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Bachelors in Authorial Acting

**BACHELOR'S THESIS**

**Searching for Home:**

*How language and body language may affect the Dialogical Acting  
experience.*

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**Hledání Domova:**

*Vliv jazyka a řeči těla na zkoušení dialogického jednání.*

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## **D e c l a r a t i o n**

I declare that I have prepared my Bachelor's Thesis independently on the following topic:

Searching for home - How language and body language may affect the Dialogical Acting  
experience.

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date: .....

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Signature of the candidate

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**Keywords:** Dialogical Acting, Inner Partner, language, body language, gestures, home, acting.

**Abstract:**

In this paper I reflect on how my lifelong search for home has inspired new ways to find home through my experiences studying at the Authorial Acting Program at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy.

Through this search for home, and my studies at the department, I find myself noticing a connection between the languages that I speak and the way that my body reacts in Dialogical Acting. In an attempt to research this connection between language and body language and the possible effects it may have on my experiences with Dialogical Acting, I revisit my own notes from my studies, and conducted my own research by devising a questionnaire which was sent out to some of my colleagues who have experienced practicing this discipline in multiple languages as well, and also include other literature that may support my findings. In the end I found some ethical errors in the way I formatted this questionnaire and believe that this too may have had an effect on how my colleagues described their experiences and in turn affected my research. Through this I end up finding some connections that I believe do support the idea that the language we speak can affect the way our body speaks.

**Klíčová slova:** dialogické jednání, vnitřní partner, jazyk, řeč těla, gesta, domov, herectví.

**Abstrakt:**

V této práci reflektuji, jak mé celoživotní hledání domova inspirovalo nové způsoby jak nacházet domov prostřednictvím zkušeností ze studia autorského herectví na Katedře autorské tvorby a pedagogiky.

Během tohoto hledání domova a mého studia na katedře jsem si začala uvědomovat spojitost mezi jazyky, kterými mluvím, a způsobem, jakým mé tělo reaguje při dialogickém jednání. V rámci výzkumu těchto spojitostí mezi jazykem a řečí těla a jejich možného vlivu na mé zkušenosti z dialogického jednání jsem revidovala poznámky ze svého studia, vytvořila jsem výzkumný dotazník, který jsem posléze rozeslala kolegům, kteří měli podobnou zkušenost s praktikováním této disciplíny ve více jazycích, a svá zjištění jsem konfrontovala s další literaturou. Nakonec jsem objevila určité etické problémy související se způsobem, jakým jsem dotazník vytvořila, přičemž věřím, že také toto mohlo ovlivnit způsob, jakým mí kolegové popsali své zkušenosti a tím ovlivnili můj výzkum. I přesto jsem nakonec objevila určité spojitosti, které, jak věřím, potvrzují myšlenku, že jazyk, kterým mluvíme, může ovlivnit způsob, jakým hovoří naše tělo.

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I would like to thank my family, who were there with me throughout this entire process and showed nothing but kindness and faith in everything I have done.

Thank you for being part of this journey with me.

Thank you for giving me a home in all of you.

Хвала свима који су доказали да дом могу наћи у људима који показују

искрену љубав.

## **Operational Definitions**

**DAMU:** The Czech abbreviation for the Theatre Faculty at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

**Dialogical Acting with the Inner Partner (DA):** Dialogical Acting is the core discipline at the Department of Authorial Acting where students interact with the Inner Partner. In Czech it is Dialogické Jednání s vnitřním partnerem and informally as DJ among students and its practitioners.

**Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy (DACP):** The Department in which students study various subjects that help aid them in finding their most authentic self.



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## **Introduction: Languages of Home**

Home, a word that holds so much meaning, so much weight, but unfortunately that same word has never been able to provide me with the same comfort as it could to others. My passport says I'm from Serbia but I spent the first 19 years of my life in the United Arab Emirates, a country that was not my own. This instigated the confusion as to where my "home" really is and what this word truly means to me. I speak both the Serbian and English language, one better than the other, but have always felt more comfortable speaking one more than the other. Serbian is the language of my people and I feel a connection to it all throughout my body when I speak it. English is the first language I learnt, so it's more my mother tongue than my actual mother tongue. Even with my troubles with learning languages I have always felt a connection to them. I've always felt that while speaking either I would suddenly turn into these alternate versions of myself. My body felt different depending on the language that I spoke, which just added to my confusion of who I was and where my home truly was.

