a play represent vibrant living and breathing communities. Doing an accent convincingly is not just a question of getting the right sounds, it is a whole feeling for the energy of a people, an understanding of how they perceive and respond to the world.

There is something exhilarating about a well-executed accent and dialect in a role because the sounds of an accent can awaken a sensory memory of other times and other places. This awakening of the memory happens for the actor as well as for the audience. The expectation today is that actors create emotional, living, breathing characters and bring a dynamic, active presence onstage, or what Rodenburg describes as a state of “readiness ... full alertness, living, breathing, listening and reacting completely in the present” (2002, p. 218). This phenomenon of creating emotional, living, breathing characters was recognised by participants in my research. For example, one student response stated, “[Accent and dialect training] is pivotal. I believe a character's voice is the key to its personality. There is nothing more important than authenticity” (S3).

This exploration into authentically representing the sounds of the new dialect needs to be conducted without judgment or squashing the person's confidence in his/her natural sounds. One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was that building a profile of a student's accent can be like a “mini therapy session” (Interview, Hollingsworth, 16 April, 2013), by revealing the student's own personal speech habits and accent. As a result, the student actors need reassurance “in order to embody many voices and that the ability to do another accent convincingly with ease and accuracy is not about losing that identity” (Interview, Jones, 9 September, 2013). Accent training can offer the opportunity to find a new confidence perhaps even the “right to make sound” (Interview, Wise, 18 July, 2013).

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have identified three main areas of awareness of the mind that are essential for actors to develop and sustain a new accent and dialect. These three areas of awareness are brain activity, imagination, and emotions. The section on brain activity discussed the requirements for muscle memory, repetition and thinking and breathing in the new accent. That all too familiar adage of practise makes perfect is “advice designed to help students retain the new brain structures that their training has sculpted” (Wilson, 2013, p. 302). The section on the imagination covered the way in which imagination can assist to colour an accent and offer the freedom to explore the many aspects of the dialect's rich cultural resources. The final section explained how emotions are closely integrated in developing an accent, particularly with respect to feeling, expressions and energy of the community. This chapter supports previous research in which it was shown that the whole brain is stimulated when a person speaks in a different accent and dialect. The next chapter will present the Awakening of the Actors' Listening.

Awakening the Actors'

Listening

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The development of *onefivezeroseven* was supported by the Perth International Arts Festival's Vital Stages program, through funding from Lotterywest.

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CHAPTER 4. AWAKENING THE ACTORS' LISTENING

The role of listening will be explored in an effort to understand the aural expertise that is required when shifting to a new accent. This chapter will discuss awakening the actors' listening, a skill that needs to be fully embedded in the professional and student actor. Darnley believes that the conventions of entertainment have changed since Shakespeare's day and that listening skills are in decline stating that "In Shakespeare's time you would go to 'hear' a play, not 'see' one—and those listening skills are in decline" (2014, p. para 1). This chapter is about what can be done to develop the actor's ability to listen.

ACTIVELY LISTENING

In order to awaken the auditory world of the actor, master voice practitioner Robert Barton asserts: "dialects awaken, they *uber* - awaken, because suddenly you're aware of all the ways to manipulate sound" (Cited in Saklad, 2011, p. 35). We go about our day hearing things but how often do we actually sit and listen? Listening requires an active involvement. By listening to the tiny changes that can be made by moving the active articulators, an actor can become more aware of how to change and manipulate sound.

Acquiring an accent involves an intense period of learning just like when a child is learning to speak for the first time. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles assert that "being good at accents is about so much more than 'having a good ear'. It is about using all your available senses to learn new skills, just as you did as a small child" (2007, p. 12). Listening is a skill that needs to be learnt when exploring accents and dialects. Actors, like young children, learn through repetition and play. Within this immersion of available senses, a child-like curiosity is necessary.

When interviewing experts on voice training, I asked what role did they perceive that listening plays in accent and dialect work. Jones replied:

It's the foundation. Being able to hear differences is fundamental. Actually listening and watching. For some, being able to see the facial changes is as important as hearing them. It's why the VADA web-site is such a great idea. Listening should also help the student identify the speed and energy of the new accent – is it faster/slower? Does it pitch up or down from their own natural sound? (Interview, 9 September, 2013)

Jones (Interview, 9 September, 2013) makes an interesting observation that an actor's awareness of his/her "own natural sound" and detection of the changes in pace or intonation of a new accent, in turn, promote active listening. If students know what to listen for, then they will be more likely to listen specifically rather than generally. Jones highlights the value of both listening and watching to identify the elements needed to shift from one accent to another.

As noted in the previous chapter, Jones (2013) points to the recent advances in visual and aural learning of accents and dialects such as a website titled Visual Accent and Dialect Archive (VADA) <http://visualaccentdialectarchive.com> (2015). This website acts as a central library in terms of an audio-visual environment, to provide information visually about a native speaker's setting of the articulators. Being able to see and hear the sounds arguably makes it easier to practise the right positions of the articulators when learning a new accent.

When asked what role listening played generally in vocal work, Wise reinforced Jones' perspective:

Oh enormous. Enormous. I mean you could say a good 25 % at the beginning, even more work. There is a lot of time with listening. I always say to my students, if you really are listening you are working. I mean that is a proven fact. That you know your apparatus is actually functioning. (Interview, 18 July, 2013)

One of first year WAAPA students' responses confirmed this emphasis on a refined listening capacity:

It wasn't until this year that I was aware that Melbourne has its own accent. But I guess there would be more (Australian Accents) than I know of, maybe even 10-15. (MT5)

The act of listening had been activated so that the student could distinguish regional differences between accents from one state to another.

DIFFERENCES

In Perth, where I am based, the number of immigrants is significant and on the increase with migrants arriving from all over the world. In paying attention to differences in the speaking population, my research revealed that there is a whole range of AusE sounds. I would agree with one student who commented: *"I believe there are a huge variety of Australian accents dependent on culture, education, international heritage etc.; thus it is impossible to determine numbers."* (MT11) This observation echoes my understanding that AusE is a melting pot of sounds and that what I need to consider as part of my research is how to foster vocal flexibility so that the performer can celebrate variation and difference.

A VOICE TEACHER'S LISTENING

A voice teacher is perhaps sensitised to listening for certain sounds. For example, when I am in conversation with someone or listening to a speaker who has an acute vocal creak (this is a habit some people have of sitting on their vocal folds and the vocal folds are moving at their slowest). I am so aware of this vocal characteristic that I cannot listen to the words they are saying. This creaking sound is placed far back in the throat rather than the more optimal position at the front of the mouth so the sound can be released out into the acoustic space. An acute sensitivity to sound should optimise communication rather than impede it. This sensitivity is useful for voice teachers when identifying or diagnosing the student actors' vocal habits.

RESOURCE RECORDINGS

To awaken the actors' listening, Sharpe and Haydn Rowles assert that "it is essential to have a good resource recording: a recorded example of at least one real speaker speaking in the accent you are looking to learn" (2007, p. 25). There is a danger that actors can fall into "preconceived perceptions of what an accent should sound like" (Lemmer, 2007, p. 121). Therefore a resource recording is played to the actor in rehearsal, to gain an understanding from a sample speaker of the region being explored rather than rely on an imagined or a 'preconceived' set of sounds that the actor may already have. Agnew believes:

that the sounds coming out of the actor's mouth have to be rooted in fact as opposed to just as come from supposition and their own cultural prejudice and presumptions. (Interview, 16 March, 2014)

The new sounds that the actors' are making as discussed above, need to be thoroughly researched and based on fact rather than making assumptions. In today's climate, as noted, a huge range of sample resource recordings of almost any accent can be found on the Internet, YouTube and Apps. Excellent websites devoted to accents and dialect are being continuously updated such as:

- the International Dialects of the English Archive (IDEA), <http://dialectsarchive.com>,
- the British Library A & D catalogue <http://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects>,
- UK Regional Voices <http://bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings>, with many more websites.

Resource recordings available as Audio files in APPs include:

- The Accent Kit Application by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles a range of accents can be purchases from the accent store.
- The Real Accent Application: USA by Howard Weate Productions.

Moody's Sandbox Project's collection of sample recordings from an Australian perspective provides an invaluable resource for the many different AusE dialects (ECU, 2014). The large audio collection of resource recordings sprang from the need to identify "the specific Australian based Englishes that contribute and reflect the diversity of AusE in performance" (Interview, Moody, 2014). More information and sandbox recordings can be heard at http://sandbox.ea.ecu.edu.au/projects/accent_dialect.

Most accent and dialect manuals contain CDs and helpful booklets with detailed descriptions and breakdowns on the basic vowel and consonant sound changes and useful tips such as practice sentences. I used the *Penny Dyer Access Accents* CD (Dyer & Strong, 2007b) with the actors on *Dear Charlotte*, (Gregory, 2003). This CD has recordings of current RP speakers as well as marked RP speakers (an older version of RP) and helped the actors listen for the differences between the marked RP and the newer version of RP.

INTONATION AND MUSICALITY

Another example of how to awaken the auditory world of the actor has been discussed in Kopf (2003) and involves playing traditional music from the country of the accent's origin, which helps the students listen for clues on the intonation or musicality of the dialect. Playing the music of Handel (Drummond, 2011) would

have been a useful reference in the case of *Dear Charlotte*, because the actors would listen for clues from the music whether it had a major or minor musical quality. Moody begins a dialect class with playing a CD of the music of the country and invites the students to move and dance to the rhythm. (Observation, 2014). According to Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, major and minor accents and dialects can be defined as follows:

Accents operating within small bands within each chunk with small slides between semitone and quarter tones may be described musically as having a minor quality (West Midlands, Liverpool), whereas those that have the wider bands with steps between full tones may be described as major (London, Edinburgh). (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 163)

The AusE dialect can be described as having a minor musical quality as it operates within “small slides” or a limited pitch range. RP on the other hand, can be described as having a major quality as it has “the wider bands with steps between full tones” (2007) and the pitch range is greater. Jones believes that “it’s easy [for learners] to identify the sound changes and much harder to find the right rhythms and tune and be consistent” (Interview, 9 September, 2013). Finding the greater pitch range needed when shifting from AusE to RP during rehearsals, proved to be a significant challenge for the actors and confirmed Jones’ statement above.

I tend to agree with Moody (2014) who argues that the AusE rhythm is often full of energy at the start of a phrase and pulls back at the end of the phrase. Think of the phrase “How are ya?” To counteract this tendency of pulling back on a phrase, while working on the show *Driving into Walls* (S. Miller, 2012), I suggested the cast walk around and punch their fist in the air in order to drive the energy to the end of the line. As the space they were performing in was acoustically challenging, I wanted to make sure that every word they said was going to be heard. This exercise is adapted from a similar one that I experienced while at the RSC. Lyn Darnley and Cicely Berry, when working with Shakespearean text, use a lot of physical releases to bring energy to the words.

PHONETICS

The human vocal mechanism can produce a very wide range of sounds that are shaped by the articulators operating on the breath. According to Crystal, “English has 44, [but] some languages use a very small numbers of sounds” (2005, p. 66). The sounds that Crystal identifies are also known as phonemes. Phonemes can be coded for annotation or transcription and are more commonly known as phonetics (Figure 9), defined earlier in the review of accent and dialects in Chapter One.

