



## Word Tasting: towards a sensorial experience of language and thought in the actor's work

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**ABSTRACT – Word Tasting: towards a sensorial experience of language and thought in the actor's work** – Starting from the metaphorical conception, *the word is nutrient*, we propose a series of four exercises as a *word tasting* to investigate the sensory aspects of language and thought in the actor's work. Through an exploration of the proximity between speaking and eating, the exercises seek to stimulate awareness of the way in which words reverberate through the entire body. The proposal aims to reduce the mechanical control of organic processes and the direct manipulation of the voice in accordance with preconceived aesthetic notions. At the same time, it proposes to provoke a deeper physical-intellectual-emotional-sociocultural experience of the text in the theatre.

Keywords: **Acting. Text. Voice. Body. Theatre Pedagogy.**

**RÉSUMÉ – Dégustation de Mots: pour une expérience sensorielle du langage et de la pensée dans le travail de l'acteur** – A partir de la compréhension métaphorique que le *mot est nourriture*, une série de quatre exercices est proposée comme une 'Dégustation de Mots' en vue de la recherche sensorielle de la voix, du langage et de la pensée dans le travail de l'acteur. A travers une exploration de la proximité entre l'acte de la parole et l'acte de manger, les exercices cherchent à encourager la perception sensible du comment le mot habite le corps. La proposition vise à réduire le contrôle mécanique des processus organiques et la manipulation directe de la voix en fonction de notions esthétiques préétablies. En parallèle, il est proposé d'approfondir l'expérience physique-mentale-émotionnelle-socioculturelle du texte dramatique sur la scène.

Mots-clés: **Jeu. Texte. Voix. Corps. La Pédagogie du Théâtre.**

**RESUMO – Degustação de Palavras: para uma experiência sensorial de linguagem e pensamento no trabalho do ator** – A partir da concepção metafórica *a palavra é alimento*, propõe-se uma série de quatro exercícios, como uma *degustação de palavras*, para a investigação sensorial da voz, da linguagem e do pensamento no trabalho do ator. Por meio de uma exploração da proximidade entre o falar e o comer, os exercícios buscam estimular a percepção sensível do modo como a palavra reverbera pelo corpo inteiro. A proposta visa a diminuir o controle mecânico de processos orgânicos e a manipulação direta da voz de acordo com noções estéticas preconcebidas. Ao mesmo tempo, se propõe a aprofundar a experiência físico-intellectual-emocional-sociocultural do texto no teatro.

Palavras-chave: **Atuação. Texto. Voz. Corpo. Pedagogia do Teatro.**

## First Words

If we pay attention when we speak, we can feel the voice vibrating, physically, in distinct cavities of the body as well as in our bones and flesh. We can feel the cold or the warmth of the breath in the mouth and the throat, to the bottom of the lungs. We can perceive contrasts of tension and relaxation in muscles of the abdomen, chest and neck. We feel the movement of the jaw and the tongue in contact with the teeth and the lips, as if each word had its own temperature, its own spice, its own flavour. In the theatre, it is possible to “chew and eat the text”, as Valère Novarina (2005, p. 7, our translation) suggests in his *Lettre aux Acteurs*, or, *Letter to the Actors*. We taste speech.

However, in our daily lives, this perception of the sensory nature of language is rare. In our infant years, we spend long hours playing with our *tongue*<sup>1</sup>, literally sticking the tongue out or putting our hands in our mouth, exploring this intriguing and difficult to perceive space, dribbling and babbling. We play, repeating syllables for the simple pleasure of the sensation of movement, vibration and sound, or to see the reactions that the voice provokes in parents, brothers and sisters and even pets. We shout, we cry, we laugh. We discover that, in different ways, all these actions transform the people around us and those people, in return, answer with new sounds or com silence. They also shout or laugh, encouraging or discouraging the continuation of our experiments. They emit specific sounds that we begin to recognize, learn and recreate to say our first words.

As our speech develops, we learn a new and important mode of articulating and expressing desires and needs. We discover that the voice can be used to ask for help or to give orders; it can be used to irritate or console our mother or to tell jokes and make our brothers and sisters laugh; it can be used to articulate increasingly more elaborate and sophisticated ideas and concepts.

As we gain dominion of our speech, however, many of us begin to just talk. We play less with our voice and our *tongue*. We learn that it is not polite to put one's hand in one's mouth, or to shout, or to cry, or even to laugh very loud. We learn that girls must speak with a soft high voice while men must speak with a deep strong voice. We fix these patterns, defining our vocal technique, without even noticing that we have such a thing. We control our voice for adult

conversations, serious discussions and banal transactions about the weather, or we simply shut up, in traffic, in front of the television or the computer. We integrate ourselves with the social environment and, through life experience, our voice and speech naturally develop and adapt to this reality.

As time passes, our language seems to be linked more to our thoughts and less to our body, as if it were possible to separate one from the other. It seems as though words are emitted through the mouth only or that they can be spoken in silence in the imagination, kept as a secret inside our heads to elaborate ideas without moving a single muscle. Finally, we may start to believe that verbal discourse can faithfully translate and communicate thought, that the primary function of language is to elaborate plans and concepts, and that, through reason, it is possible to control our body, our voice, and even the world around us. Maybe we even manage to do this up to a certain point, but at what cost? And for the actress or the actor? What is the impact of this control over her or his creative work?

Without denying the proximity between language and thought it is necessary to consider the word in all of its dimensions: physical, sensorial, intellectual and cultural. This allows for a broader organic conception of the ontology of thought itself, and suggests artistic-pedagogic approaches to develop a more efficient coordination of diverse bodily processes to enunciate in the theatre.

To elaborate these arguments, this article makes reference to the publications of Kristin Linklater, in dialogue with Valère Novarina's *Lettre aux Acteurs*. Following these reflections, four voice exercises will be presented, founded on the metaphorical conception *the word is nutrient*. Two of these are inspired directly by exercises published by Linklater (1992), adapting the original sounds from the English language to approximate sounds from Brazilian Portuguese.