In truth, this struggle with language is what I believe inspired my personal investigation into how language and body language could possibly have an effect on performance. Seeing as I could not find any existing research related to this specific topic I decided to conduct my own. This research was based predominantly on my personal experiences in Dialogical Acting<sup>1</sup> as well as the experiences of my classmates who practiced the same discipline. Throughout this paper I attempt to explore these findings by reliving the process of my studies by using some

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<sup>1</sup>Dialogical Acting (DA), better known by its Czech name Dialogické Jednání s vnitřním partnerem and informally as DJ among students and its practitioners. It is one of the core subjects of the Authorial Acting Program at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy. I go into further detail about this discipline throughout this paper.

of my notes, a questionnaire I created containing questions specifically focused on this topic asking my colleagues about their experiences, as well as some research found through literature and articles which I believe could aid me in the search for these connections to language and body language. Unfortunately as I began writing this paper I noticed that I had met some errors in regards to how the questionnaire was devised, errors that I believe may have affected the responses, but I will go into further detail about this in the paper.

Let us start with the beginning, one of the official definitions of Home according to the Cambridge Dictionary is “a place of origin, or the place where a person belongs”<sup>2</sup>. Now, based on this definition I suppose one would consider both Serbia and the United Arab Emirates my home, but any time I would try to explain this to someone I was always told that you can’t really have more than one place as your home. They would say, home is where your family is, but my family is all over the place. My parents are in the UAE and my brother and the rest of my family are currently residing in Serbia. They would then say, your home is where your heart is, but my heart is truly in both of these places. Thus, leading me right back to my continuous search for home.

No matter how much time I would spend in either of these countries and no matter how hard I tried to learn about them or learn about the people who live in them, it never felt like I was completely connected to either. But then, anytime time I would leave one, I would begin having this feeling; the one where when you leave your ‘home’ you feel like you are leaving a part of yourself every time you leave. That’s when I would wholly believe that yes, I finally

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<sup>2</sup> “Home.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, 6 Apr 2021, <[dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/home](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/home)> .

found a place that I can really call home. Then, just as I was about to leave my other home I would find myself feeling the same yet again. Feeling like I was leaving a part of myself... bringing me right back to the start of once again not really knowing where my home was.

I somehow always felt out of place, like I never belonged. It wasn't until I had my first taste of the arts, of performing, that I finally found a place that felt like I fit in. Early in my adolescence I started taking acting a little more seriously, I was part of all the school plays, performed at festivals out of school, and once I graduated from high school I even ended up working for a small theatre company<sup>3</sup> during my gap year. My favourite part about performing was the thrill of being able to be anyone you wanted to be, even for a short period of time. Enjoying the journey of learning about each character, about their history, about their movements, the way they speak, the way they stand, or even getting to create a story for them from their past. There is a certain beauty in being an actor where you can be everything all at once, you get to carry this great weight of this characters past and then leave it once the show is done. Performing, whether on stage or in front of a camera, has always given me a sense of comfort. It always made me feel like this was where I was supposed to be. Regardless of how nervous I was, being able to perform made me feel grounded.

I then began my studies at the Authorial Acting Program at The Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter referred to as DACP) a program that was founded by

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<sup>3</sup> Scenes&Skenes is a theatre company, started by Vicky Koumoutsou, Greek actress. I worked for where I got to perform a variation of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and play the character Bibi (originally known as Violet). We performed in primary schools as well as in the National Theatre of Sharjah.