BACKGROUND ON THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (IPA)

It is commonly acknowledged that the IPA was developed in 1886 by a small group of language teachers in France who classified individual sounds with the use of symbols and formed an association wherein the IPA was born (Crystal, 2005, p. 53). The IPA consists of a set of symbols to describe different sounds of different accents. A speech pathologist will use phonetics to write down her clients’ speech sounds. For actors, phonetics is used in order to replicate sounds for a new dialect. Phonetics is based on the same letters as the Roman alphabet with a few additional symbols, which can lead to some confusion, however Barnes confirms this in her classroom lecture that “essentially it is a consistent way of representing the

INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET SYMBOLS FOR USE IN AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

(a) Vowels

i as in 'peat'	/pit/	ɔ as in 'port'	/pɔt/
ɪ as in 'pit'	/pɪt/	ʊ as in 'put'	/pʊt/
e as in 'pet'	/pet/	u as in 'pool'	/puːl/
æ as in 'pat'	/pæt/	ɜ as in 'pert'	/pɜt/
ɑ as in 'part'	/pɑt/	ə as in 'apart'	/ə'pɑt/
ɒ as in 'pot'	/pɒt/	ɸ as in 'bon voyage'	/bɸ vwa'ʒaːz/
ʌ as in 'but'	/pʌt/	œ as in French 'vin'	/vœ/
		y as in French 'rue'	/ry/

(b) Diphthongs

aɪ as in 'buy'	/baɪ/	oʊ as in 'hoe'	/hoʊ/
eɪ as in 'bay'	/beɪ/	ɪə as in 'here'	/hɪə/
ɔɪ as in 'boy'	/bɔɪ/	eə as in 'hair'	/heə/
aʊ as in 'how'	/haʊ/	ʊə as in 'tour'	/tʊə/

(c) Consonants

(i) Plosives

p as in 'pet'	/pet/
b as in 'bet'	/bet/
t as in 'tale'	/teɪl/
d as in 'dale'	/deɪl/
k as in 'came'	/keɪm/
g as in 'game'	/geɪm/

(ii) Fricatives

f as in 'fine'	/faɪn/
v as in 'vine'	/vaɪn/
θ as in 'thin'	/θaɪn/
ð as in 'then'	/ðeɪn/
s as in 'seal'	/seɪl/
z as in 'zeal'	/zeɪl/
ʃ as in 'show'	/ʃoʊ/
ʒ as in 'measure'	/meʒə/
h as in 'heat'	/hiːt/
r as in 'rain'	/reɪn/

(iii) Affricatives

tʃ as in 'choke'	/tʃoʊk/
dʒ as in 'joke'	/dʒoʊk/

(iv) Nasals

m as in 'mile'	/maɪl/
n as in 'neat'	/neɪt/
ŋ as in 'sing'	/sɪŋ/

(v) Semi-vowels

j as in 'you'	/juː/
w as in 'woo'	/wuː/

(vi) Laterals

l as in 'last'	/lɑːst/
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(d) Stress

' as in 'clatter'	/'klætə/
, as in 'multimillionaire'	/,mʌltɪmɪljə'neə/

Figure 9. IPA Symbols for use in Australian English. Mcquarie Dictionary.

sounds of language in written form" (Observation, 16 October, 2012). This is invaluable as linguists can go anywhere in the world and record and replicate speech sounds produced through phonetic notation. Writing down the phonetic symbols to represent speech is called transcription. "*Phonetic transcription is not just 'odd spelling', it has very little to do with regular spelling and much more to do with listening*" (Observation, 16 October, 2012).

Through communication with Jones (Personal Communication, 9 September, 2013), it became clear early on in the research that phonetics is a necessary part of accent and dialect training. Her reasons for teaching phonetics are outlined below under five themes; developing aural awareness, identifying components of their own dialect, reinforcing available audio-visual resources, preparing students in response to industry demands, and applying accents and dialects to a monologue. I have applied these principals throughout this research period and have given examples.

□ Developing aural awareness:

Students need to hone their listening skills in order to differentiate subtle changes in sounds. This precision of hearing is aided by knowledge of phonetics.

There's clear evidence that [phonetics] helps develop aural awareness, being able to identify how a classmate's dialect might differ from their own ... and provides a framework and reference point for analysing new sounds.

For example, the students at WAAPA notice regional differences in the way that their classmates pronounce of the word 'Melbourne', with some saying /mælbən/ instead of /mɛlbən/. This highlights the range of differences in the way people pronounce words.

□ Identifying components of their own dialect:

Jones values sounds that are common in a student's idiolect and in RP and uses phonetics to identify sounds that differ. Being aware of the student's idiolect as a reference point is an essential step in Jones' teaching technique.

[Phonetics] allows the student to analyse the component parts of their own dialect, to appreciate the roots of their voice and identify which sounds they have in common, with RP, and which elements of their own articulation will need to be adapted.

□ Reinforcing available audio-visual resources:

Basic knowledge of phonetics aids the students in understanding and actively using resources available to them (as mentioned previously).

All voice books/CDs written about accents and dialects refer to and use the IPA: if a student wishes to research the breakdown of an accent, using Penny Dyer's 'Access Accents' CDs or Edda Sharpe/Jan Haydn-Rowles 'How to do Accents' series, they will understand a lot more of the book if they have a basic understanding of the IPA symbols and their corresponding sound.

□ Preparing students in response to industry demands:

There are many accent and dialect coaches working in the TV and film industry who will assume a knowledge and indeed one coach I know of who ONLY teaches accents phonetically. As all our teaching is designed in response to industry demand, I still include phonetics.

□ Applying accents/dialects to a monologue

I'll always provide the students with a phonetic breakdown of the dialect being studied: this will detail major sound shifts-dentalised t's, which type of r, vowel shifts etc. but we'll move very quickly on to using the accents in monologues.

While speaking a monologue all the elements that have been discussed individually can be brought together and applied. Monologues allow the actor to be fully engaged in sustained speech while actively combining all the elements.

Jones has, however, identified that some students have difficulty learning phonetics. Her experience has alerted her to dyslexia as being one of the factors contributing to the difficulty.

There is now established evidence that actors are more likely to be dyslexic than students that study other subjects. Interestingly over the years I've always helped students identify that they have dyslexia precisely because they have struggled with phonetics. Which is partly why I have developed the various on-line quizzes etc. to try and make the learning journey as accessible as possible. (Jones, 9 September, 2013)

Jones' evidence for including phonetics in her actor training shows that the feeling of articulators, developing aural awareness, identifying their idiolect, researching resources, responding to industry demands, and using a monologue are all important aspects to consider. These allow a student to combine the elements of accent acquisition effectively. It is also significant that if a large proportion of the student body that study performing arts are dyslexic, then they need to be acknowledged and catered for. New technologies such as Apps and websites can assist with making learning phonetic more accessible. According to McGuire:

I like using the touch and tap website where you touch the phoneme and it speaks it back to you it really helps the actor a lot. There is also an app called flashcard my students really like too. (Interview, 26 November, 2013)

COMPARING AUSE AND RP VOWEL SOUNDS

When comparing AusE with RP, the vowel sounds are markedly different. Because of this, it is critical to know how many vowel sounds there are in AusE and RP (see appendix 1) for Barnes' list. According to Dyer, a vowel sound is: "made by an uninterrupted passage of vibrating air, through the mouth. Primarily the movement of the tongue shapes the vowel. Some vowels have secondary shaping with the lips. All vowels are open and voiced" (Dyer & Strong, 2007b).

On hearing a new accent, it can be overwhelming to try to differentiate all the sounds at once. In order to break the palette down into smaller bite-size units, a dialect coach will often use a vowel list or a word list to mimic the specific vowel sounds needed for the new accent such as Sharpe and Hayden Rowles' (2007) Kit List. The actors listen to the new sounds and repeat the words with the vowel sounds to feel the articulators move in a different way. In this manner, they feel the sound which is reinforced with the phonetic symbols and words that they see on the sheet in front of them.

In working with actors, I noted one specific challenge to new sound making for Australians. The long [ɑ:] sound in ‘dark’ and ‘garden’ was difficult for some students to execute without involving nasality. This is a signature sound for RP and if the sound becomes nasal the sound shift is not precise enough. When outlining the regional variations in Australia, the Macquarie University website, (“Regional Accents Australian Voices,” 2014) revealed that the long [ɑ:] sound is found in Adelaide but not in most other parts of Australia. Macquarie University credit the reason to Adelaide’s relatively late settlement compared with the other states. There are differences between the pronunciation of this sound found in the word ‘France’ a short [æ] found in Queensland, and Perth, and the longer [ɑ:] found in Adelaide and RP.

As mentioned earlier, when discussing the RP vowel sounds with the students in *Dear Charlotte*, Dyer’s “Access Accents” resource was used. The actors repeated the following sentences to identify the specific vowel sounds needed. See below (Figure 10).

In addition to the practice sentences above, Moody’s Vowel chart below (Figure 11) was used to identify challenging phonemes specific to Western Australian actors. The chart outlines phonemes that have been identified by Moody as sounds that can prove to be a challenge for Australians making the shift to RP. The column on the left outlines the AusE sound and the column on the right the RP.

CONSONANTS OR THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN AUSE

Consonant sounds are a big giveaway and clue to any accent. Once the vowel sounds are explored in the new dialect, the actor needs to listen for the consonant sounds, identified by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles as Major Players. In order to explore the definition needed for RP, a consonant can be described in the following way:

A CONSONANT is made by an interrupted passage of air, through the mouth. The air is either completely or partially blocked by one or more of the Organs of Speech. Some consonants are voiced (vibrating) and some are voiceless or unvoiced. (Dyer & Strong, 2007b, p. 20)

The consonant sound [p], for example, is made by the two lips (bilabial) pressing together with the breath being released in a burst (plosive) and is an unvoiced consonant as the vocal chords do not vibrate but allow the breath to pass through. An example of a voiced consonant which is also placed on the lips is [b] but, in this case, the vocal folds vibrate when the breath is released. Try placing your hand on your throat or larynx to sense the difference between a voiced and unvoiced consonant when speaking a [p] and [b]. The first, is not activated by the vocal chords, and is a release of air, the second, is activated by the vocal chords and supported by the vibration.

In addition to voiced and voiceless consonants, there are varying placements of the articulators for vowels and consonants. The three consonant placements which are essential for engaging the muscularity needed for RP include the lips [p] and [b], the tongue and hard palate [t] and [d] and the back of the tongue and soft palate [k] and [g]. Moreover, these points of resonance vary from the lips to the back of the tongue and soft palate. When making the shift from AusE to RP, the organs of speech, in particular the lips and tongue tip, need to be strengthened and exercised. These plosive

practice sentences for shaping the sounds

RP	
u:	1 Feeling in a gloomy mood, Jude threw chewed fruit at the blue moon.
ju:	2 If you knew that dubious tune, I'd assume you were a new student.
ʊ	3 If good cookery books could push their looks, they would never be full of sugar.
ʊə	4 Surely enduring another tour to the moors is pure hell.
ɔ:	5 Bored with all the talking, my small daughter's jaw opened more with a yawn.
ɔɪ	6 Boiled oysters feel exploited, when annointed with a choice of oil.
ɒ	7 Tom's dog Oscar squatted down and watched him shop for hot sausages.
ɑ:	8 Margaret's car drove fast past Marble Arch, on the way to her aunt's garden party.
ʌ	9 Come to London one Sunday, Mother and have duck and onion stuffing for lunch.
əʊ	10 Don't throw stones into lonely holes, with no knowing where they're going.
ə	11 Another murder happened at the theatre, by a jealous actor with an axe to grind.
ɜ:	12 We heard the girl learning absurd words and hurling dirty curses at the world.
aʊ	13 Crouch down scouts and no loud shouting, there's a cow on the downs.
aɪ	14 At my time of life, I like flying high and smiling wide from deep inside.
æ	15 That black cat that's sat on the mat, having a nap, has flat, flappy ears.
eə	16 The careless hare daringly stared at the pair of bears, from under the chair.
e	17 Evidently Fred intends revenge, by sending a dreadful letter.
eɪ	18 Pace and facial space make verbal grace on a daily basis.
ɪə	19 His weird disappearance from here on the pier, was clearly mysterious.
ɪ	20 Bridget wickedly kicked her little sister and hit her with her fists.
i:	21 Please be peaceful and discreet, by leaving the team immediately.

more practice sentences for shaping the sounds

5 LONG VOWELS	{ SMALL BIRDS SEE FAST MOVES. BORED GIRLS NEED LARGE SHOES
7 SHORT VOWELS	THE BLACK PEN IS NOT MUCH GOOD.
8 DIPHTHONGS	PURE WHITE CLOUDS JOIN, PLAY and BLOW CLEAR AIR.
/ʌ/	I <u>m</u> ust <u>j</u> ust put (s <u>o</u> me) b <u>u</u> tter in the pudd <u>ing</u> and (s <u>o</u> me) s <u>u</u> gar in the c <u>u</u> stard.
/p/ /t/ /k/	Packet of tea, coffee and biscuits.
/b/ /d/ /g/	Dirty dogs, growling and barking with gusto.
/h/	Have you ever heard of Hazel getting heated and having hysterics?
/m/ /n/ /ŋ/	Anxious moaning men must never sing their thanks, when skiing on mountains.
/l/ [ɫ] /r/	Little red and yellow roses in a real restaurant, live longer when love rules the world.
LINKING INTRUSIVE R	Her <u>i</u> dea <u>x</u> of a law <u>x</u> abiding country allows no room for <u>e</u> xploration.
/tɪ/	It'll be fine to <u>s</u> ettle the <u>m</u> etal <u>b</u> ottle by the <u>r</u> attling kettle.
/dɪ/	I get <u>m</u> uddled with <u>h</u> andling the <u>p</u> edals, while <u>t</u> oddling through <u>p</u> uddles of rain.
/tɪn/ /dn/	If you <u>c</u> ouldn't be <u>c</u> ertain the <u>k</u> itten <u>h</u> adn't <u>h</u> idden behind the <u>c</u> urtains, I <u>w</u> ouldn't have asked you.

Figure 10. Dyer and Strong, Access Accents Received Pronunciation (2007). Practice Sentences for RP.