Linklater is a Scottish voice specialist and author of two books, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976) and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (1992). From 1963 to 2013, she taught at theatre schools in various universities in the United States, such as *New York University*, *Emerson College* and *Columbian University*. In 2014, she returned to Orkney Island, in Scotland, the place she was born, to inaugurate her private studio, the *Kristin Linklater Voice Centre*. Her first book, which was published almost 40 years ago, still shows itself to be highly relevant, given the way in which it anticipates new conceptions of body and

suggests principles that continue to be greatly important for voice teaching/learning in contemporary theatre. Even though Linklater is renowned in diverse countries of the world, she is still little known in Brazil, and so, a secondary aim of this discussion is to disseminate some of her ideas and practices in this country.

### **The Word is Nutrient: the relation between speaking and eating**

#### *Word, Body and Nourishment*

By proposing an exploration of the sensorial aspects of the word in the theatre, we need to discuss a contemporary mode of understanding the body as a whole and not only the voice. However, by choosing to focus on the voice, and more specifically, speech, we highlight certain questions that pose problems for traditional concepts of the body, emphasizing the notion that there is no separation between body and voice, body and mind, mind and world, subject and object.

The connection between language and thought is so intimate that one may be mistaken for the other. Through verbal language, it is possible to articulate and communicate thoughts in a relatively precise and detailed manner, and in this sense, the word is integral to the elaboration of reflections and concepts. At the same time, however, the voice belongs to the physical/biological body and without this body neither voice nor language can exist. Without the vocal organs, without breath, without resonators, without articulating surfaces, the word cannot be. It can of course be written; however, writing merely represents the corporal experience of spoken language through symbols, and even then, to exist it still depends on the existence of the human body and the movement of the hand that writes. This dependence is not only a physical fact: it refers to the corporal aspects of the word and the corporal aspects of thought itself.

According to Brazilian phonetician, Luiz Carlos Cagliariari (2007, p. 17), “[...] speech appears through the modification of the functioning of certain parts of the body, in such a way that results in the production of sounds in the form of the expression of language” (our translation). The author goes on to highlight that these *parts of the body* do not only serve to linguistic communication, but also execute other bodily functions.

This means that even if it were possible to consider the vocal system only in its biological dimensions, it would still be impossible to understand it as isolated and disconnected from the body as a whole, since it is an open system and component parts of this system are also components of other physiological systems. For example, the teeth, the tongue and the jaw are necessary for the formation of vowels and consonants and are also part of the digestive system.

Linklater highlights the importance of the interweaving of the voice and other corporal systems, not only in relation to their biological functions, but also in relation to their broader meanings.

Emotion and appetite and creative impulse are inextricably connected in the central nervous system. Consonants provide a sensory experience which can translate into mood and they can curb and channel the vowel in ways that make sense of its emotion (Linklater, 1992, p. 15).

Articulation does not only remind us of a mechanical digestive process, but also of hunger, mastication and appetite, including sexual appetite. Novarina, like Linklater, emphasizes the relation between the primary instinct of eating and the act of speaking:

Chew and eat the text. The blind spectator must hear the biting and swallowing, and ask what is being eaten there on the stage. What are they eating? Are they eating themselves? Chew or swallow. Mastication, suction, deglutition. Pieces of text must be bitten, viciously attacked by the eaters (lips, teeth); other pieces must be swallowed whole, slurped down, ingested, sucked, absorbed. Eat, swallow, eat, chew, breathe in with one gulp. Go, masticate, grind, cannibal! (Novarina, 2005, p. 7, our translation).

Speech, like digestion, does not imply only isolated movements of the mouth, but the mobilization of the entire organism. It is part of the vital flux between body and world, of continuous processes of ingestion and excretion. According to Novarina (2005, p. 22, our translation), actors “perform with all their holes, with the interior of the perforated body, [...] all their *speech* escapes through the body-hole”.

The body of the actor is his body-from-inside (not his chic marionette body or his articulated doll body with its etiquette), his deep body, interior without name, his rhythm machine, where everything is caught in a torrential circulation, the liquids (chyme, lymph, urine, tears, air, blood), all this that, through channels, through tubes, the passageways of sphincters, descends and rises again,

pressurized, overflows, pushes against the mouths, all this that circulates within the closed body, all this that makes us mad, that wants to escape, flux and reflux, that after so much racing through contrary circuits, after so many currents, after so much being carried and expelled, after so much running through the entire body from one closed door to the mouth, after so much, it begins to find a rhythm, find a rhythm from so much, builds up through the rhythm – rhythm comes from pressure, from repression – and escapes, ends up escaping, ex-created, excreted, ejected, ejaculated, material (Novarina, 2005, p. 20-21, our translation).

In this manner, physiological, emotive and instinctive processes are interconnected between themselves and with the world. For vocal teaching/learning in the theatre, even when there is a direct focus on the physiology of the voice or even on the musculature, the complexity of the body as a whole must be implicitly understood. In this sense, Linklater suggests that even the word itself has a physical-biological dimension, that is, an *anatomy*, that refers to the mode in which sounds, the component parts of the text, belong to the organism and not only to an abstract linguistic code.

Actors [...] can/should/must become sensitive to the *feel* of vowels and consonants, to the *anatomy* of words as well as their meaning. They can/should/must re-connect with the neuro-physiological circuitry that allows the senses and the emotions to be informed by the taste, touch, colour, and pitch of words (Linklater, 1992, p. 14).

By defending the need to rediscover the sensorial dimensions of language, including its taste and texture, Linklater does not deny the importance of the intimate connection between word and thought, rather, she conceives *thought* in a broader manner, reminding us that the mind is also part of the body, and therefore, is intertwined with primary instinctive processes. According to the author, the experience of words – not as something emitted through the mouth only, but as something that reverberates through the entire body – makes possible a deeper mode of thinking.

[...] when today's actor starts to *experience* [...] language as a whole-body process s/he is led to a larger and deeper experience of thought and emotion, and from there to a more fundamental, more individual and enlarged experience of *truth* (Linklater, 1992, p. 6-7).

Linklater (1992, p. 14) laments occasions in which she hears directors or voice teachers saying to actors, “let the *words* play you,

don't play the words" or "don't think about the words, they are unimportant; it's the behaviour that counts" or you're getting in the way of yourself, don't think, let it happen to you".

