

# The language of embodiment in actor training

Ross W. Prior<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This paper identifies the types of language that actor trainers use to articulate embodiment in practice. The paper explores the predominant kinds of meanings generated by actor trainers in the discussion of their practice. The paper reveals that the predominant kinds of meanings generated by these trainers in the discussion of their practice is synnoetic that is they are direct, personal, and experiential. However, meanings constructed about acting and actor-training are known tacitly and therefore are difficult to communicate in conventional ways. This paper identifies the dominant knowledge(s) evidenced in this community of practice in order to further appreciate how 'teaching' of embodied practices is understood within the contexts of western actor training.

The paper further reveals a perceived separation between the 'academic' ['theoretical' or the 'intellectual'] and the 'practical' appears to be largely derived from experientially acquired knowledge. In actor training, approaches to pedagogy are hard to capture by virtue of particular meanings being constructed vicariously through the process of moving from novice to expert.

In acting there is a strong reflexive relationship between the physical, thoughts and feelings. In the last 30 or so years there have been significant developments in the scientific understanding of the brain which help us understand how physicality, thought and feeling may be intertwined. Whilst meaning is indeed communicated through language, much meaning is communicated non-verbally as well. In fact it is the interplay between the verbal and non-verbal that converts thought to expression, linking thought and physical actions. What then are the implications of metaphoric communication by actor trainers as part of an on-going understanding of contemporary actor training?

---

<sup>1</sup> School of The Arts, The University of Northampton, Northampton. Email: Ross.Prior@northampton.ac.uk