AusE	RP
In the word NOW the vowel sound is [eu] In the word TIME the vowel sound is [ɔɪ]	In the word NOW the vowel sound is [au] In the word TIME the vowel sound is [aɪ]
[ʌ]	In the word TELL the vowel sound is [e]
In the words PASS DANCE [æ]	In the words PASS DANCE the vowel is a long [ɑ:]
Suffixes eg In the word PAINTED the final vowel is [ə] In the word PRETTIEST the final vowel is [əst]	In the word PAINTED the final vowel is [ɪ] In the word PRETTIEST the final vowel is [ɪst]
In the word CONCEALED the first vowel is [ɒ]	In the word CONCEALED the first vowel is [ə] Practice words, Again, against, been, neither and either [aɪ] ceremony, project, innocent, says, yogurt.
Diphthongs OUT, NO, DAY the vowels are swallowed.	The sounds return forward

Figure 11. Moody's (2014) Vowel findings when comparing AusE to RP.

sounds in particular require a firm release of air from the three consonant placements described above. AusE has a dark coloured L [ɫ] for example. However considering the diversity within an Australian accent this statement is a generalisation, which became evident when working as a dialect coach on the musical *Annie* (Charnin et al., 1977). I noticed that a few of the girls (who were from Perth) found the shift to a dark L difficult to achieve. They had a light L sound which led me to discover that there are a few English sounds in the Perth accent. I had to concentrate on getting them to relax the end of their tongue and loosen it to shift to an American sound.

The two planets Rhotic or non Rhotic

The first consonant I tend to introduce is the [r] sound. The R sound has two distinctions either rhotic or non-rhotic. The rhotic sound is made by the tongue blade lifting and colouring the r, whereas the non-rhotic is when the tongue is flat. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles, use the following sentence

to identify if an accent is a rhotic on non-rhotic one; “Margaret and Gerry were very rowdy after drinking the terrible water” (2007, p. 62). AusE and RP are examples of a non-rhotic accent whereas the General American accent is rhotic. Some students when shifting to GenAm from AusE find it hard to keep the coloured [r] consistent and the American Southern, or non-rhotic Plantation Southern, seems to be easier to find as the tongue remains flat while speaking the [r] sound. For example, while teaching at WAAPA, one of the musical theatre students sang the title song from *Sunset Boulevard* and the position of his tongue was too pointy, so I suggested he spread the tongue in order to find the American [ɹ] sound. As said before, the L can be a dead giveaway when Australians are making the shift from AusE to GenAm. Dyer has a couple of great sentences that I found helpful in finding the dark [ɹ]. They are, “Let the tongue lie loose” and “Lemon yellow Cadillac rolling along the road”(2007a). These sentences assist in spreading the tongue for the desired sound.

During the *Dear Charlotte*, workshop the difference between the AusE and RP intonation was discussed. RP is a major key accent because of the wider pitch range, while Australian is a minor key accent, because of the minor pitch changes in speech. The RP intonation can be more of a statement than an utterance in AusE, with upward inflections that cause sentences to sound like reflections rather than questions. A question intonation is placed on the key words rather than at the end of the sentence. Stressed and unstressed words and syllables need to be observed to give rhythm, for example in the phrase, ‘cup of tea’ (Personal Communication, Moody, 2014). The ‘of’ is unstressed. A further example is the second [o] in photocopy, which is unstressed and becomes a neutral schwa [ə]. In general Australian speakers tend to have more energy at the beginning of an utterance whereas RP tend to have greater energy later in the utterance, certainly not pulling back on the last few words (Personal Communication, Moody, 2014). ‘How are you?’ has a distinct stress on the ‘you’ in contrast to the falling away of stress in ‘How ya goin?’ Or ‘Will she be alright?’ varies from ‘She’ll be right.’ Likewise, ‘Will I see you later?’ Is different from ‘See ya later’. To counteract this tendency to pull back at the end of the phrase and not commit to the end of the line, I encourage students to kick the air with their foot or punch the air with their fist on the last word of each phrase to drive the sound to the end of the phrase.

DIRECTION OF SOUND

Before undertaking this research, I was not aware of the term direction of sound. This concept is discussed by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007)(Figure 12), and additionally, by expert McGuire (Interview, 26 November, 2013). According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles, the sound may begin in one place but move out of the mouth in a specific direction. What needs to be identified is where it begins and to where it travels. Voice and Dialect practitioner, McGuire encourages her students to use a white board to draw where the path of sound begins and ends (Interview, 26 November, 2013). Having some idea of the dynamic quality of the sound and its trajectory proved to be a challenge for my students during rehearsals on *Dear Charlotte*, as they were unable to hear where the sound began and travelled to when uncovering their own idiolects.

It is worth noting, that the general characteristics of the General AusE dialect that have been identified above, represented the majority dialect in the cast of *Dear Charlotte*,. However being but a tiny proportion of all Australian actors, I have to admit that my research has its limitations. By the

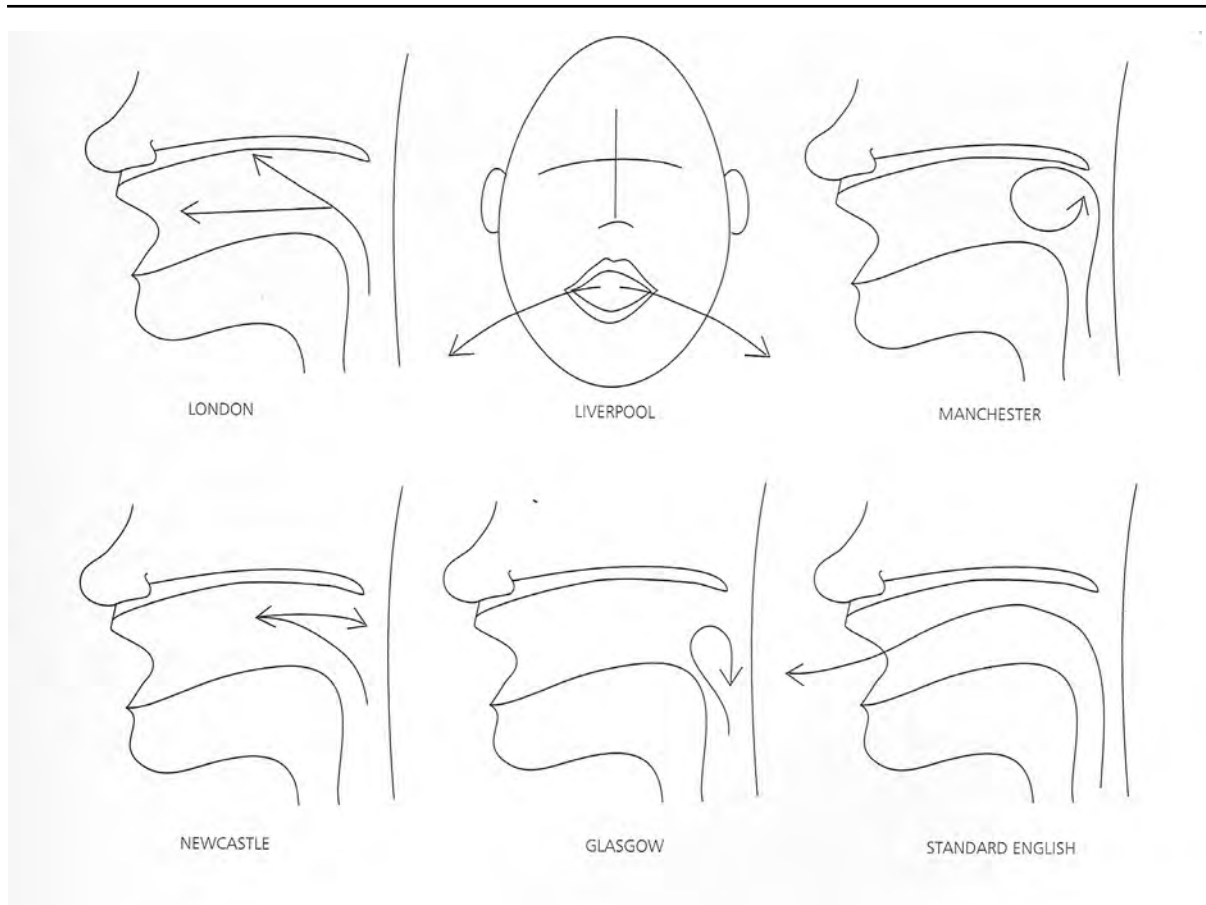


Figure 12. Edda Sharpe and Jan Haydn Rowles, (2007) Direction of Sound.

same token, the research did reveal that, in order to execute an RP accent, an AusE actor does need more flexibility in the soft palate, a wider pitch range for intonation, more definition and muscularity for accuracy of tongue tip and lips, and more breath energy. Although this research delves into the AusE dialect the student actors who participated live in Western Australia but not all have been born and raised here and may well move to other parts of Australia. The specific details of the lazy soft palate are not specific to Western Australia they are across the board in the cities and regional areas. These cultural influences are not specific to WA.

DIFFICULT VOWEL SHIFTS WITH INSERTED FILM CLIPS

The following film clips, address the success or otherwise of the shift from an Australian accent to RP for the cast of *Dear Charlotte*. The filming occurred at the final dress rehearsal.

I have chosen to present the following film clips and still images as representative of a three-fold multi modal format. Every student learns differently, whether by understanding the position of the lips, jaw, and tongue; hearing the sound while watching the film; and feeling the mouth position, or all of these methods in combination. By choosing to present the information in this way, I aim to encompass several modes of learning for readers of this thesis.

The specific vowels and consonants below represent the difficult shifts that the actor had to make when finding the RP sounds.

Video Clip 1: Vowel shift from [æ] to [ɑ:]. The actor in this clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed. The challenge for the actor was the vowel in the word ‘can’t.’ The [æ] vowel needs to be replaced with an [ɑ:] sound. In the sentence “I was on Oxford Street but wanted Kings Cross somehow, you CAN’T get from Oxford Street to Kings Cross.” The actor says /kænt/ using the [æ] vowel instead of /kɑ:nt/ with the long [ɑ:] required. The subtle change in sound from [æ] to [ɑ:] can only be achieved once the actor has sufficient critical listening skills to master the aural shift. This actor needed more of a shift to find the [ɑ:] vowel, in the word /kɑ:nt/ due to the nasality or low position of the soft palate and the high position of the back of the tongue releasing the sound out through the nose rather than out through the oral cavity. Releasing the lower jaw more would help with this. Additional words where the [æ] sound was challenging to shift to the long [ɑ:] occurred in the following words: charming, departing, charge.

Video Clip 2: Vowel shift from [æ] to [ɑ:]. The actor in this clip has been chosen as the same vowel shift is needed. The first vowel concerns the word answer [æ] which needs to shift to answer [ɑ:]. In the sentence “What ANSWER can I give him?” The actor is saying /ænsɹ/ instead of /ɑ:nsə/ with the long [ɑ:] required and the schwa at the end.

I recommend dropping the jaw open and inhaling a surprise intake of breath to lift the soft palate and flatten the tongue. Flexibility of the soft palate can be found by inhaling on a silent ‘kaa’ as discussed in the following *Awakening the Actors’ Embodiment* chapter. Useful practice sentences for this vowel sound include: “Arthur’s garden is filled with large calming palms.” OR “Dad’s new car is a Jaguar.” Speaking on the edge of a yawn is also useful for lifting the soft palate. (Figure 13 and 14).

Video Clip 3: Vowel shift from [ɒ] to [ʌ]. The actor in this clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel change needed. The first vowel on the word ‘cultivated’ /kʌltiveɪtɪd/ [ɒ] becomes /kʌltiveɪtəd/ [ʌ]. In addition, in the sentence “Do you mean Branny in the letter?” the actor uses a short [ʌ] for the final vowel in the word ‘letter’ /lɛtɹ/ instead of /lɛtə/. In addition the actor’s alignment is too relaxed and needs to be more upright. This actor needed more of a shift to find the [ʌ]. Both the [ə] vowel and [ʌ] are mid vowels and this requires the middle of the tongue to drop.

Video Clip 4: Vowel shift from [ɒ] to [ʌ]. This actor has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel change needed in the word ‘cultivated’ /kʌltiveɪtəd/. The first vowel sound in the word cultivated [ʌ] vowel becomes [ɒ] /kɒltiveɪtəd/. In addition in the sentence using the word ‘indulge’ /ɪndʌldʒ/ where the [ʌ] vowel becomes [ɒ] becomes /ɪndɒldʒ/.

I recommend stretching the tongue from tip to roots by sticking it out of the mouth extending it as far as it can go. A further stretch involves placing the tip of the tongue behind the bottom teeth and pushing the middle of the tongue forward in the mouth in a ‘Ya’ position. A useful practice sentence for this vowel sound is “Don’t touch much stuff, said the glum, sun struck nun” sourced from Moody’s general list of vowel sounds (Moody, 2014). (Figure 15 and 16).

Video Clip 5: Vowel shift from [ʌ] to [ə]. This actor has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel change needed at the end of the word ‘better’ /betɹ/. In the sentence “If you’re going to figure drawing, you BETTER hurry”. The final vowel sound on the word ‘better’ becomes [ə].