These instructions need translation. [...] They] simply mean, *don't think cerebrally* and *let the words create an experience in you that you register sensorily, emotionally, imaginatively, and that you respond to impulsively*. This is quite different from *not thinking*. It is rather, whole-body thinking, or experiential thinking, or incarnated thinking, or the Word made Flesh dwelling among us (Linklater, 1992, p. 14).

Speech implies the mobilization of instinctive processes connected to our animal nature, appearing physically through the same movements that serve the primordial need to feed, but this does not mean that it ceases to be a sophisticated means of communicating profoundly human ideas. In this sense, language becomes a channel for the flux between biological, psychological, intellectual and sociocultural processes. Vegetative functions, abstract thought, our people's *tongue*, desire, hunger, rationality, sexuality, creativity and the cognitive operations of language as a complex and highly evolved code: all of these are interwoven and intermingled as an integral process through the act of enunciation.

Despite this, however, a paradoxical problem in the actor's or the actress's creative work may be observed: certain modes of thought, that is, certain modes in which the intellect relates to physiological functions, may disrupt the organic flux between different elements of the body and the environment. For this reason, it becomes necessary to elaborate a pedagogical approach to the voice that is not founded on classical Cartesian dichotomies.

### *The Fragmentation of the Body*

If we accept the notion that there is no differentiation between body and mind, we may also conclude that the body cannot be considered an instrument to be manipulated as if it was an object distinct from the essence of the person, as there does not exist a separate mental or spiritual entity disconnected from the flesh and the senses that can control movement and voice in an independent and superior manner. A person *is* a body, they do not *have* a body, according to the phenomenological conception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2011).

Despite this, behaving in this manner, as if the body was an object or an instrument which could be manipulated through direct control via the motor system, may provoke what Linklater alludes to, metaphorically, as a *separation* between body and mind. In this context, references to a fragmented body do not mean a real division between different processes of the organism, but rather, express the idea that efficient coordination between emotion, thought, speech and breath can be impaired, also affecting the flux between body and world.

Linklater starts from the supposition that “[...] each person is indivisibly mind and body”, and on this basis, the work she presents demonstrates a “constant emphasis on mind-body unity” (Linklater, 1976, p. 2). In this way, a paradox arises when, in other comments, she refers to the body as a divided entity, speaking of blocks, cuts and disconnections between different systems of the organism, and even arguing that “[...] the problems [with the voice] all stem from the separation of the voice from the person” (Linklater, 1976, p. 192).

She laments specifically the separation between intellect and instinct and between word and body. In her first book she argues:

The problem for us is that words seem attached to ideas and detached from instinct. Feelings, attached to instinct and experienced physically have to struggle for verbal expression because words seem to belong not in the body but in the head. The mistake has been the banishment of words from the body. Human communication has become fragmented and weakened, even false. [...] We have persuaded ourselves that print, logic, intellectual ideas and the spoken word are one thing while our bodies and feeling are another (Linklater, 1976, p.172).

And again, in her second book, she notes:

Within the last two hundred years the growing influence of print and media has increasingly cut language off from the sensorium. One might say that language has become anaemic. The severance creates for the actor a chasm between creativity and verbal communication (Linklater, 1992, p. 11).

Throughout her publications, Linklater discusses how different aspects of the physiology of the voice function in a reflex and involuntary mode, which includes responses to impulses of thought, memory and imagination. However, she suggests how these processes may be subverted by secondary impulses that are imposed to control



the organic reactions of the body. This does not mean that the connections between different systems are literally cut and separated in these cases, but that the flux of energy and information between them may be impaired. In this way, the quality of the interaction between body and world may also be impaired, to the extent that the possibility of formulating authentic responses in real time to new situations also becomes limited. The roots of these secondary impulses “[...] can be found in psycho-physical conditioning by family, education and environment” (Linklater, 1976, p. 192), implying that the subject controls her or himself according to social norms and preconceived ideas about correct modes of behaviour. Linklater emphasizes the possibility that actors and actresses may wish to control the organism through direct manipulation of the muscles and the sound, as they strive to develop a *beautiful voice* and a *well-trained instrument*, seeking to conform to what is perceived as a correct way to *use the body* in the theatre.

The author implicitly and explicitly emphasizes the concern that there is a tendency amongst actresses and actors to behave in a *divided* manner, interfering in organic processes through the deliberate attempt to control the body and its psycho-physical reactions, as if these could exist in a disconnected form under the dominion of the rational subject. In contrast, Linklater begins her work with the supposition of the inseparability of the organism, and in this manner proposes “[...] a technique which uses the imagination to unify in one place within the body, mind, feeling, breath and sound” (Linklater, 1976, p. 51). In other words, she seeks a new relation between the intellect and psychological and physiological processes: a relation that may be differentiated from those of control and dominance of reason over the organism.

In this sense, there is a significant difference between *direct and mechanical control* on the one side, and *passive and experiential control* on the other. The first occurs through the attempt to interfere in the motor mechanisms by directly manipulating muscles, articulation and the sound of the voice; whereas the second happens through the sensorial exploration of an image or of a visceral, emotional or intellectual sensation, related to internal spaces and vibrations that course through the entire body.

Throughout her publications, Linklater stresses that “the conscious mind cannot operate” the muscles of the vocal system

“[...] with enough subtlety to preserve the expressive integrity of the natural voice” (Linklater, 1976, p. 72). She highlights that “[...] any voluntary controls that you apply will involve muscles that are large, clumsy, external”, which are inapt for the organic functions which they supposedly command, and in this case, may inhibit the reflex connection between these functions and the impulses of feeling and thought (Linklater, 1976, p. 25), as for example with breathing.

The tendency may be to observe, correctly, that when you breathe in, your stomach moves out, and when you breathe out your stomach goes in, and use that observation to start controlling the breath with the stomach muscles. You might start to push your stomach in, which blows the breath out, and to push your stomach out, which draws the breath in. This is a misuse of perception (Linklater, 1976, p. 25).

In this example, the direct control of the muscles imposes itself over the organic functioning of the respiratory movement, diminishing the natural capacity to react to emotional and intellectual impulses, as well as to environmental stimulations. According to Linklater, “[...] conscious control of breath will destroy its sensitivity to changing inner states, and severely curtail the reflex connection of breathing and emotional impulses” (Linklater, 1976, p. 25). The author insists: “you cannot imitate a reflex action” (Linklater, 1976, p. 25).