<sup>4</sup> The Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy (DA) is a department founded by Ivan Vyskočil a well-known Czech writer, performer, psychologist, and teacher. The department is mainly focused on

professor Ivan Vyskočil. As a result of his experiences in psychology, teaching, writing, and performing he was able to create this department and specifically Dialogical Acting (hereinafter referred to as DA) an original discipline and the primary foundation of the department.

It was during my studies at DACP that I found a way to investigate this connection between languages and my body. I first noticed a real connection to it when I performed my Authorial Presentation<sup>5</sup>, titled “Kruševac”, in my second year. In short the piece was about an accident I had when I was 14 where I fell off of a swing and was staying with my aunt and grandmother in Kruševac and wasn't sure who to go to for my injuries. I tell the story in both the Serbian and English language. At the end of my performance many of my colleagues and pedagogues all commented on how I was able to create such a vivid picture using my body and voice and how speaking in these different languages, somehow changed the way that I portrayed these incidents and how differently my body moved depending on the language that I spoke when portraying the different characters. Shortly after, I began investigating this topic in DA.

## **1 My Dialogical Acting Experience**

My experiences with DA began on Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> 2017, our first class, in our first semester of our first year. In the beginning it was very confusing for all of us first timers. We didn't really understand the concept of DA but we were all soon going to find out by just

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studying and exploring the authorial approach to acting and being your most authentic and authorial self. More information about the department can be found on their website, [www.damu.cz](http://www.damu.cz).

<sup>5</sup> Authorial Presentations, much like everything else at DACP is a process of creating a piece or a presentation. Where the student learns how to communicate and share the experience of a story, text, or perhaps even something personal, whilst founding their work on the principles from the other disciplines learned here at DACP.

going into the space and trying it out for ourselves. I remember researching about the subject prior to the class but the information was so broad I still wasn't too sure what it was about or how it worked. Although, I suppose there was beauty in not knowing and having to figure it out as I go. We each began by taking turns going into the space and tried letting ourselves be free to explore in public solitude.<sup>6</sup> This is a terrifying concept, having to allow yourself to just be you and to talk to yourself, to your inner partners, in front of these new people whom you've just met, trying out this new practice, in this new space. Having to be vulnerable in this way in this public solitude can sometimes feel scary and quite vulnerable. Especially when you are showing this side of you, a side you may be used to hiding, but here in this space, you let it out and show your true authentic self. I later found this vulnerability incredibly rewarding while continuing my practice, and after almost four years of practicing and experimenting with Dialogical Acting I can honestly say it has allowed me to be more comfortable in any space. However that is not to say that I have mastered being vulnerable, I still have difficulty with this and quite often end my sessions in DA feeling quite frustrated, but then I just remind myself that I am still learning and this is still a work in progress.

I remember the first time I had stepped foot into the space, I could physically hear my heart beat faster and faster the closer I got to the wall on the other side of the room. I was simply put: nervous. I don't remember much of what I did in the space that first time, but what I do

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<sup>6</sup> Vyskočil best explains this in his interview "Basically, it means the whoever is in the space, in the center of everyone else's attention, tries to and learns to behave, interact and experience as if the others weren't there and weren't watching him, as if he were alone, that is, alone with himself." see Ivan Vyskočil, "(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner", 8 June 2021 <<https://www.ivanvyskocil.cz/html/english.html>>.

remember is coming back to my seat and realising with the help of the assistants<sup>7</sup> feedback, that I had completely closed myself off while in the space. I had kept my hands and legs crossed, but was just continuously speaking the majority of the time I was up there. It was as though I was blocking myself, both physically and verbally. Keith Johnstone describe blocking as a form of aggression and that because of it actors are more likely to rely on speaking because it feels safer than action.<sup>8</sup> Although I do not agree that it is a form of aggression in my case, I can say that it is a form of fear. While this fear blocked me, speech did in fact feel safer in the space than moving. I seem to recall that I was too hyper focused on trying to control what looked good rather than just allowing myself to project and even really verbalize what I was feeling in that moment. This fear of not being my idea of perfect, this feeling of losing control, is how I was blocking myself and my body. Declan Donnellan best describes this feeling stating that “we stop ourselves moving because fear maintains us in a state of control.”<sup>9</sup> That is why being able to verbalize what you are seeing, feeling, hearing can be very helpful during your time in the space and can be very helpful with opening you up in order to explore and play more freely. It will allow you to feed off of what is happening to you and thus making your experience in the space richer. By verbalizing your experiences, you let yourself get out of your head and can then really listen to yourself as though you were a stranger thus allowing yourself to hear what you are saying as the other.