Video Clip 6: Vowel shift from [ʌ] to [ə]. In the sentence “Leave England behind all TOGETHER.” The word /tɔʒeðɹ / the final vowel [ʌ] becomes the vowel [ə]. In addition please listen for the word ‘spinster’ where similarly the final vowel in the word /spɪnstɹ/ [ʌ] becomes /spɪnstə/ [ə]. The actor



Video Clip 1: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the words 'can't' and 'go.' Duration: 16 seconds.



Video Clip 2: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'answer.' Duration: 17 seconds.



Figure 13: Shaping of the mouth for the AusE [æ] vowel

In the AusE setting the lips are slightly spread when making this vowel sound. The jaw is slightly open and the centre of the tongue is towards the front of the mouth.

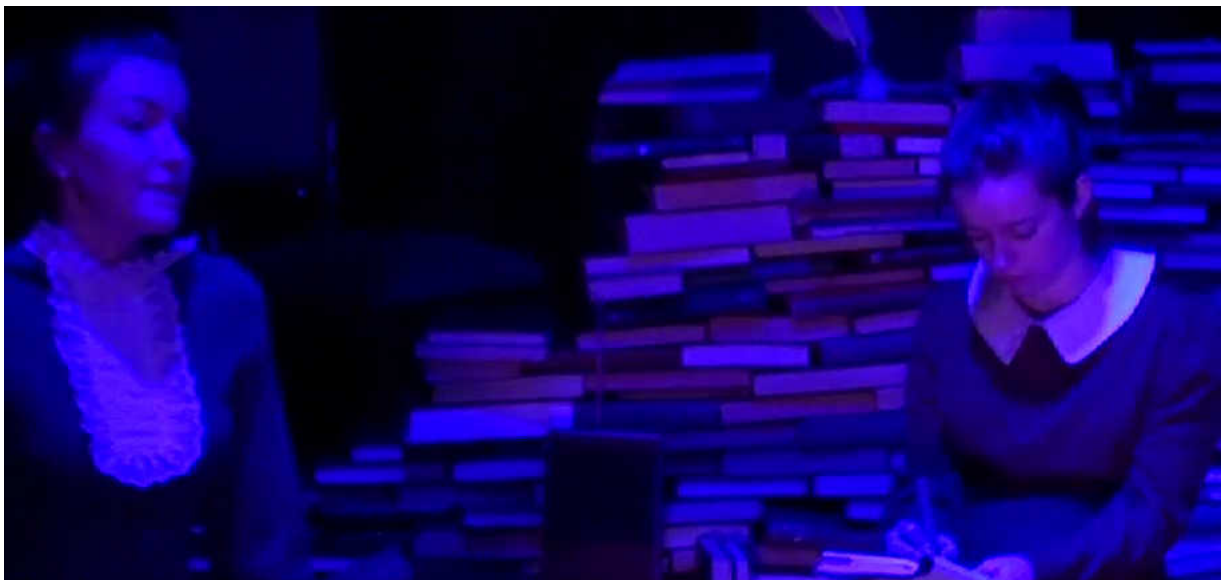


Figure 14: Shaping of the mouth for the RP [ɑ:] vowel

In the RP setting the jaw needs to be more open and the back of the tongue drops down to release the sound orally rather than involving nasality.



Video Clip 3: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP the [ɒ] vowel to the [ʌ]. The actor in this film has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'cultivated' and 'indulge'. Duration: 22 seconds.



Video Clip 4: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP the [ɒ] vowel to the [ʌ]. The actor in this short film has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'cultivated'. Duration: 38 seconds.



Figure 15: Shaping of the mouth for the AusE [ɒ] vowel

In the AusE setting the lips come forward slightly without opening the jaw too much. The back of the tongue is lowered to shape the vowel sound.



Figure 16: Shaping of the mouth for the RP [ʌ] vowel needed

In the RP setting the mouth opening is wider as the lower jaw releases.

needed more of a shift to find the mid neutral central [ə] vowel.

I recommend jaw release exercises. Starting with the head turned over the right shoulder, nod the head all the way to the left shoulder releasing out the back of the neck. Furthermore, placing a thumb and forefinger under the chin, slowly drop the head back while keeping the chin in place to stretch the masseter muscle. Practice sentences are the same as above. (Figure 17 and 18).

DIPHTHONG FINDINGS

Diphthongs, described as “[c]ompound or double Vowels” (Dyer & Strong, 2007b) occur when two vowels combine to form one sound. For example in the word ‘cow’ the vowels combined are [aʊ]. The challenging diphthongs were as follows:

Video Clip 7: Diphthong shift from [əʊ] to [oʊ]. This actor has been chosen to demonstrate the diphthong. In the sentence “Oh, I’m not going here,” the diphthong in the word going /gouɪŋ/ [oʊ] becomes going /gəʊɪŋ/ [əʊ].

Video Clip 8: Diphthong shift from [əʊ] to [oʊ]. This actor has been chosen to demonstrate the diphthong in the sentence “and don’t say find a husband, or I’ll send you back” the diphthong in the word don’t /doʊnt/ [oʊ] becomes /dəʊnt/ [əʊ]. The actor needed more of a shift when saying don’t [oʊ] to [əʊ].

I recommend flattening the tongue to find the RP placement of the diphthong. In addition, I would suggest tongue stretches to release tension in the back of the tongue and practice words such as ‘poe’, ‘toe’ and ‘koe’ ‘don’t’, and ‘go’. (Figure 19 and 20).

CONSONANT FINDINGS

Video Clip 9: Consonant shift [w] to [l]. This actor has been chosen as the consonant [l] was replaced with a [w]. Please listen to the line “I am convinced the only thing to do is to leave England all together”. The words ‘all together’ becomes /ɔ:l tægɛðl/ instead of /ɔ:l tægɛðə/. In addition to this, the word ‘school’ from the line “The moment I finish school, I shall set sail for New Zealand.” The word /sku:l/ the final vowel is a [w] instead of a [l]. Included in this is the vowel [ʌ] in the word /spɪnstʌ/ which becomes /spɪstə/ as mentioned previously.

Video Clip 10: Consonant shift [w] to [l]. This actor has been chosen to demonstrate the final [l] on the word ‘continental’ in the sentence “Your continental education”. The word /kɒntɪnəntəl/ becomes /kɒntɪnəntəw/ education.

The actor needed more precision of the tongue tip when making the [l] sound. This is because the lips are forming the sound rather than the tongue tip. I recommend regular practice of the sounds; la la la la, te te te te, de de de de, and ne ne ne ne for increasing muscularity of the tongue tip and consonant clarity and accuracy. Practice sentence: Lilly lolly, Lilly lolly, Lilly lolly. In addition to this, keeping the jaw released flick the tongue up and down inside the mouth in quick rapid movements. (Figure 21 and 22).

During rehearsals, notes were given to each individual actor in the cast. It is worth pointing out that I could not possibly cover every single sound that was inaccurate in the filming of the two-hour dress rehearsal. The sounds that have been analysed, identified and described above were selected as the most common difficulties found and were not as successful in the acquisition process, which reoccurred for one or more of the actors. The shaping of the mouth images have been included in this chapter however this discussion is an overlap with the discussion on embodiment because you cannot take the listening away from embodiment.



Video Clip 5: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'better' and 'going.' Duration: 11 seconds.



Video Clip 6: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the words 'together' and 'spinster.' Duration: 20 seconds.



Figure 17: Shaping of the mouth for the AusE [ʌ] vowel.

In AusE the jaw is open and the back of the tongue is held high



Figure 18: Shaping of the mouth for the RP neutral schwa [ə] vowel.

In RP the jaw is mid open and the position of the tongue is central and neutral.



Video Clip 7: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'don't.' Duration: 31 seconds.



Video Clip 8: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the diphthong shift needed in the word 'going.' Duration: 37 seconds.'



Figure 19: Shaping of the mouth for the AusE [eu] vowel.

In AusE the setting of the lips is fairly spread with the back of the tongue lifted causing nasality.



Figure 20: Shaping of the mouth for the RP diphthong [ou].

In RP the setting of the lips is rounder and is made by the lips pushed forward from a larger or to a smaller o shape. This is also more of an oral sound.



Video Clip 9: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the vowel shift needed in the word 'continental.' Duration: 24 seconds.



Video Clip 10: Challenging Vowel Shift from AusE to RP. The actor in this short film clip has been chosen to demonstrate the consonant shift needed in the word 'school.' Duration: 27 seconds



Figure 21: Shaping of the mouth for the AusE [w] consonant.

In AusE the setting of the lips are full, round and bunched forward to form the sound of the final l and the tip of the tongue is not used.



Figure 22: Shaping of the mouth for the RP [l] consonant.

In RP there is a small mouth opening and the lips are rounded but the tip of the tongue is pointed and touches the back of the front teeth on the final l.

A MUSICAL EAR

My research suggests that knowledge of music can help the actor in learning phonetics. During my observations at WAAPA, speech pathologist, Ros Barnes (Personal Communication, 16 October, 2012) pointed out that, for the last five years, the musical theatre students' grades on the final exam were consistently higher than those of the acting students. Why are these students more successful when it comes to learning phonetic symbols?

According to Barnes (Personal Communication, 16 October, 2012), the main difference between the acting and the musical theatre students is that the latter are able to read music due to the need to analyse sounds when they are singing. They are aware of how long to hold a note and what is the best mouth shape to make that note in order to make sense of the word or sign. Barnes believes this type of analysis constitutes an advantage when it comes to learning phonetics and coding sounds. Jones supports this perspective by observing:

I teach students on both the acting and musical theatre courses and have observed that those on the MT courses who will have strong singing skills, aural responses and musical aptitude are often much quicker at shifting into unfamiliar sounds and re-placing tongue positions etc. For me learning accents has a lot in common with learning music-notation (phonetics), rhythm and tune, identifying major and minor keys, phrasing, etc. (Interview, 9 September, 2013)

Below is a chart (Figure 23) outlining the results of the acting and musical theatre students' phonetics tests over the last five years. The red column represents the musical theatre phonetic test results and the blue column represents the acting students' phonetic test results. Apart from the year 2010, the other four years show better results from the musical theatre students, thus reinforcing Barnes' hypothesis that the musical theatre students are better able to analyse sounds or have a greater aptitude for phonetics because they have studied music.

These findings suggest that students with strong singing skills might have an advantage when learning a new dialect, although this was not an area directly explored in this study. When breaking down the RP dialect, there are five elements that need to be explored fully: foundations, including zone, tone, setting, and direction of sound; accuracy of vowel and consonant shifts; awareness of intonation and musicality; rhythm and stress; and embodiment.

Structure of voice course for actors

What this research has revealed is that a rethinking regarding where phonetic instruction should sit within a three-year acting course syllabus could be beneficial. Possible suggestions would include students continuing practising symbols and the use of phonetics beyond first year. This concern has arisen because anecdotal evidence suggests that students are failing to retain their knowledge of symbols and use of phonetics throughout their three-year training. Another suggestion would be to include the multi-modal learning model with YouTube phonetic equivalents and examples. When using resource recordings, it would seem advantageous to insert film and still images with the phonetic symbols and text. The three fold, see it/feel

it/ hear it approach as suggested by Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) could assist in the retention of the phonetic symbols. Similar to the VADA website, to enhance my practice, I intend to continue collecting film samples of AusE speakers to build an archive of challenging sounds, to demonstrate what they look like and what can be done to change them.