As well as posing problems for direct muscular control, Linklater also warns against the direct control of the aesthetic quality of the sound, questioning the value of a *beautiful voice* that is smooth and pleasant to hear, but bereft of emotional or intellectual content. “There is no point in developing a vocal instrument that performs dutifully, but has nothing to say” (Linklater, 1976, p. 40). As a pedagogical approach she suggests shifting “the job of judging sound from the aural to the tactile sense” (Linklater, 1976, p. 35). In other words, she defends the necessity to relinquish *listening to* or criticizing one’s own voice according to preconceived aesthetic notions, arguing that “[...] as long as work on the voice includes listening to sounds to check their quality, there will be a conditioned split between the head and the heart, and emotion will be censored by the intellect rather than shaped by it” (Linklater, 1976, p. 35).

We may observe that this work does not propose to develop virtuosity as an end in itself, although this does not mean that it does not seek a significant expansion of the vocal capacity of the actor or

actress. To the contrary, Linklater proposes exercises to *liberate* the voice and speech from secondary impulses and inefficient control of the organism, preferring to elaborate a vocal practice which takes as a starting point the necessity to communicate and the sensorial experience of images and visceral aspects of language.

In relation to the breathing, for example, she affirms that “[...] you can *affect* the breathing musculature, *provoke* it to greater efforts, but do not confuse the consciousness of emotional control, through the application of emotional impulses, with conscious muscular control” (Linklater, 1976, p. 28). She argues that “[...] the ultimate controls for breath are thoughts and feelings” (Linklater, 1976, p. 34). We may understand this approach as *passive control*, a conscious way to explore and expand the possibilities of the voice and speech, together with intellectual, emotional and sociocultural processes, but without interfering directly in the motor mechanisms or restricting sound through the judgement of its aesthetic quality, according to Holesgrove (2014).

We must emphasize Linklater’s effort to not only reintegrate voice, speech and body, but also to reintegrate thought and body. She does not deny the importance of the intellect and reason in the creative process of actresses and actors, however, she suggests a reorganization of the mode in which these process interact with physical, emotional and instinctive processes. She proposes a pedagogical approach that stimulates certain physical and vocal functions through the intention and the desire to communicate and not through the direct control of the muscles, using processes of perception, imagination and cognition to avoid the judgement and dominance of reason over the organism. In this manner, she seeks unity and a more efficient flux between diverse systems of the body and the world.

*Anthropophagy: you don't give orders to a body*

To reintegrate diverse corporal processes, including language, Linklater argues that “[...] we have to take the risk of indulging in the sensual experience that words can give us when returned to their rightful home in the body” (Linklater, 1976, p. 172). She says that “[...] by indulging in sensory, sensual, emotional and physical responses to vowels and consonants – the component parts of words – we begin to resurrect the life of language” (Linklater, 1992, p. 13).

When words are mainly experienced in the head and the mouth they convey cerebral meaning. In order to transfer Shakespeare's<sup>2</sup> full emotional, intellectual and philosophical intent from the page to the stage, words must connect with the full human range of intellect and emotion, body and voice. They must be allowed to rediscover old neuro-physiological routes of appetite to bring back taste and texture to speaking, and to spark the animal response mechanisms which fire the creative processes long buried under the layers of *civilized* and *rational* behaviour. Only the fullest access to the humanity of the speaker allows one to speak Shakespeare fully (Linklater, 1992, p. 11).

The proposal to reconnect the word to *old neuro-physiological routes of appetite* reminds us again of the similarities between eating and speaking, suggesting the metaphorical conception: *the word is nutrient*. The text must be tasted and devoured by the actress or actor. Though the experience of appreciating the taste of language, of feeling between the teeth, on the tongue and in the belly, words that are ripe and full with sounds, images and ideas, the actor or the actress fattens him or herself on the subsistence of knowledge; a rich, ample, experiential knowledge, that transforms the body in all senses, provoking simultaneously physical, emotional and intellectual changes.

This highlights a new conception of the importance of the text in contemporary theatre, reinforcing the need to be attentive to each word, not because of some logocentric authority of the author, but because of the nutrients that this *old cadaver* offers when the actress or actor feeds on the stage. The relation of actors and actresses to the author becomes anthropophagic as the words are consumed by the stage artist who takes possession of the vital energy of this other body.

The text becomes a nutrient for the actor, a body. Search for the musculature of this old cadaver that has been borrowed, its possible movements, where does it want to move; see it come back to life, little by little, as you breathe into it, redo the act of doing the text, re-write it with your body, see what it was written with, with muscles, different breaths, changes of elocution; see that it is not a text but a body that moves, breathes, feels desire, sweats, appears, is spent. Again! This is the true reading, the reading of the body, of the actor. No one knows more than it about the text and it doesn't need to take orders from anyone, because you don't give orders to a body. It is the only thing that really knows what this is for the teeth, what this is for the feet and what this is for the belly (Novarina, 2005, p. 18, our translation).

In this succinct manner, a practical, philosophical and ideological question is raised for the performing arts and the pedagogy of actresses and actors in contemporary theatre: *you don't give orders to a body* – not to someone else's body and not to your own. Novarina builds on this argument saying:

The actor does not interpret because his body is not an instrument. Because his body is not the instrument of his head. Because it is not its support. Those who say to the actor to interpret with his body as an instrument, those who treat him as an obedient and able brain to translate the thoughts of others into bodily signs, those who think that you can translate anything from one body to another and that a head can command anything in the body are on the side of the misapprehension of the body, on the side of the repression of the body, which means repression pure and simple (Novarina, 2005, p. 20, our translation).

The pedagogic approach based on the metaphor *the word is nutrient* affirms the autonomy of the actor or actress as a creative artist and not as a simple interpreter of the ideas of the author or the director, going against the logocentric western theatre tradition and the hierarchical organization of the functions of the artists. According to the traditional western vision, there is a division between the intellectual functions of the author and the director as if these were distinct from the executive function of the actress or actor. We may perceive in this old perspective of the theatre a comparison with the traditional Cartesian vision of the body itself. In both cases, there is a hierarchical differentiation between, on the one side, a head, a superior entity which thinks, and on the other side, a body, a submissive, docile and mechanical entity which simply executes what has been thought previously.