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<sup>7</sup> The assistants that lead this class were Václav Trojan, PhD and Zuzana Pártlová, PhD, “Assistants” is used at DACP to describe the pedagogues and in some cases students who supervise the dialogical acting classes. I am not completely sure why we say “assistants” but I assume it is because they are not there to teach us how to DA but rather ‘assist’ us in our process of exploration.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the theatre*. (Routledge, The Arts Books, 1992) 94.

<sup>9</sup> Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*. (Nick Hern Books, 2002) 154.

I noticed that one of the reasons behind my struggles with opening up in the space was because I was being introduced to a new inner partner. I have the tendency of having this inner voice take control of what I am doing and it was then that I realised this inner voice, the one who is constantly dictating what I can and cannot do, could be an inner partner, an inner critic, my own inner control freak. However, interacting with this inner partner was very difficult because I had difficulty verbalizing what that inner voice was saying to me. Once I was finally able to let that inner voice speak out loud that was when I noticed that it usually would appear with a specific tone, one that resembled the tone of some of my teachers from high school. It was typically strict, short and to the point. I noticed it would mostly sound like that if I was speaking in English. Which got me thinking, whenever I would interact with this inner partner there was a certain change in my body, a certain kind of bodily tension would appear whenever this inner partner would. It was interesting however to see, that when I would speak in Serbian sometimes this same inner partner would appear, only then the bodily tension that came with it was different. Perhaps it was because the strict voice this time was more parental and since I associated it to a parental voice it had certain cultural gestures that accompanied it.

Thanks to some feedback given after one of the many interactions with this inner partner it was then that I realised my body truly reacted differently depending on the language that I spoke in. It seemed that when I would interact with this inner partner while speaking in Serbian whether or not I was also arguing with them or speaking with a kind voice I seemed to be more playful with them. This was visible both through the more free movements of my body as well as a more freeing voice. I seemed to allow myself to play with different intonations while speaking which made this play with the inner partner more interactive and as a plus, more enjoyable for me. Not knowing it at the time, this was just the start of my many questions as to how the language I spoke effected my experience with the inner partners as well as my bodily reaction.



## 1.1 My Rules

After several attempts I began collecting notes on some feedback I received of some rules that we could follow when going into the space. Now I use the word 'rules' lightly because at the start of our practice with Dialogical Acting we were told that we could not and should not do and use some of these things listed below while in the space. Only later in our studies were we informed that we in fact could work with these things so long as there is meaning and purpose for mentioning or using them (i.e props). The idea behind it was that we would learn to be more explorative and playful without having to rely on any miscellaneous objects or things like lights and costumes but rather just work with what is there and use our bodies and voices to explore the space. I do admit that for beginners, these simple 'rules' made it little less confusing in terms of what is expected of us from the space and allowed us to give more attention to ourselves and our just being in the space rather than looking into these objects.

Some of these 'rules' that I collected based on feedback for going into 'The Space' include:

1. No props (don't touch your jewellery).
2. Hair tied.
3. Take your time.
4. Don't look at those sitting in the seats.
5. Go in there relaxed, not to relax.
6. Be kind to yourself.
7. It's ok to speak what you are thinking.
8. You don't have to move/speak but you are allowed to.
9. Just express what you feel/think.
10. Slow down.
11. Breathe.