CONCLUSION

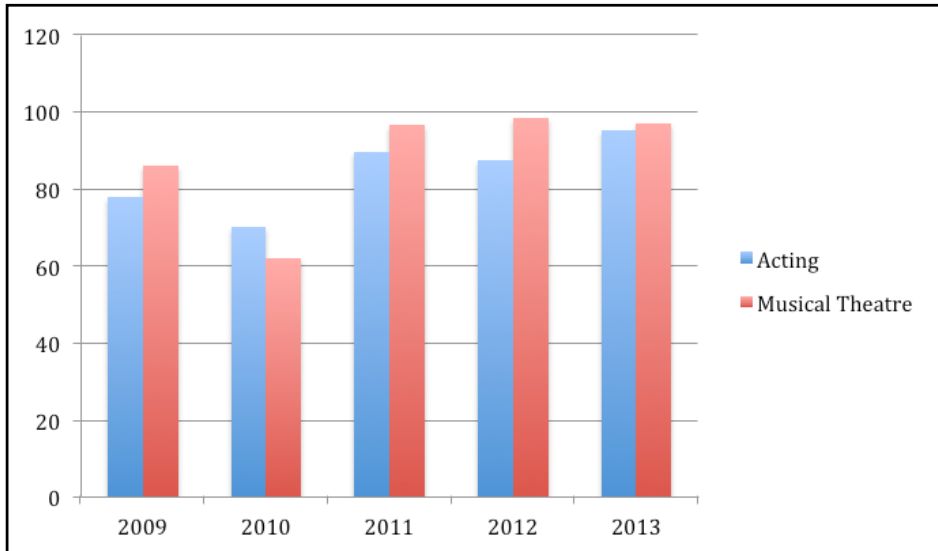
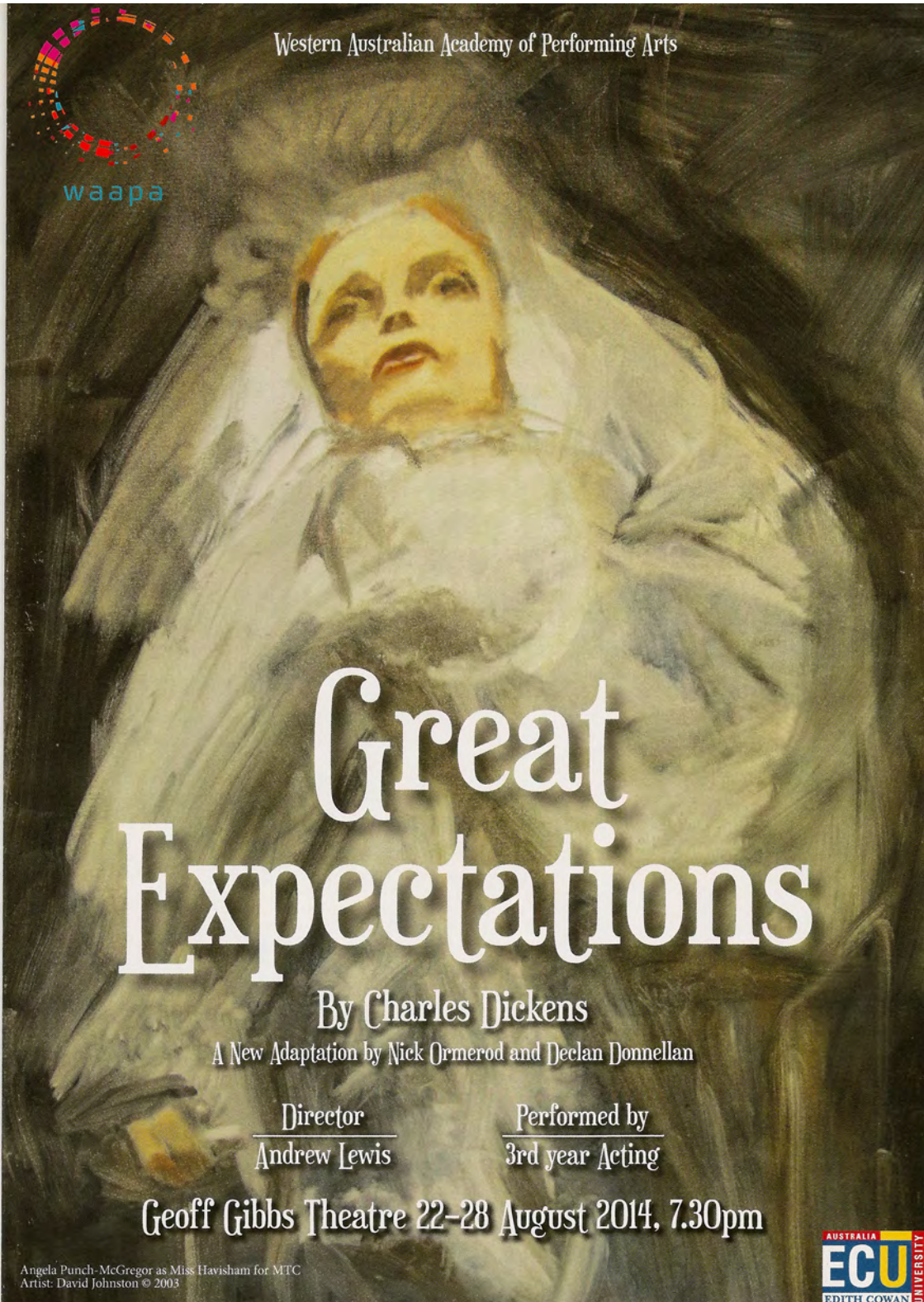


Figure 23: Ros Barnes' phonetic test results (2013) WAAPA musical theatre and acting students

In this chapter I have identified the importance of developing the actors' listening skills. Active critical listening is a skill that can be trained to achieve greater sensitivity to variations or changes in the sounds that the actor is trying to recreate. Findings indicate that actors must work on the detail and accuracy of both vowel and consonant shifts to find the definition and precision required when shifting to RP and to become aware of how subtle movements of the soft palate or lips can change and affect their sound.

I have argued that teaching phonetics can be a useful tool as part of actor training and the awakening of listening skills. The section on phonetics outlines, demonstrates the requirements needed for the precise and detailed work that is involved. This chapter has also identified general characteristics and findings that were discovered when shifting from AusE to RP such as specific vowel shifts, flexibility in the soft palate, wider pitch range for intonation, more definition and muscularity for accuracy of tongue tip and lips, more release in the jaw constitute factors which need attention. The final section explored how knowledge of music can help the actor in learning phonetics. Main findings indicate that once sound differentiation is detected by the ear, other physical skills need to be employed to complete the shift. The next chapter will consider such physical skills in Awakening the Actors' Embodiment.

Awakening the Actors' Embodiment



Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

waapa

Great Expectations

By Charles Dickens
A New Adaptation by Nick Ormerod and Declan Donnellan

Director
Andrew Lewis

Performed by
3rd year Acting

Geoff Gibbs Theatre 22-28 August 2014, 7.30pm

Angela Punch-McGregor as Miss Havisham for MTC
Artist: David Johnston © 2003

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CHAPTER 5. AWAKENING THE ACTORS' EMBODIMENT

This chapter will discuss the awakening of the body that is needed for the actor to be engaged in accent and dialect acquisition, and suggests physical exercises to assist in achieving the changes. When working on accents, the body and voice are mutually connected. Colaianni describes this interdependence succinctly: "As you explore accents you're exploring new frontiers and facets of your own voice. Your body becomes a tuning fork for the expression of the voices of the people of other cultures" (1994, p. 67).

The striking of a tuning fork provides the sounding board which aids in matching sounds from different sources to the pitch of the struck fork. That is what occurs in accent acquisition when the body is conditioned to match the sound of another culture. A core beginning note brings all the sounds together, like in acquiring a French accent where the uvular [r] might be a good departure point from which to work. If a student finds an accent difficult, for example a New York accent, then one sound can become a building block on which to construct the full vocal range (or sound blocks) of those speakers.

Everyone has a habitual setting of the articulators; a way of using their tongue, their jaw, and their lips that is easy and comfortable. Consequently, an actor cannot work on dialects without working on his or her body. According to Rodenburg, the shaping of the articulators is a crucial component in the acquisition of a new accent and dialect for the actor, stating that "[a]lthough any speaker produces the basic components of voice in exactly the same way (all of us around the world sing the same), our languages are shaped differently in the mouth" (1992, p. 116).

This quotation clearly explains how every language and, therefore, every accent and dialect has a different mouth shape required from the articulators. Awareness is not only necessary to discern feeling and movement in the mouth (bigger space is needed if going from AusE to RP) but exploring accents also involves whole body engagement, including breath, posture and gesture. We all make sound using breath and vibration but for the purposes of my research, the vital part of the vocal process is that an actor is able to change the shape of the mouth to produce different sounds. Thus by changing the shape of the speech muscles, spreading the cheeks or rounding the lips, the body irrevocably becomes involved in speech making.

When discussing factors involved in accent acquisition, Jones observed that "*Muscle memory plays a key part*" (Interview, 9 September, 2013) and this response formed a common theme from the interview participants. Muscle memory is as pertinent to cognition (as discussed in Chapter Three, *Awakening the Actor's Cognitive Mind*) as it is to embodiment. Accent and dialect training gives the actor an awareness of how he/she has been using the tongue or soft palate for example. When teaching actors, I often ask the student to feel what happens to the lips/cheeks or tongue when making a specific vowel or consonant sound. GenAm requires a spread tongue for the dark [ɪ] consonant while German, on the other hand, does not have a dark [ɪ] and uses a light [ɪ] where the tongue tip is shaped more like a dart, straight and pointy. By such questioning, I bring awareness to

their physical manipulations and the sensations derived from the different movements in order to incorporate Kopf's (2003) advice on the role of kinaesthetic learning or muscle memory in making sound changes. These further examples reinforce the melding that happens between brain and body. Rodenberg alludes to much the same identification between voice and body.

Always connect the whole body, breath and voice to any work on accent. If you just shift sounds around in your mouth the accent will sound cosmetic and false. So breathe all the sounds. (1997, p. 128)

By only shifting the sounds around in your mouth and not incorporating the posture and gestures, an actor becomes a talking head rather than a whole person with a mind body and spirit as advocated by McGuire (Interview, 26 November, 2013). Audiences want to experience a whole person speaking not a token dismembered gesture to an accent that can sound affected and disembodied. Rodenberg believes that we can know or experience words "on different levels: in the head, in the heart and then in the whole body" (1997, p. 174). In the head, sounds are technical and dry, in the heart, passion rules and may become self-indulgent but knowing the text in the whole body is a skill that leads an actor to engagement with the character. When teaching accents, the aim is to encourage the whole body to become involved in the shift from one accent to another. My research suggests that breathing differently or standing differently or using more energy in the arms can be fundamental places from which to start to make a big difference in absorbing accents and dialects.

When observing Moody (2014) teaching the Dublin accent, she started the class by playing the traditional music of the country and then asked the students to identify whether the accent corresponds to a major or minor key. Clues, she advised, may be detected in intonation. Moody then invited the students to move to the music as a way of bringing the rhythm into their bodies. This approach is also used by Kopf (2003) and Jones (Interview, 9 September, 2013) who play Flamenco music (the symbolic music of the nation) when teaching students Spanish accents.

McGuire claims that sound "*has to evolve from the body, the body is visceral imagination*" (Interview, 26 November, 2013). Similarly, Jones observes that a "*real understanding of the physicality of the new accent [is needed], where it is placed in the mouth and how it relates to your own natural dialect.*" The extension of this process was explained as "*the ability to then translate your personal embodiment to a class*" (Interview, 9 September, 2013).

This process of embodiment is a crucial component when it comes to awakening an actor to the rich resources of accents and dialects. How the whole body behaves, the postural and gestural variations, is fundamental to the actor's performance and the believability of the characterisation. This holistic engagement in the dialect supports both Rodenburg's (1997) and Linklater's (2006) convictions that integration of the mind, body, voice and emotions culminates in an embodied performance.

When exploring a new dialect "the whole person, a physical, thinking, functioning entity" (Kennedy, 2009, p. 415) is involved. This notion of the 'whole person' was adapted from the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), who rejects the Cartesian mind-body dualism and proposes that it is through relations in the world with other beings, other objects, that experience is perceived and knowledge and meaning is created. This phenomenological view is that things only

exist because we experience them. The example Merleau-Ponty gives by way of illustration is the handshake, where “I can feel myself touched as well at the same time touching” (Cited in Kennedy, 2009, p. 415), which provides a useful analogy for “the sound of the speaking voice, which occurs in the body of the speaker and that of the listener” (Kennedy, 2009, p. 415). I can feel the sound being created in my body and at the same time I know the sound I make will reach other ears in the room. I can feel my voice vibrating in my body as the breath strikes the vocal folds and creates sound released out into space to touch someone else.

This phenomenological view of locating the voice within the body is useful for my research and teaching practice. The body makes and receives the voice. The belief that we cannot know anything apart from through our perception fits well within accent and dialect training. The process of accent acquisition is experienced through the senses. The feeling of the mouth and creating space in places that are non-habitual allows the actor to experience the embodiment of the accent and dialect. This sensory awareness is crucial to forge a bridge between knowing and doing.

UNCOVERING FUNDAMENTALS

The technique I chose for the workshop was based on Sharpe and Hayden Rowles’ book “How to do Accents” (2007). The reason for choosing this technique concerned the level of detail given in the fundamentals of “the YOU” and “the NEW” which these experts employ to explore the structure inherent in all accents. The actors in *Dear Charlotte*, were asked to complete a chart (Figure 24) to help them identify their own idiolect. Once the students had uncovered the fundamentals that made up their accent and completed the YOU section of the chart, we moved on to the NEW to identify the shift from an AusE dialect to an RP dialect.