However, the same way that Linklater conceives thought in a broad manner, not as merely cerebral thinking, but as *whole-body thinking*, sustained through diverse biological, psychological, intellectual and social functions, we may also conceive artistic work in contemporary theatre, not as a reflection of the exclusive thinking of a single vigilant head, but rather as a reflection of the organic thinking of a collective body, formed by the union of different human experiences. In both cases, either in the theatrical work itself or in the human body, the quality of the thought depends on the vital flux between its constituent parts.

This reflection has important implications for pedagogic approaches to the voice, especially as the voice teacher, similar to the author or the director, may also easily assume a position of superiority in relation to the actor or actress, as a head that thinks for the docile body of the other.

In any case, the question is not only restricted to the relation between the teacher and the student, but also the relation that the student/actor/actress has with him or herself, as it is possible that the same structures of dominance and control repeat themselves within the organism. In this case, as has already been discussed, difficulties may arise as the student/actor/actress tries to control the voice, directly interfering in the functioning of the organism through the motor system.

The series of four exercises that are presented below aim to affirm the autonomy of the actress or actor and stimulate the development of the organism as a whole by provoking experiences through which diverse corporal processes can function without any one imposing itself over the other. More specifically, through the exploration of the metaphor *the word is nutrient*, we seek to diminish the directly controlling imposition of reason over the mechanical functioning of the vocal system, stimulating awareness of visceral aspects of the word and the relation of the text to the entire organism and not only to rational conscious thought.

### **Word Tasting: four exercises**

The aim of proposing these four exercises is to suggest possible pedagogic directions for the questions raised in the first part of this text and to add reflections based on practical experiences. The first and second exercises are loosely inspired by the principles that Linklater presents in her two books. The third and fourth exercises are based on specific exercises published by the author, proposing an adaption of the sounds from the English language to Brazilian Portuguese.

The exercises were originally developed as part of the results of the doctorate research of Thomas Holesgrove (2014). The research was realized at the Escola de Comunicação e Artes at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), with seven students from the third year of the Bachelor of Performing Arts, Acting Course, in the first semester of

2013, as part of the discipline, *Poéticas do Gesto e da Palavra I*, under the supervision of Dr. José Batista Dal Farra Martins, as part of USP's internship program, Programa de Aperfeiçoamento de Ensino (PAE).

However, these exercises are not presented here in the same manner in which they were applied during the doctorate research. The exercises have been reorganized and some modifications have been made, with the specific objective of exploring in greater depth the metaphor *the word is nutrient*, which is being discussed in this article, but which was not the principle focus of the doctorate research.

*1st Exercise: speaking with your mouth full (or chewing on the text)*

In this exercise, the students explored intelligible ways of articulating a text as they ate and drank. The experience was prepared with a table cloth (laid on the floor) and a basin with soap and water. Each student brought food to contribute to a banquet prepared with a diversity of flavours and textures of food and drink.

Before eating, all the students washed their hands with water and soap, as the entire group sang music propitious to the act of washing. Each student washed and dried the hands of another, creating a more intimate contact between the members of the group before eating. After washing their hands, the students were lead through a massage that they applied to their own jaw, placing their fingers inside the mouth to feel and release the muscles, establishing a tangible contact with the speech organs, and at the same time, breaking the taboo of *putting the hands in the mouth*.

Finally they sat down to eat, forming a circle. As they ate, they began a table conversation, speaking texts of Novarina that had been memorized specifically for the work in the classes. During this conversation, they were only permitted to speak while eating, that is, when the mouth was full of food. The students experimented speaking the text with different types of food, observing what sensations were provoked. At the end, they chose an excerpt of the text to speak, without food in the mouth, but remembering the sensation of speaking while eating something specific, recreating in the imagination the flavour and the texture of the food in relation to the verbal discourse.

The exercise was developed, taking as an initial reference *The Freeing Process*, focusing on *The Channel for Sound*, chapter 7 of Linklater's first book, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976). The author refers to the pharyngeal, oral and labial cavities as *the channel for sound*, proposing exercises to liberate these cavities from unnecessary tensions that may impair resonance and the formation of vowels and consonants. Her approach is sensorial, involving, for example, the perception of vibrations in the chest, the mouth and the teeth, visualizing these vibrations as colours or imaginary forms.

The objective of our exercise was the activation of the musculature and the release of unnecessary tensions through the exploration of the dual functions of the speech organs, engaging the jaw, the tongue, the soft palate and the throat. The approach was indirect and sensorial, in the sense that it did not involve the direct manipulation of the muscles, but rather the stimulation of these through the tactile and kinaesthetic awareness of internal spaces and their meanings. In this way, it sought not only the liberation of the speech muscles, but also of the mind, posing problems for notions of a *beautiful voice* or *educated speech* with the aim of reducing self-criticism of the voice and personal modes of speech, modifying habits and making possible the discovery of new patterns. The intention was to provoke reflections about sensorial aspects of language as well as changes of perspective in relation to the voice, opening the way for visceral explorations of words in other exercises.

### *2nd Exercise: the red hot chilli pepper*

In this exercise, the students were asked to imagine chewing on a red hot chilli pepper that began to burn on the lips and then passed to other areas of the face, head and torso, doing this to perceive and intensify the vibratory energy of the voice, principally with the nasal consonant MMM [m].

The exercise began with the simple action of placing the imaginary chilli in the mouth and beginning to chew. As the students began to chew, they were asked to imagine the chilli burning on the lips to try to feel and intensify the vibrations that they were making through the pleasurable sounding of the consonant. The sound expressed the pleasure of eating the small fruit. The game of imagining the sensation of the burning helped to focus the vibrations on the lips and the chewing action stimulated the opening of the pharyngeal and



oral cavities, indirectly, through the exploration of the image and not through the mechanical manipulation of the muscles.

As they began to feel clearly the burning on the lips, the students were asked to imagine that the burning became more intense, rising up into the nasal cavity and spreading through the sinuses. The students continued chewing, feeling the vocal vibrations more intensely in the facial mask, always exploring the sensations through the imagination game. Continuing in this manner, the sensation of pleasure reached a climax and the students were asked to pretend that they were becoming delirious with the flavour, allowing the pitch of the consonant to reach higher, together with the burning sensation that rose to the top of the cranium, making the entire head vibrate with the intoxicating taste of the chilli. Using these vibrations, the students began to release words, beginning with the phrase *que delícia!* (*how delicious!*), and subsequently articulating things from real life that evoke such pleasurable delirium.