Originally these rules were intended to help me focus more while in the space, and learn how to follow impulses better. I also wanted to include these rules in this paper because I think it is quite ridiculous, considering my experience with the space now, just how strict I was with myself in the beginning. I also included them in order to compare them to some of Vyskočil's 'rules' for Dialogical Acting. Slowing down and speaking what I am thinking were for example quite important to my experience with DA because it reminded me that I needed to stop speaking so fast so that I could actually catch up with my own thoughts and reveal them to the space in the hopes of it leading to something else, perhaps an impulse or gesture. So that it would allow me to be more playful and explorative in the space. I have the tendency to speak very fast and because of it not only do those watching get confused in my fast paced changes in thought but so do I. So, as to not let this negatively affect my experience in the space I would often remind myself of this each time I went up there. Unfortunately I wasn't always successful, but later in my practice I found ways to be playful with this too.

Vyskočil mentions a similar rule about not rushing. That didn't mean we should be slow, and it also didn't mean we couldn't be slow either. It just meant that if we don't rush we allow ourselves to perceive and be more conscious of what we're saying, doing and overall more aware of what is going on. Not rushing can be helpful because it can help us notice how or if our inner partner could be speaking to us.<sup>10</sup> Whilst Vyskočil does mention more rules that could help in our investigation and exploration in the space, he would always add that there are no real rules for it and that DA is nothing fixed or finished.

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<sup>10</sup> Ivan Vyskočil, "(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner", 8 June 2021

<<https://www.ivanvyskocil.cz/html/english.html>>.

## 1.2 My Body can Speak

My experiences in DA in the space changed each time I was there, however it was always accompanied by some of the same feelings of nervousness, feelings of not exactly knowing what I was doing and having my inner control freak, which has always been ever so present in my life, was now also present almost every time I was up there and constantly criticizing me. Yoshi Oida compares the critic to a distorting mirror, one that already has its own shape and direction. This mirror shouldn't be taken too seriously otherwise we end up with a false impression . As actors we should remember that “a critic's words are not a true reflection of what you are doing”<sup>11</sup> By keeping this in mind I was slowly learning not to take what my inner critic was saying too seriously and instead tried to be more playful with it and also be kinder to myself.

This lead to having dialogues with my hands. By finding a focus point I was able to hone in on my impulses and follow through. Yes I suppose this meant I was once again controlling the situation in a way but I never went into the space with this intention of talking to them, I would just go in with an open mind but somehow always find myself starting a little conversation with my hands. Hands are very dynamic in the sense that they are used for many things. They can be used for physically picking things up, for gesticulation, for communication, sign language, expression, or even theatre. In the book *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, there is an entire chapter dedicated to hands, and how different cultures utilize them. It also discusses how they can have meaning and even speak, whether

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<sup>11</sup> Yoshi Oida, Lorna Marshall. *The Invisible Actor*. (Bloomsbury Academic, 1995) 53

through the expression of a word or even articulation of a sound.<sup>12</sup> In comparison to my experiences with DA and what was said in the chapter, I found that I agreed because my hands spoke to me as well. They spoke to me by reacting to what I was saying. When the rest of my body would stay in one place, completely stagnant, my fingers would flicker in response. I guess you could also say that because I was so focused on looking for a reaction my brain sent a signal to my fingers to create one, and honestly it could have very well just been that but it felt like something more, It honestly felt as though I was talking to them.

I remember that on one occasion I even tried experimenting by changing from speaking English to speaking in Serbian to them, to see if they would do something different and to my surprise they did. Initially, while conversing with my hands in English and expressing my feeling of stress from being in the space they began forming a fist. I had tried encouraging them, my inner partner, to relax and just give in to all the possibilities of play in the space but they just would not budge and that made me more frustrated. Once I started speaking Serbian to them and also in a kinder manner, I found that the tension in my hands was slowly releasing and they were no longer in the formation of a fist. Almost as though I had somehow calmed them, as well as myself, down just by speaking in Serbian. I believe that there is a connection with what I associated the languages to at the time. I seem to associate English to my professional self, as English to me is very much associated to my past in school and my teachers, and so I believe I sometimes fall into a strict demeanour because of it. So while doing DA in the space I noticed that I seemed to behave more rigidly while speaking English. Whilst, with

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<sup>12</sup> Barba, Eugenio, and Nicola Savarese. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology : The Secret Art of the Performer*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005) 151

Serbian, the language was always used more as a social language, to interact with family and friends so it was for the most part less formal. I believe that this experience with languages did effect my corporeal tension seeing as it physically relaxed me while speaking in a different language.