Many discoveries emerged from the first workshop including the challenges in uncovering the unconscious idiolect when developing a personal profile of what characteristics made up a student’s accent. A critical moment in my research appeared when I realised that I did not spend time challenging the actors’ perceptions of their own vocal profiles at the beginning of the process, a realisation that became part and parcel of my awakening as an accent and dialect coach as I progressed through the research.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE ARTICULATORS

During the *Dear Charlotte*, workshop, the students were introduced to the active and passive articulators one by one while examining their mouths with a hand mirror. Passive (non-moving articulators) concern the teeth, the alveolar ridge or (upper gum ridge behind the front teeth) and the hard palate (the dome or roof of the mouth), and the Active (moving articulators) concern the lips and cheeks, lower jaw, tongue and soft palate. I explained the ways in which the muscles of the lips and cheeks move, the jaw muscle (the masseter), the tongue and its different sections, the soft palate (the fleshy part at the back of the mouth) which directs the sound either into the nose or into the mouth, and the voice box, where vibration is produced (also known as the larynx) and vocal folds. I explained that different muscles hold varying degrees of tension and looseness depending on the accent and the individual idiolect.

You and the New chart

ACCENT	
YOU	General Australian
NEW	Received Pronunciation

The Foundations

	ZONE	ZONE	SETTING	DIRECTION
YOU	6	Twangy and brassy	Lips spread Soft palate low Jaw held Back of the tongue high	Punched up into the hard palate then out the sides of the mouth
NEW	2 Gum ridge	Smooth, soft and velvety	Tongue tip active Released jaw Cheeks scooped Soft palate high and bouncy	Forward out of the mouth like a wave

Figure 24: Sample You and the New chart outlining the foundations of the actor's idiolect and RP from rehearsals of *Dear Charlotte*, (2013).

When it comes to accent training, it is useful, as indicated elsewhere, for individuals to identify where their tensions lie in order to find the flexibility to make a shift to a new accent. This knowledge of where tensions lie involves raising awareness, which is the prerequisite to a shift. “Once an individual has achieved a shift in sound making, whether consciously or by accident, then the shift has to be practised to form a new and, in this instance, productive habit” (Personal Communication, Moody, 2014). Movement and physicality specialist, Lorna Marshall suggests that physical work makes ideas become concrete, stating that “You have to physically experience, then repeat and claim through practice” (2008, p. 144). By putting in the “solid learning” (2008, p. 144) at the beginning of the acquisition process, the actor is given “confidence to play.” “The core business of performing is repeatability” (2008, p. 144). Marshall’s work on actor training has been influential in exploring an actor’s physical embodiment for character. This solid learning can be extended to include accent and dialect training.

Idiolect

Sharpe and Haydn Rowles note that: “In each accent [or idiolect] the muscles of the face and mouth are shaped and held in a particular position” (2007, p. 39). As specified above, the articulators determine the sound produced. Uncovering an actor’s habitual setting or how he/she shapes the sounds in the mouth is the starting point from which to begin any project to change or accumulate sound (See Appendix 2).

In the workshop that took place during the rehearsals for *Dear Charlotte*, the starting point was uncovering the fundamentals that made up the students’ idiolects. This was not an easy task for the actors. Responses from the questionnaire identified that six out of the nine actors who responded had no previous idea of the fundamentals that make up their own dialect. This result seems to indicate that the students gained something from the workshop.

By identifying his/her own idiolect, the actor is then able to know where the shift needs to occur in order to find the different muscular setting for the new accent. Once the idiolect has been uncovered, learning the new structure and then retaining it is a key factor in the transition, as the former habit will tend to creep back in. This is why springboard sentences (discussed in more detail later on in this chapter) such as “Arthur’s garden is filled with large calming palms” are so useful as they launch you into the new shapes in the mouth for the specific sound, which in this case is the oral [ɑ:].

Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) break down the mouth into separate zones (See Figure 2 in the Background Chapter). McGuire calls this configuration of zones the source and path of resonance, asserting that,

This is probably the most important thing about an accent. Because it’s where the vibration begin and how does it travel? Literally I will have the students draw a picture of it sometimes and it will be so totally bizarre but personal and they get it. (Interview, 26 November, 2013)

This path of resonance is a fairly new concept within the world of accent training. Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) identify this path of resonance as “the direction of sound”. For example, when speaking RP the vibration occurs mostly in Zone 2 at the alveolar ridge just behind the front teeth.

The tip of the tongue makes contact with the ridge, quickly flicking and tapping. The direction of sound effortlessly escaping out of the mouth like a breath on a wave, which means air does not escape out of the sides of the mouth, but through a released and open jaw (Please refer to previous diagram of direction of sound in *Awakening the Actors' Listening* chapter).

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH [AUSE] AND JAW TENSION

How was the Australian accent formed? My practice and the *Dear Charlotte*, experience enabled me to understand that students (and actors for that matter) need to be proud of the robust and strong sound that represents the strength of the Australian accent/dialect. To reiterate Agnew's earlier assertion "Australians are tough".

Ever since the country was colonised only the most virulent, healthy, fittest voices were going to have survived here and that has bred us tough here. I mean we've got snakes here that swallow crocodiles for God's sake so our voices are tough and flexible. We can swallow a crocodile here. (Interview, 16 March, 2014)

This quotation could be an exaggeration but coming to terms with the harsh Australian landscape and climate, does lead to a sense of national pride.

My experience of a summer in Perth when the temperature is over 40 degrees suggests that the mouth may not open very wide because dryness and breathing through the nose too deeply can be uncomfortable. Perceived from this angle, the mouth may exhibit a smaller opening in speech because of the heat. Rodenburg's (1992) belief that jaw tension is a common theme when it comes to the Australian accent was partially confirmed by my research. The students who displayed the most jaw tension produced sounds that were less clear because they came from a smaller mouth opening. In contrast, students who were able to relax and scoop out their cheeks produced sounds that were open and clear and the sound carried better in the space.

When I encourage WAAPA students to find more release in the jaw, they over-mouth the words in an attempt to find more freedom. Sometimes students also hold the jaw too open while trying to form the sounds. This is also a form of tension as it over extends the jaw. It is a fine balance to find a softness as well as an agility in the movement of the jaw and students do go through a transition period in trying to accomplish this skill. When the jaw is released, the muscles of the articulators are working in a larger space within the mouth and have to be stronger and more accurate.

Rodenburg's advice is that:

Many actors when working with a free jaw experience a few days of slurring their speech. Do not worry. This is a natural part of the process. If you have been speaking with a tight jaw the speech muscles have been working in a very cramped space. They haven't been used to working in a free way and are untrained and imprecise. They will soon learn. Go through this slurring phase because clearer and more dynamic speech will follow. (1997, p. 108)

This was useful advice for my student actors working from AusE to RP as they began to develop the muscles within this larger space. There was also a change needed in the muscles of the lips because of the spreading 'smile' shape of the lips commonly observed in AusE. This characteristic shape is called the 'smile mask' at WAAPA. When making the shift to RP, the outer sphincter muscles of the lips need to relax so the lips can form more vertical vowel shapes. The next section discusses details of the soft palate and the resultant nasality.

Further findings uncovering the fundamentals of the Australian accent during the workshop suggest that the soft palate is positioned low, resulting often in a nasal sound that is reputedly characteristic of an Australian sound. The function of the soft palate is to either send the breath through the mouth in an [ɑ] when it is lifted or send the breath through the nose on a [ŋ] when flattened. "When breathing through the nose, the soft palate is normally relaxed and hangs limply downwards" (Musgrave Horner, 1976, p. 112). Thus breathing through the nose and mouth assists actors in vocal dexterity. Sharpe and Hayden Rowles believe "that having a flexible soft palate is essential in order to do accents" (2007, p. 23). In my experience, if an Australian executes an American accent for example, there can be too much nasal colouring and the character can sound harsh and brassy with an accentuated twang.

The nasality of the Australian accent is developed by a habitual posture in the back of the tongue and soft palate. This structural positioning was confirmed when working on *Dear Charlotte*, in particular with the [ɑ] sound. My findings suggest that the soft palate can be held low with the tongue placed high so that words like 'calm' and 'garden' are placed in the nasal passage rather than in the oral space.

When discussing the channel for sound, Linklater believes that nasality is due to "a lazy, dead soft palate" (1976, p. 72) and that if the soft palate is inflexible or stiff the voice will be monotonous. This is because the function of the soft palate is to:

respond to changing pitches with tiny changes in muscle tone, which almost invisibly lift and lower it as the pitch goes up or down. When you speak, pitch is almost constantly changing in response to thought inflection (in a free voice) so the freedom of the soft palate to respond in an involuntary level is essential to accurately nuanced communication. (1976, p. 72)

When discussing the soft palate in her chapter on releasing the sound, Houseman (2002) suggests exercises to engage and lift the soft palate to increase flexibility. Houseman uses the stimulus of a soft surprise when breathing in, to lift the soft palate and "imagine a smile across the back of the roof of the mouth, as you open up with surprise" (2002, p. 151). Yawning opens the throat and can also be useful exercise to lift the soft palate and open the larynx. Linklater (1976) suggests exhaling very gently on a 'kaa' whisper (only using breath without vibration), and then inhale gently on a 'kaa' as if surprised by something and lifting the soft palate as the breath goes in to encourage the soft palate's mobility. The above and following exercises are useful warm up exercises for the Australian actor wanting to find flexibility when shifting from AusE to RP.

The other common muscle tension found in the workshops with students occurs in the lips due to their habitual positioning being spread into a half smile during speech. When discussing the

foundations that make up an accent Sharpe and Haydn Rowles observe that “‘Australian’ is similar to ‘London’, but you need to smile and grit your teeth” (2007, p. 34).

Before doing any accent work, I encourage greater flexibility by embarking on some facial gymnastics using the imagery of a ‘raisin face’ (scrunching the facial muscles up tight) and a ‘pumpkin head’ (opening the mouth and facial muscles as wide as possible) as starting points to mobilise the lips. I then ask the students to do horse blows with their lips on an exhale, initially without sound, then introducing some gentle sirens. Following this, I ask the students to close their lips, circling the tongue in front of the teeth, to stretch the tiny sphincter muscles that can tighten when performance nerves set in. By loosening the lips, more flexibility and range of expression becomes available to the speaker. Looser lips are needed, in particular, when going from an Australian to an American Accent.

One interesting discovery in my research concerns the inaccuracy of the tongue tip. An Idiosyncrasy that I have noticed with young actors in Perth is the tendency to substitute the L sound for a W. For example the word ‘tell’ becomes ‘tew’ (with the lips forming the sound rather than the tongue tip). Likewise, ‘world’ becomes ‘worwd.’ Sharpe and Haydn Rowles claim this tendency is similar to cockney speakers which corresponds to Stern’s view (1983) that linguistically Australian speech has its roots in cockney.

Linklater reiterates the general advice to: “Remove tension in order to allow something new to happen” (Linklater, 1976, p. 71). In addition to this lowering of the soft palate, tension also emerges at the back of the tongue that can often be held quite high in the mouth in AusE. When stretching the tongue, I encourage students to put the tip of their tongue behind the bottom teeth, pushing the remaining tongue forward in the mouth in a ‘ya’ position. Think into the middle of the tongue and roll it forward and out of the mouth like a wave breaking over the bottom teeth, until you feel it stretched from tip to roots. A good indication of whether someone has tongue tension is if they are incomprehensible when they try to articulate the days of the week while sticking their tongue outside their mouth. Some younger students find this exercise rather confronting and are embarrassed because sticking out the tongue can feel quite exposing.

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH TO RP

During rehearsals, I asked what the students knew about England back in Charlotte Bronte’s day? What were the preconceptions of people like those characters depicted in the play? Had any of the students visited or lived in the UK? I gave them a sketch about the background and origin of RP and how it evolved as an accent that was acceptable socially. It is essentially a display, via language, of social power. Rodenburg “adopts the notion that RP originates from a group of people who collectively and for years had the confidence and a right to speak”(1997, p. 126). When speaking RP, Rodenburg advocates, “Take time to breathe, feel the breath low and connected to the support while you practice RP. Take your time. RP is an evenly paced accent. Comes from a place of certainty if not superiority” (1997, p. 126).

Jones supports this perspective by her reflection on an accent’s dynamic:

I also pay a lot of attention to the energy of an accent as how breath flow and capacity is used in an accent can be key to students finding the right 'feel'. RP for example has much more breath energy than people realise whereas I might work more on the physicality of 'twang' for American dialects and the anatomy of the front of the mouth, lips and teeth if I was teaching Venezuelan for example. (Interview, 9 September, 2013)

In addition to considering the role of breath, other foundations of RP were uncovered in the workshop. This includes the zone, tone, setting and direction of sound. As a group, the consensus was that RP was placed in zone two or the alveolar ridge in Sharpe and Haydn Rowles' (2007) breakdown of the seven zones in the mouth. (Refer to earlier insertion in literature review).