Eventually the students were led to imagine that the delirium passed and that the burning sensation descended to the chest, vibrating with calm contentment. They let the consonant MMM [m] open for the vowel AAA [a] and breathed with pleasure, trying the phrase, *ahh! que gostoso!* (a synonymous phrase for *how delicious!* but with markedly different vowel sounds to the first phrase) and, following this, feeling the warmth of the chilli in the chest, spoke of things from their lives that provide calm relief.

But in the imagination game this moment of pleasure passed as it was suggested to them that the chilli was not good for the digestion. The students were asked to feel the sound descend to the belly and the intestine, evoking the sensation of nausea and the necessity to vomit or defecate. In this game they imagined all their orifices opening, and in this manner, with the throat and mouth wide open, vomited the sound. The vibrations of the consonant MMM [m] originated in the bottom of the intestine and rose, opening the torso like a thick tube to spray onto the floor with the vowel OOO [o] and afterwards with words and phrases, saying everything that needed to be expelled from the body and personal life. The vomit was understood as purgation to clean the body of sicknesses and physical, emotional and intellectual toxins.

Like the first exercise, this is not one of Linklater's proposals, however, it was inspired by her practice of shifting emphasis from the aural to the tactile senses to register different vocal experiences

through the awareness of vibrations in different areas of the body instead of listening to and judging the aesthetic quality of the sound. It worked in a similar mode to the *sound scale*, which will be discussed below. The game of imagining the chilli was also inspired by Linklater's practice of using images to provoke new corporal experiences and stimulate the development of vocal energy, without resorting to direct or mechanical control of the organism.

The emotional intensity and the grotesque nature of the exercise, both of which developed gradually over the work, was proposed as another way of provoking the students to free themselves of preconceived aesthetic notions of a *beautiful voice* to explore with greater depth the vocal potential. One of the objectives was that the experience of opening the orifices, of opening the organism, could work physically, emotionally and intellectually to enlarge internal spaces of breathing and resonance, allowing a greater flux between body and world and the passage of that which needs to transit from inside to outside.

The exercise was particularly useful in the way that it passed through different sensations of pleasure, disgust and purgation. By verifying the frontal projection and the presence of vibrations on the lips and in the facial mask at the beginning of the exercise the students safely prepared for the greater demands of the exploration of the voice in other areas of the body. At the end, it was observed that the exploration of the sensation of vomiting or defecating stimulated the abdominal musculature in an organic, non-mechanic, way, making possible the exploration of the emotional and intellectual sense of the interweaving of the voice with other biological functions.

### *3rd Exercise: the anatomy of sounds I*

As with the previous exercise, this third one was also proposed as a procedure to experiment the localization of sounds within the structure of the organism, searching to feel vowels and consonants in specific areas of the body, making possible the discovery of images, movements and personal associations arising through the sensorial experience.

This experience was based on a specific exercise proposed by Linklater to explore the material quality of the language of the text, focusing on vowels and consonants (1992). According to the author, the work allows for the exploration of the *anatomy* of words, investigating the relation between the constituent parts of language

in specific areas of the physical body. The exercise also involved the observation and the notation of images and associations linked to the experience, with the aim of highlighting for the participants the mode in which, apart from the formal meaning of the text, the sound itself is capable of provoking different thoughts and states of emotion. In this way, it sought to broaden simple lexical knowledge through the perception of the word's sensorial qualities, enriching thought and imagination. For Linklater (1992), this type of work looks to the revitalization of the word through the exploration of the equilibrium between emotion, intellect and speech.

However, due to the fact that the exercise targets the qualities of specific language sounds, it was necessary to make an adaptation of the original, taking into consideration differences of sound between English and Portuguese. A careful analysis was made of Linklater's exercise to identify sounds of the English language that are not found in Brazilian Portuguese. In these cases, the original sounds proposed by the author were substituted for approximate sounds in Portuguese. In this way, it was also possible to add important sounds from Portuguese that do not exist in English, as for example, some of the nasal vowels. The result of this analysis is presented below in the *sound scripts*.

In our adapted version of this exercise, these scripts were distributed and completed through the students vocal-corporal work. Initially, they experimented with the vocal sounds (script #1), localizing the physical and emotional sensation of the vibrations in certain parts of the body, and based on these sensations, began to explore patterns of movement. The exploration was conducted to investigate specific associations with food, tastes, images and sensations related to eating. After trying each sound, the students took a brief pause to make a written record of these associations.

These concrete records of images and sensations were seen as an important means to avoid the direct manipulation of the voice. Without this element of the process, the exercise easily became mechanical, possibly because of the lack of a specific focus which allowed the mind to wander over other questions. Linklater insists on the importance of “[...] the accuracy of the image and the sensory perception of resonance”, emphasizing that the voice must be produced as a natural result of this mental work (Linklater, 1976, p. 113). After doing the experiment with the vowel sounds, the students continued with the consonants (script #2).

Script #1: Adaptation of Linklater's work with vowels (1992)

	Vowel suggested by Linklater in the original exercise in English.	Vowel used in the exercise adapted for Brazilian Portuguese.*3	Localization of the sound in the body (to be completed by the participants).	Personal association with food, tastes, images and sensations (to be completed by the participants).
Experiment with these vowels, using long extended movements.*4	OOOO of "moon" [u:]*5	U-U-U of "mousse" (mousse)*6 [u:]		
	O of "hope" [o:]	Ô-Ô-Ô of "ovo" (egg) [o:]		
	AW of "wall" [ɔ:]	Ó-Ó-Ó of "óleo" (oil) [ɔ:]		
	AAAA of "father" [a:]	A-A-A of "amargo" (bitter) [a:]		
	-	É-É-É of "mel" (honey) [eɔ]		
	EY of "fate" [ei]	Ê-Ê-Ê of "peixe" (fish) [ei]		
	EEEEEE of "see" [i:]	I-I-I of "milho" (corn) [i:]		
	-	MÃ-ÃO of "mamão" (papaya) [ãɔ]		
	-	Ã-Ã-ÃE of "pães" (bread rolls) [ãẽ]		
	-	Õ-Õ-ÕE of "limões" (limes) [õẽ]		
	-	I-I-IM of "vinho" (wine) [i:]		
Experiment with these vowels using short quick movements.	-	Ú of "cru" (raw) [u]		
	-	Ô of "gota" (drop) [o]		
	O of "hot" [ɒ]	Ó of "pó" (powder) [ɔ]		
	HUh of "but" [ɒ]	Á of "guaraná" (guarana) [a]		
	-	Ã of "maçã" (apple) [ã]		
	A of "hat" [æ]	É of "café" (coffee) [ɛ]		
	E of "pet" [e]	Ê of "azedo" (sour) [e]		
	I of "hit" [ɪ]	Í of "abacaxi" (pineapple) [i]		

\*See notes 3, 4, 5 e 6.