Still I felt like I needed to know more, why do I feel that there is a connection and how can I explain this, not only here in this paper, but to myself too. In the third chapter of *Why Gesture?: How the Hands Function in Speaking, Thinking and Communicating* there are multiple studies that investigate the functions and processing of gesture in the context of language. They found that “researchers examining native speakers’ gesture production across a variety of languages show that the content and type of the iconic gestures covary with the preferences made in different languages.”<sup>13</sup> My understanding of this was that depending on the language we feel more comfortable with we are more likely to attach a more appropriate gesture to it depending on the syntax of the language we are using.

In my case, it shows that like the interaction with my hands in DA and the play that happens with my body and my posture, the language that I spoke influenced the way everything moved. As mentioned before there are sometimes words that cannot be translated from one language to another and similarly there are some movements that simply cannot be projected through a different language. In Serbia ‘bre’ is a very common word we use as a form of expression. There is no official definition of this Serbian interjection but it can be used as a filler word in a sentences or like an exclamation. It is similar to how Canadians use ‘Eh?’ as an

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<sup>13</sup> R. Breckinridge Church, et al., editors. *Why Gesture?: How the Hands Function in Speaking, Thinking and Communicating*. (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017.) 43

interjection to their sentences. Therefore, just as 'bre' only exists in the Serbian language, and is understood amongst other Balkan languages, there are also certain body movements and gestures that can only be expressed through speaking one language and simply trying to use them with another language will not have the same effect. I would say in comparison to my experiences with DA, finding different ways to interact with my inner partners has led me to the recognition of these gestures more. It is certainly interesting to see that there are so many more connections to our body that we still do not even know or understand in their entirety.

On another note, something that I found fascinating was that with each attempt in the space, and considering the stressful state I was in being in the space, I had noticed that I spoke in different speeds depending on which language I would be speaking in. From my own perception, I would say that while speaking English the speed at which I spoke, although still fast, was much slower in comparison to when I spoke in Serbian. The reason I found it interesting was that in actuality, my knowledge of the English language was much better but for some reason my comfort speaking the Serbian language was far greater and I believe that this was because sometimes some feelings or thoughts are easier for me to express in Serbian. Perhaps because the words used to express them are more connected to the emotions of the thought or feeling. I suppose that resulted with me sometimes mixing the languages but also speaking much faster than intended. Perhaps it can also be said that the reason I am at times more comfortable in one language is because of the topic at hand, or the specific impulse I receive. It's possible that with each of these unique impulses I have different thought processes in each language and sometimes require the comfort of expressing myself through one more than the other.

Now combining that with this stressful situation of being in the space, I seem to speed up with the intention of trying to catch up with all of these accompanying thoughts and responses for these impulses. It also may be due to the fact that depending on the situations and

impulses, sometimes I feel the necessity to bounce between the languages as I am better able to express myself while mixing them because as mentioned before, some words in one language have a different and perhaps even greater meaning than in the other. However after receiving feedback suggesting that I try focus on just one impulse at a time and find different ways to express my response, and not just with speaking but with my body, I was able to gradually slow down. I experimented with this in my second year Authorial Presentation, *Kruševac*, where I performed the piece in both the Serbian and English language. Specifically, I believe mixing the two was effective because the story was based on an experience that occurred in Serbia and with characters based on real people who only spoke Serbian. Even though I could have translated the performance entirely into English a lot of the meaning and reactions made by these characters would have been lost in translation including each characters physicality because the physical responses that accompanied each of them were directly linked to the language and cultural upbringing as well. This would have as a result also changed the effect I intended to create while communicating this story.