RP's tone is smooth and velvety, generating an effortless and efficient sound — rather than an aggressive one. Rodenburg describes this as, "The RP resonances are well balanced and modulated. The whole voice does have an aesthetic quality" (1997, p. 126). This aesthetic quality (at least from an English speaker's point of view) could be due to the slightly lowered larynx, as explained by Wrembel:

General features which contribute to the quality of the English voice, include the position of the larynx, which is neutral or slightly lowered, thus giving usually a warmer and more resonant effect. The larynx is used predominantly with low energy and low tension, therefore, English sounds rather relaxed and 'breathy'. (2001, p. 57)

When discussing the setting of the articulators for RP, the actors were given the instruction to scoop out the cheeks and create space between the upper and lower back molars as Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007) had suggested. Dyer (2007b) suggests that "[t]he tongue tip is doing a lot of work, and is like ice you can't hold it in a position for too long it needs to move quickly" (2007b) which explains the tendency for the tongue tip "to be very active frequently moving towards the alveolar ridge" (Wrembel, 2001, p. 57). In addition, Rodenburg states that "the jaw stays free and opens evenly" (1997, p. 126) and furthermore, "the throat stays very open" (1997, p. 126). These facets form the setting of the articulators required for RP and the chart was filled in accordingly.

In my experience of working as a vocal coach, I have identified that articulation can be an area with which Australian actors have particular difficulty and, consequently, they may need a significant amount of practise when shifting to an RP accent. Working on releasing tongue and lip tension can free up an actor from habitual constraints so that they can "move into new and dramatic areas of change" (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 11), offering up "choices that open up further options to vocal freedom" (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 18).

BODY LANGUAGE AND EMBODIMENT

When discussing body language during the time period of the play, the actors were invited to sit upright with both feet firmly planted on the floor while speaking. This gave the actor a formality and helped find the breath energy needed to bring the accent into their voices and bodies. Rodenburg proposes that actors "[p]hysically sit and stand centered as though you dominate the space. Look

down your nose at someone while speaking” (1997, p. 126). This changed the alignment of the actors as a few had a tendency to round their shoulders and collapse in the chest.

To develop this characteristic further, linking intonation and physical moves is suggested in the literature to help embody the accent and find its physical dynamics. Physical metaphors are suggested to try and encourage pitch range. To help understand the momentum and music of an accent, the following anecdote shed an interesting light on my workshop and proved useful:

When Jan was working with an actor from the RSC (Royal Shakespeare Company) whose own Australian accent was leading to a narrow pitch range in his RP, they played with a chiffon scarf, dancing it around like Isadora Duncan, to encourage his range to find the swoops. (Sharpe & Haydn Rowles, 2007, p. 153)

Jones supports this physical approach and suggests that “[e]ach nation moves differently too; when I’ve taught Spanish I’ll always start with some Flamenco — different physicality to the more ‘slouchy’ British!” (Interview, 9 September, 2013).

According to Sharpe and Haydn Rowles, different accents have “different energies, dynamics and momentums” (2007, p. 152) and that “[s]peech is a physical act” (2007, p. 152). Taking a physical approach can often lead to dynamic change because the “voice likes to take its lead from the actions of the body” (2007, p. 152). By moving the body in a certain way, the voice is affected. For example, if an actor speaks his/her lines aloud in an accent at the same time as punching the air with his/her fist the resulting sound will be affected by the punching and the rhythm of speech will become short and staccato. This approach of engaging the body in specific movements helps the actor to embody the sound rather than simply hearing the sounds. This sound and body engagement corresponds to Marshall’s dictum that “Performance is a concrete act” (2008) and that accents exist in the body.

When identifying the characteristics of the Australian dialect in the workshop, the student actors were asked to become consciously aware of their physical movement while speaking. Did they have a tendency to tilt or drop their head when speaking in their own idiolect? Did they take up space under the arms or have a tendency to move from the elbows when talking? These physical explorations can help with an awareness of where the accent sits in the body. Experienced dialect coaches talk about this accent location when working with actors. When going through the RP vowel sounds, I encouraged the actors to invest more in the lower breath connection in order to produce the sounds that Wrembel described as “relaxed and ‘breathy”” (2001).

SPRINGBOARD SENTENCES

When I asked participants how actors’ remember the sounds of an accent, the response from Jones was informative:

By revisiting their various accent collection physically on a regular basis. It’s like all learnt things, so I operate a ‘use it or lose it’ approach. Muscle memory plays a key part. You can use ‘hook sentences’ that just get the mouth organised very quickly and monologues so they can tap back into the voice of the character. (Interview, 9 September, 2013)

The idea of a “hook sentence” was further reinforced by, McGuire (26 November, 2013), who discusses the use of what Sharpe and Haydn Rowles (2007) call “springboard sentences” as mentioned earlier. These sentences often contain key sounds or phonemes that help the actor shift into the new accent. For example, a useful springboard sentence that I use when teaching GenAm, is Dyer’s (2007a) “Lemon yellow Cadillac rolling along the road.” This sentence as previously discussed, contains the dark [ɹ] a key sound in shaping the tongue for American.

As well as springboard sentences or hook sentences to help maintain the setting of the articulators, working on specific texts can encourage the flexibility and accuracy of the tongue tip. When shifting from AusE to RP texts, as well as the script the actors were working on I found useful practice sentences included:

- ‘Tiger Tiger burning bright’ as the plosive t/b sounds are repeated in this poem and consequently the lips and tip of tongue are worked. In addition the final vowel in the word ‘tiger’ in AusE /taɪgɹ / [ɹ] becomes /taɪgə/ [ə] in RP.
- ‘What a to do to die today’ as there are consonant clusters and the tip of the tongue is exercised for accuracy and agility.
- ‘Arthur’s garden is filled with large calming palms’ and ‘Dad’s new car is a jaguar’.
- Regular practice with exercises such as ‘la la la la,’ ‘te te te,’ ‘ne ne ne,’ ‘de de de’ and ‘lilly lolly, lilly lolly’ will improve the muscularity of the tongue tip.

The suggestions above will prove useful to develop the mobility of the muscles of the lips and tongue tip and must be executed regularly to produce the best results. As well as these technical exercises, the actors also used monologues and text from the play to fully embody the sounds. Working purely technically as mentioned earlier can produce dry and technical performances, therefore the total characterisation needs to be included.

LEARNING STYLES

One of the interviewees, Agnew, believes that “*the (vocal) coach has to be well versed in different learning approaches and techniques and methodologies but also has to have their own senses and their own intelligences quite wide open and well developed*” (Interview, 16 March, 2014).

Scientific advances have also aided our understanding of the complexity of speech and, consequently, the need to approach learning from different perspectives. These advances into voice provide more awareness into how the muscles function during speech and the detection of different levels of tension and effort used in the activity of speaking. Caroline Coggins, a laryngeal physiotherapist, used a teaching resource called Primal Anatomy. This highly sophisticated software delivers an inside perspective on the workings of the mouth, larynx and pharynx. At a glance it was possible to see how each muscle in the throat, shoulder and face is interconnected. Visuals are important learning aids for actors, making sense of connections between action and sound. Questionnaire responses from students reflected this point. For example, (MT12) thought that “*Definitely visually and possibly kinaesthetically. Listening loses my concentration.*” I found it interesting that this student claimed that listening is the least of the preferred styles for learning.

When asked what learning style WAAPA students thought was their dominant learning mode (visual/ audio/kinaesthetic), the responses from both groups were mixed. Interestingly almost half of the musical theatre students responded with a combination of “*visual and aural*” with the other half of the group responding “*visual and kinaesthetic*”. On the other hand, only a quarter of the acting students responded with “*visual and aural*”, a quarter with “*visual and kinaesthetic*”, another quarter with “*a combination of visual, kinaesthetic and aural*” and finally the last quarter with “*visual*” (Questionnaires). This response from (MT4) underlies the preference for visual; “*All of the above, but if I had to choose one I would probably choose visual.*” Although these responses derive from a small sample, the result is interesting because analysis points to the fact that this generation is visually conscious, speculatively suggesting that they are so in touch with computers, iPhones and YouTube that perhaps the visual is the preferred or most habitual learning style.

If a visual learning mode is predominant then, following Marshall’s lead, perhaps it is important to involve the embodied and physical aspect of the vocal experience to make development for the students more concrete? Agnew highlights the need to assault all the available senses,

the teacher, the coach, has to be adept in many areas and not just phonetics but a keen diagnostic, someone who is able to work out how am I going to serve this person best? Are they best visual learner and therefore what ways in can I go? Having said that, I never settle for going in one way, I normally like to assault their senses and their learning experience, coaching experience from different angles. Some people will resist a certain way. (Interview, 16 March, 2014)

McGuire extends this further by speculating that:

People who have a strong sense of kinaesthesia i.e. what’s going on in their mouth, the shifts I’m going to ask them to make and some people have a stronger sense of ear, so of course as a teacher I need to develop the person who has a strong sense of kinaesthetic I need to develop their ear, and the person who has a strong sense of ear, I need to develop their kinaesthesia. It just makes them better. (Interview, 26 November, 2013)

PHYSICAL EMBODIMENT TO TEXT

Rodenberg (1997) and Berry’s (2000) approaches emphasise various physical connections between voice and body and suggest many exercises to encourage students to engage bodily with language. I was fortunate enough to work with Berry when working as an actor for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in 1997 on an international tour of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* directed by Adrian Noble. Members of the cast were invited to stand in a circle on the stage in the Barbican Theatre, with each actor given a line from sonnet number 12 to vocalise. The sonnet begins with the line “When I do count the clock that tells the time.” Berry (2000) explained that, as we spoke our line of text, we had to pass it seamlessly to the next person, finding the energy from line to line. At the beginning, we were somewhat rough and jerky but, by the time we had repeated the process a few times, we began to find the through-line of the rhythm. Berry then asked us to run in all directions,

vocalising the same lines but moving over the chairs in the theatre and filling the whole auditorium. This exercise gave us a feeling of owning the whole space with our voices and bodies, not just the area on the stage but the entire acoustic environment. We then came back to the stage and repeated our lines, keeping that sense of space and vibrating energy without having to run around.

Adapting games to an accent.

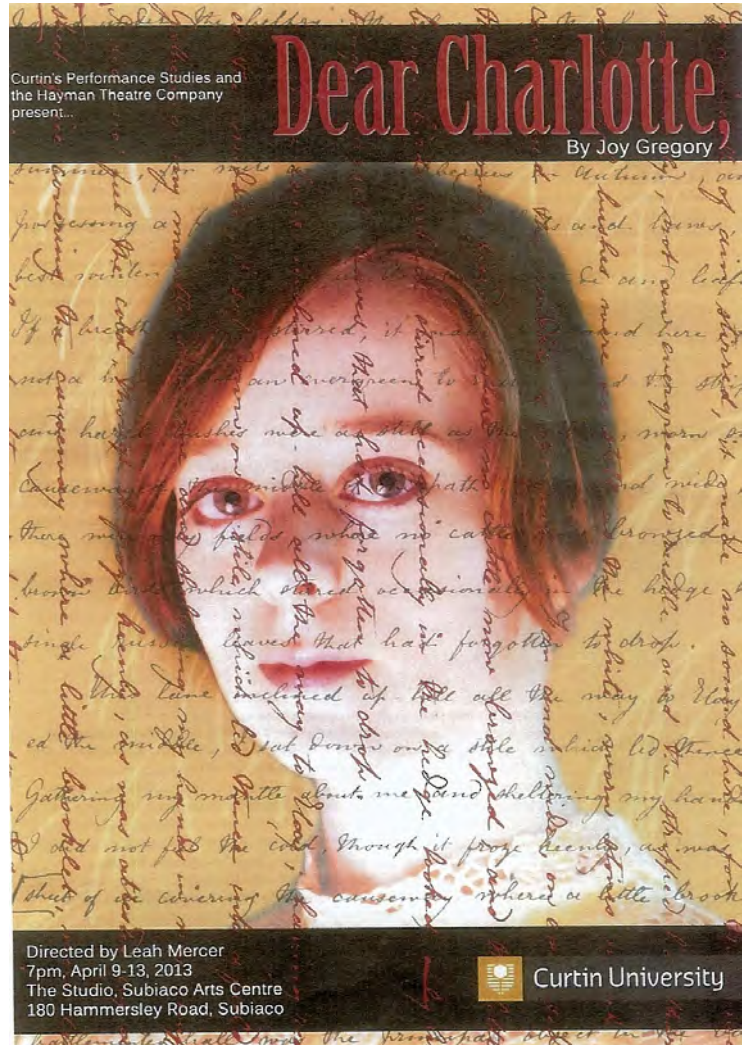
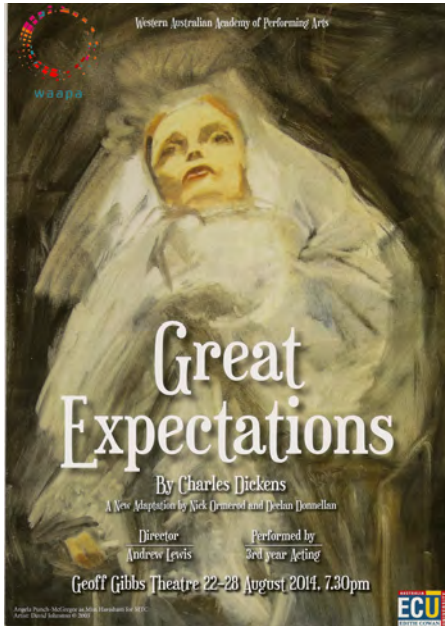
When teaching young adults or high school students, I often start with a warm up game called Zip Zap Boing reminiscent of my early National Youth Theatre experience in London. The aim of the game is to keep the energy passing from one person to another, accomplished with either a Zip to the nearby person in the circle by way of a hand-open palm-up extended from the elbow, or a Zap to someone across the circle by stepping into the circle arms outstretched, or a Boing, where both hands are held up in front of the face to bounce the energy away. I then ask them to do it in an Eastenders' Cockney dialect. Instead of Zip, I substitute the word 'ave it,' instead of Zap, I substitute 'take it' and, in the place of Boing, I invite them to say 'get out my pub!'. The release is evident and the students begin to relax and enjoy the different sounds infused with movement. The game embodies an approach that can be tapped for different accents.