Script #2: Adaptation of Linklater's work with consonants (1992)<sup>7</sup>

Consonant/movement <sup>8</sup>		Personal association with food, tastes, images and sensations (to be completed by the participants).
Voiced – heavy movements.	Nasals: long sounds and movements.	MMM of “mastigar” (to masticate) [m]
		NNN of “nutrir” (to feed) [n]
	Plosives: short sounds and movements.	B of “beber” (drink) [b]
		D of “devorar” (to devour) [d]
		G of “engasgar” (to choke) [g]
	Fricatives: long sounds and movements.	VVV of “vomitar” (to vomit) [v]
ZZZ of “azedar” (to make sour) [z]		
Unvoiced – light movements.	Plosives: short sounds and movements.	P of “picotar” (to perforate) [p]
		T of “tomar” (to take, or to drink) [t]
		C of “cuspir” (to spit) [k]
	Fricatives: long sounds and movements.	FFF of “fritar” (to fry) [f]
		SSS of “assar” (to bake) [s]

\*See note 8.

*4th Exercise: anatomy of sounds II*

This exercise was proposed as a continuation of the exploration of the connection between the linguistic sounds, the vibratory energy of the voice, the physical anatomy, as well as images and personal associations related to food, while also paying more attention to the contact between work partners. Once again, it was an adaptation of a specific exercise published by Linklater (1992). As with the previous exercise, an adaptation was made of Linklater's *scale*, substituting English language sounds in the original exercise for Portuguese language sounds. This adaptation is presented in Script #3.

In this exercise the participants experimented with all of the sounds of the *vowel scale*, using syllables, words and movements to

create physical-vocal actions that were directed at work companions as if it were possible to reach them physically only with the energy of the sound and the intention of the action. They were also permitted to try new words (maintaining the same syllable), paying attention to the mode in which the meaning of the word altered the quality of the action and of the contact with the work partner. The scale was repeated, increasing the speed until it could be done in its entirety in only a single respiratory movement.

**Script #3: Vowel scale, adapted from Linklater's scale (1992)**

Syllable proposed by Linklater	Translation of the syllable to approximate sounds in Brazilian Portuguese	Localization* <sup>9</sup>	Movement* <sup>10</sup>
ZZOO-OO of "zoo" [u:]	UU-UU of "chuchu" (chayote) [u:]	Pelvis and thighs	Wobbly legs
WO-Oe of "woe" [oo]	ÔÔ-Ôu of "enjoo" (nausea) [oo]	Belly	Shaking the belly
SHAW-AW - [ɔ:]	Ó-Ó-Óme of "fome" (hunger) [ɔ:]	Sternum	Cord extending from sternum
Goh of "got" [ɔ]	GÓ of "engole" (swallow) [ɔ]	Centre of the chest	Explosion of the fists
MA-AA - [a:]	MA-AA of "mamar" (to breast or bottle feed) [a]	Heart	Opening the heart
FUh of "funny" [ʌ]	FÁ of "faca" (knife) [a]	Lips	Blowing a kiss
HU-UH-UH - [ɜ]	CA-CA-CA of "cana" (sugar cane) [ɛ]	Mouth/mask* <sup>11</sup>	Wobbly head
BA of "bat" [æ]	FÉ of "café" (coffee) [ɛ]	Cheeks	Explosion of the fingers
DEh of "den" [e]	DÊ of "dente" (tooth) [e]* <sup>12</sup>	Mask	Flicking the face
PE-EY of "pay" [ei]	PE-E-EII of "peixe" (fish) [ei]	Eyes	Pulling cords out of the eyes
GI of "give" [i]* <sup>13</sup>	GUI of "guisar" (to stew) [i]	Back of the skull	Thumbs backwards
KI of "kit" [i]	QUI of "caqui" (persimmon) [i]	Forehead	Pecking with the finger
RREE-EE - [i:]	RRI-I-I-I of "risoto" (risotto) [i:]	Top of the skull* <sup>14</sup>	Rocket

\*See notes 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 e 14.

## Final Considerations

In summary, four exercises were suggested for a sensorial approach to voice and speech in contemporary theatre, based on the metaphor *the word is nutrient*.

A naive conception of the proximity between speech and digestion may be observed in daily expressions and metaphors which describe certain modes of communicating, through which the speaker may *chew on an idea, spit an answer, vomit their hate, swallow their words*, and even, *speak shit*, for example. These metaphors say as much about the content of the discourse as they do about the mode in which the entire body is organized to make the enunciation, and, in this way, these expressions make strong allusions to the mobilization of concomitant processes of language, thought, emotion, instinct and social interaction.

In distinct and vastly different works, Linklater and Novarina observe the proximity between eating and speaking in relation to the approach to the word and the text in the theatre, emphasizing that this proximity does not only refer to the similarity between mechanical movements of the organs shared between the two anatomic systems, but also to the similarity of the wider meanings linked to primary instincts, to vital necessities and to the flux between body and world.

These observations call attention to the importance of going beyond the intellectual understanding of the word in search of a sensorial understanding. According to Linklater (1992), in western culture the traditional emphasis that is placed on the relation between the word and reason results in a loss of the sensibility to the visceral qualities of language, reducing the potential of the coordination between speech and physical, psychic and instinctive processes.

This affirmation does not mean a denial of the logical aspects of the word, but rather, suggests the necessity to broaden the notion of thought itself and make a radical commitment to the idea that reason is not disconnected from these other processes. By asserting the inseparability of body and mind, we perceive that the mode in which intellectual processes relate to psychological, physiological and instinctive processes can be organized in different ways. Through the reading of Linklater's publications together with Novarina's *Lettre aux Acteurs* (2005), we highlight the necessity to search for a horizontal relation between different organic processes instead of strengthening a vertical and hierarchical relation based on Cartesian suppositions about the supremacy of logic. According to these authors, to behave as though reason was superior to the other functions and capable of dominating and controlling the organism can reduce the inherent efficiency of the global system.

This vision of the individual body can also be extended to the concept of the collective body, suggesting the need to develop horizontal relations between the different functions in the creative

and pedagogic work in the theatre, so that the author, the director or the teacher do not impose themselves over the actress/student or actor/student as if they were capable of thinking for the other, or of commanding or controlling their body.

Beyond the ethical questions, this proposal implies practical and objective considerations for the pedagogy of voice and acting in contemporary theatre. We suggest that as systems, both the individual body and the collective body function more efficiently and with greater potential when they are coordinated in such a manner that all their constituent parts can interact in a horizontal form in the creative work. As Novarina states (2005, p. 18), the true reading, is the reading of the body, of the actor: “[...] no one knows more than him about the text and he doesn’t need to take orders from anyone”.

To read the text *through the body* and not simply *with the mind*, that is, to read the text by way of a deep exploration of all the sensorial and intellectual aspects of the word instead of only prioritizing logical comprehension, can open the way to discover new, more subjective, original and relevant meanings. More than this, the reading of the text through the body values the experience of the language and the theatrical performance as a process of reflection, without reducing the artistic work to a single fixed meaning.

The exercises presented in this article are understood as possible pedagogic approaches in accordance with these considerations. The attempt to provoke visceral experiences of language, as if it was food, aims to reduce the tendency to directly control the musculature. It is founded on the hypothesis that this tendency can be overcome through the exploration of images related to eating, food and digestion as well as through the tactile perception of vibrations that fill the mouth, the nostrils, the cranial cavities, the throat, passing through the stomach and the intestine to the depths of the pelvic floor. The exercises also aim to overcome pre-established aesthetic notions of a *beautiful voice*, overcoming taboos related to the vocal and digestive systems. They seek to stimulate the development of awareness of inter-related process in speech, of the mode in which vibratory energy passes through the entire body, and of internal spaces and movements which are constantly transformed by thought inflections, intentions and fluctuating states of emotion and meaning. In conclusion, they seek to deepen the sensorial experience of language and thought and establish a new relation between the actor or actress and the text in the contemporary theatre.



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember that, as well as referring to the speech organ, the word *tongue* can also refer to the language that is spoken as well as to the style and mannerism with which the a person speaks. In this sense, we play physically with the speech organ and also with the manner in which we articulate our language.

<sup>2</sup> This citation refers to the work that Linklater presents in her book *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (1992).

<sup>3</sup> Reference for the sounds in Brazilian Portuguese: (Cagliari, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Vowels in the English language have intrinsic lengths. For example, besides a slightly different opening, the vowel [ʌ] of “*ship*” and the vowel [i:] of “*sheep*”, are differentiated principally through their intrinsic length. Linklater then, divides the exploratory work in this exercise between long vowels and short vowels. In Portuguese, vowels are not differentiated on the basis of intrinsic lengths, however, we can observe that there are other factors that can influence the duration of the vowel in speech, as, for example, nasal pronunciation, the position relative to other vowels and consonants, and the tonic or atonic position in a word or phrase (Cagliari, 2007). Observing this, we revised this exercise to explore the durational qualities of Portuguese vowel sounds through junctions with other vowels and consonants, forming syllables and words.

<sup>5</sup> Linklater does not use phonetic notation and emphasizes that the objective of the exercise is not the perfect pronunciation of specific vocal sounds, but the stimulation of the sensibility to the manner in which the sound inhabits the body. She clarifies: “[...] the exact pronunciation... of these sounds is not very important – an awareness of their differentiation is the object” (Linklater, 1992, p. 18). Therefore, the indications of the original exercise may be understood and pronounced in different manners, depending on the accent and regional dialect of the reader. We use phonetic notation here to establish a relation between the sounds of Standard American English (where Linklater’s book was first published) and the Brazilian, São Paulo accent, where the work of this article was developed. However, it is important to emphasize that this notation is used in this case to facilitate the adaption of the exercises for Portuguese and not with the intention of fixing in a definitive way a specific sound. The words should be freely explored to investigate the sensation of sounds pronounced in accordance with the regional dialect and the personal idiosyncrasies of the participant.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to repeat that, in the original exercise, Linklater does not use provocations related to food. In our adaptation, the choice of words was made in accordance with the theme of the current work.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this exercise, there is no significant difference between English consonants and Portuguese consonants, therefore no adaption of these sounds was made.

<sup>8</sup> Linklater (1992) makes a division between vocal and non-vocal consonants as well as between short and long consonants, that is, between plosives, on the one hand, and nasal and fricative consonants, on the other. We maintain Linklater’s divisions and add suggestions as to patterns of movement related to the duration and vocalization of the sound. But one of Linklater’s most important comments about this exercise is that the participant should become aware of the qualitative difference between vowels and consonants.

<sup>9</sup> In this exercise Linklater suggests specific areas of the body to explore the different sounds.

<sup>10</sup> These movement suggestions are inspired by Linklater's suggestions, but do not reproduce them exactly.

<sup>11</sup> Linklater suggests that the participant should explore the sensation of this sound in the mouth without making reference to the facial mask. However, in Portuguese, this sound tends to become nasal when it is followed by the nasal consonant[m], and therefore, it is useful to explore the mask too.

<sup>12</sup> In Portuguese, this vowel tends to become nasal when it is followed by the nasal consonant [n], as in this case. This is an advantage in this exercise, because it provokes an increase in the intensity of vibrations in the facial mask and the nasal cavity, the area of resonance being explored in this part of the exercise.

<sup>13</sup> This sound is not part of Linklater's scale. It was added specially to focus vibrations in the back of the skull.

<sup>14</sup> With the last three sounds, we suggest that attention be paid to explore the exact place where the greatest intensity of vibrations are felt, in order to discover subtle variations of timbre.

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