Summary of findings

My research indicates that when shifting there is a need for flexibility in the soft palate, increased embodiment and crisper articulation as significant contributions to knowledge in accent and dialect acquisition from a West Australian perspective. My findings indicate that more breath was needed to counteract habitual shallow breathing and that increased vocal energy was needed to counteract dying off at the end of phrases and statements. Improved and crisper articulation was needed to acquire an RP accent, which comes, in part, from engaging the agility and muscularity of the tongue tip. I had heard that the soft palate was stiff and sluggish in the Australian accent. Only by running a workshop and filming the students was I able to discern exactly which sounds are difficult when shifting from AusE to RP. Also by running this workshop I was able to determine what remedies might be most appropriate.

This chapter has detailed the importance of Awakening the Actor's Embodiment when learning a new accent and in particular, in making the shift from AusE to RP. Exercises to facilitate Western Australian actors to increase the flexibility of the soft palate and work on muscularity of the lips and tongue when shifting from AusE to RP were presented.

Conclusion



CONCLUSION

The aim of this Masters by research was to extend my knowledge of accent and dialect training and to use this knowledge to inform my teaching of actors in a Western Australian context. This knowledge can then be applied by vocal coaches and student actors alike. The original research question, directed towards the necessity of phonetics in the acquisition of accents and dialects, was answered almost immediately, from the response to my first interview, in which Jones listed the reasons for including phonetics in her curriculum. The findings suggest that phonetics is an important aspect of accent acquisition for the following reasons:

- the systemized spectrum of sounds assists in the accuracy and fluency of speech-making;
- phonetics facilitates access to resources such as voice books and CDs on accent and dialect;
- phonetics helps with aural awareness, for example, detecting 'Malbourne' instead of 'Melbourne;' and finally
- phonetics prompts thinking about how sounds are created physically, where the points of tension are and how the tongue is capable of moving in different ways.

This was confirmed in rehearsals by using Dyers' practice sentences which isolate the individual sounds needed for RP.

The question, concerning what expertise is required by actors when learning a new accent, has led to explorations of awakening cognitive skills, listening skills and embodiment, all of which precipitate new awareness within the actor and teacher. Ultimately, an actor needs courage to move beyond habits and familiar patterns of speaking, thinking and breathing in order to master a new accent. The foundational elements of the Australian dialect that became apparent in the setting of the articulators were a low soft palate, a high back of the tongue and a jaw held in half smile with lips spread. The zone of resonance was in the naso-pharynx (behind the nose). The tone was brassy and twangy. The direction of sound was punched up into the hard palate and out the sides of the mouth. Furthermore, experiences of the minor intonation and a rhythm that had a tendency to have more energy at the beginning of an utterance were useful in finding the specific needs of attention for Western Australian actors.

The practice-led research was driven by the necessity to explore skill acquisition on the floor in the rehearsal room with the actors. The exploration involved trialling techniques such as profiling the individual's vocal foundations and delving into diverse approaches through which to accomplish phonetic shifts, tonal agility and rhythmic sensitivity. Embodiment emerged as the means to draw the various components together and reinforced the effectiveness of a multi-modal or holistic approach when examining issues related to accent and dialect acquisition. Classroom observations, a series of interviews with experts in the field and, workshops and rehearsals, particularly for the performance of *Dear Charlotte*, formed the main avenues of data gathering and experimentation, analysis and findings.

INNOVATION

This research highlights the challenges an actor faces when shifting from one accent to another concentrated on the shift from the Western Australian English dialect to the British Received Pronunciation. The findings suggest that the AusE dialect is diverse and that in the shift between AusE and RP, the soft palate can be low and sluggish in the muscularity of the setting of the articulators, indicating that the tongue tip needs to be exercised for accuracy and more breath. Consequently, accent and dialect teachers need to work towards flexibility in the soft palate of Australian actors using embodiment strategies and motivations to stimulate vocal energy and gain more variance in pitch range.

Other recommendations include accommodating dyslexic students, incorporating visual aids (as this was a preference from the questionnaires), and instilling the need for regular practice throughout the three year training to retain knowledge of the phonetic symbols. The questionnaire results also indicated that over half the actors in the rehearsal had no knowledge of the foundations that made up their idiolect.

For an actor to produce a consistent and believable performance, all the elements need to be working together and integrated similar to a well-functioning ecosystem. The chapters on awakening cognitive thinking, listening and embodiment outline the significance of the relationship between the mind/body connections. In this way, the innovative approach adopted by this research concluded that each part of the vocal system and each skill, if carefully guided, will lead to integration in a holistic approach to working on a vocal performance. Although this research has examined the specific shift from AusE dialect to BritE dialect, the results suggest that a holistic approach is useful and beneficial for accent and dialect training *per se*. The actor is a living organism, in which all parts of enactment are integrated: voice, body and brain and the elements of the new accent work together to create a character for the stage. Awakening self-awareness in the actor is what voice training aims to do and is thus integral to the discipline of acting. Ideally, by acquiring another dialect with unfamiliar sounds, the actor moves away from the confines of a predetermined self while, at the same time, retaining the confidence and knowledge of his or her unique idiolect. This training can allow him/her to awaken new ways of being and, thereby, transcend everyday states of being without denying the uniqueness of each voice to represent and express a vast diversity of sounds.

SIGNIFICANCE

This research will add to the scholarly research in the area of accent and dialect acquisition, specifically in terms of Australian actors. Moreover, the research's particular focus lies in experience from a Western Australian perspective. At the same time, this research could be easily adapted for the eastern states or arguably reversed for an English actor wanting to acquire an Australian dialect. Having an understanding of the fundamentals that make up the AusE dialect will enable an actor to acquire other accents like GenAm or Russian. Through uncovering the structural foundation from which other structures can be built, easier acquisitions of other accents may ensue.

My research has identified that there has been a significant increase in the use of digital applications such as self-contained programmes for mobile devices (also known as Apps) iPads and Skype which

have become a means of extending communication when teaching actors accents and dialects. However, the tendency of the information-rich environment is that people learn how to access information rather than process information into active knowledge. While this valuable progression in digital media formats seems like an advancement, actual embodied learning may be missing.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The research has had immense impact to my teaching practice. My understanding of the technical components required when teaching or learning a dialect have strengthened and I have been alerted to the wide variety of methods and techniques available for supporting the acquisition of accents and dialects. This goes beyond my practice because these principles can be adapted for accent and dialect acquisition across a range of cultures.

This thesis is the result of three years of researching, reading, teaching, writing and personal awakenings. Uncovering ways of eliciting the actor's idiolect and exploring vocal identity are significant findings and critical starting points to learning alternative sound systems. In addition, taking into account actors' different learning styles is vital if phonetics and an integration of kinaesthetic, visual and auditory information are to be achieved. As a consequence, a voice coach/teacher needs to have strong listening skills and be adaptable and flexible to each performance situation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The challenge with being part of the research is that I missed the opportunity to film the process of the actors and I during the first workshop on completing the YOU and NEW chart. It was imperative that I reflect 'in' action and be immersed in the moment, actively working with the students, which made it difficult for me to capture in durable documentation the holistic perspective of the practice. I only realised afterwards about what I could have known or done differently.

The characteristics of the General AusE dialect that have been identified in the previous chapters represented the majority dialect in the cast of *Dear Charlotte*,. However being but a tiny proportion of all Australian actors, my research findings cannot be extrapolated beyond this small cast of actors.

CRITICAL INSIGHT

In structuring the thesis into the three main strands of learning through the awakening of cognitive, listening and embodiment skills, I have realised that strengthening each student's weakest area of learning does present a formidable challenge to those responsible for the development of vocal skills but one which the voice teacher must have the courage to accept if vocal quality and dexterity is to be achieved. Future research and experimentation into the linguistic contexts of phonetics will hopefully point to new physical approaches for acquiring the phonetic symbol language that acknowledge and include dyslexic students and which may be conducive to the needs and mindset of performers. I am also aware that adapting and incorporating visual aids into my practice as effective learning tools through the use of an iPad and interactive apps will ultimately facilitate some students' learning.

Suggestions for further research include filming the process an actor undergoes from the start of acquiring an accent and dialect through to the embodiment of the dialect on stage. Capturing the journey and process of accent acquisition for the trainee actor learning in a student setting and a professional actor learning in a professional context could prove to be invaluable assets in the acquisition process for the teacher and coach. Further exploration is also necessary on the Aboriginal English idiolect and identity and what technology can reveal in accent and dialect training to enrich the discipline.

Dialect training is a detailed and complex area of actor training that requires a significant amount of dedicated time and effort, however, the resulting accent will be more consistent and reliable during a performance if attention is paid to that accent's structure and specific characteristics. Currently the time allocated to teaching an accent or dialect for a role, in my experience, is between three and five hours at the start of rehearsals. This amount of time is the minimum and ideally should be at least twice this duration. The amount of time it takes to learn a new dialect and the constant practice needed is often underestimated. Time, which can be a constraint when learning a new accent or dialect, can also place limits on the research itself. The principal substance of the research has been confined to explorations of an embodied AusE dialect from a Western Australian perspective and the means of its unlocking in order to acquire the shift to RP.

Finally, my recommendation is that accent training, which recognises the integration of vocalisation within the ecosystem of performing, can take the actor beyond the limitations imposed or created by their background, education or experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE FREE VOICE

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Any prescriptive idea of a perfect voice denies the value of the variety of individual voices, but practitioners comfortably use words like 'healthy, expressive, connected, open, released, flexible' as desirable attributes in a voice. These do imply a common view about what constitutes a well-functioning voice – whether in an operatic tenor, a Shakespearean actor, a public speaker or a client with vocal nodules.

The concept of the free voice has no value judgment involving perfection or beauty, and although not part of medical or voice therapy terminology, it implies a healthy or 'unconstricted' voice. If a voice is free, it has the potential ability to move anywhere along the human voice pitch range, to imitate or produce any particular quality, resonance or volume. It can soar, croak, whisper, shout, squeak and growl, and talk for hours without tiring, weakening or straining.

DEFINING THE FREE VOICE

- 1 It is based in a **BODY** that is as free as possible from habitual awkward postures and excess tension.
- 2 It is powered by **BREATH** that flows from low in the body, and can support a variety of physical and vocal activities.
- 3 It has a passage through the **CHANNEL** with appropriate settings of face, lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate, pharynx and larynx and no excess muscle constriction.
- 4 It has **PHONATION** which will vary appropriately according to mood and energy but is not excessively rough, breathy or creaky, nor will the quality significantly change with long or demanding voice use.
- 5 has an appropriate balance of head, oral and chest **RESONANCE** qualities with an appropriate sound of forward 'placing' in the mouth.
- 6 has an appropriate centre **PITCH** with flexible range for any emotional, semantic or vocal need.
- 7 has a flexibility of **LOUDNESS** for emphasis, variety and different situations, with an appropriate power support.
- 8 is shaped into appropriate words by clear, energetic **ARTICULATION** of vowels and consonants, with appropriate pace, pause, fluency and rhythm.

APPENDIX II

Australian Phonetics for Vowel Sounds

Phonetic symbol	Example word
i	"heed"
ɪ	"hid"
ɛ	"head"
æ	"had"
a	"hard"
ʌ	"hut"
ɒ	"hot"
ɔ	"hoard"
ʊ	"hood"
u	"hoot"
ɜ	"heard"
ə	"awake"
eɪ	"hate"
aɪ	"hide"
aʊ	"howl"
oʊ	"hope"
ɔɪ	"hoist"
ɪə	"hear"
ɛə	"hair"
ʊə	"tour"

You and the New chart

	ACCENT
YOU	
NEW	

The Foundations

	ZONE	TONE	SETTING	DIRECTION
YOU				
NEW				