Another instance that stayed with me from our DA sessions was when we were all trying to explore Da with different languages. I experimented with Czech, some words in Arabic, and even gibberish but always came back to English or Serbian. The DA assistants<sup>14</sup> then advised us to try and experiment more with our own native language while in the space to see if we would notice something different. So when I would start talking to my hands, I began by talking to them in my two ‘native’ languages, Serbian and English. Yet again, I found myself spending my valuable time in the space stagnant, staring into my hands; something that I see every day.

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<sup>14</sup> Václav Trojan, PhD and Zuzana Pártlová, PhD were the main assistants who lead our Dialogical Acting classes throughout the first year.

I began receiving all kinds of impulses mostly coming from a place of anger and frustration, some in English and some in Serbian, so I began responding to them in both and it wasn't until then that I realise that I was still bouncing from one language to another in order to express this frustration. I realised throughout my experimentation that this was actually a part of my nature. Being able to bounce between languages is something that I grew up doing precisely because I grew up in a different country and found that this was the best way to express myself, of course this only worked with people who also spoke both languages, my fellow Serbian third culture kids who also grew up in the UAE alongside me. Funnily enough this ended up being very productive for me while in the space because I finally wasn't limiting myself to one single language and as a result this freed me from this constant conversation with my hands. In fact the frustration and being able to speak both of these languages gave me a boost of energy and I was suddenly not stagnant, I was able to move myself around the space more and use my body more. I was now noticing the ways in which I walked, and even my posture improved throughout the experiment.

During these sessions I noticed more and more that when I spoke in Serbian I was more energetic and free with my voice and body. So when I would move my body that meant that my limbs were less restricted and more expressive. I was suddenly noticing so many more gestures that accompanied each character I would create when speaking in Serbian. However, when it came to speaking in English I had noticed that it was as if there was an intellectual side of me that was connected to the English speaking Aleksandra. As mentioned previously I associate the English language mostly with my early school days and so, speaking it quite often makes me feel trapped in the language because I am constantly more concerned about making sure I am always grammatically correct rather than just expressing myself even with mistakes.



In an article in the New York Times, they share a quote from Samuel Beckett<sup>15</sup> where he says that he chose to write in French because writing in English made it seem too easy. Writing in French gave him more clarity and allowed him to think more fundamentally and write with a greater economy.<sup>16</sup> Although my reasons were perhaps different to Beckett's, I believe the feeling of something not being quite right was the same. I too felt as though the language I grew up speaking, English, was becoming too easy, perhaps a little inflexible, and sometimes even boring. In all honesty this was not something I was purposefully thinking about but it was something that I would just realise every once in a while.

I first recognised it in DA, and then in any other performances that I did in English. My body would be more staccato and rigid, that's not to say I wasn't able to move, far from it but my body movements felt more calculated, almost choreographed. I became more aware of them and their connection to the language, it made me feel as though I was being unnatural and inauthentic. To be frank, before starting my studies at DACP I had no idea that there was even such a difference in my performance style and stance depending on the language that I spoke, it wasn't something that I was purposefully thinking about but it was something that I always seemed to notice, especially during my time in the space.

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906–1989) was an Irish playwright, novelist, short story writer, theatre director, poet, and literary translator. He is best known for his work, a play called "Waiting for Godot" (originally written in French "En attendant Godot", 1948-49, published 1952 and premiered 1953 at Theatre de Babylone in Paris).

<sup>16</sup> Herbert Mitgang. "Book Ends; BECKETT IN PARIS; PARIS." *New York Times*, 25 Jan. 1981, [www.nytimes.com/1981/01/25/books/book-ends-beckett-in-paris-paris.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/25/books/book-ends-beckett-in-paris-paris.html).

### 1.3 Dealing with frustration

It was only in my second year that I truly understood the importance of practicing DA continuously for at least three years. Once I had come back from summer holidays, meaning four months of no DA explorations, it felt as though I had to start from the beginning, of course this wasn't the case really seeing as the Aleksandra that was in the space in her second year was far more experienced than the one in her first. Unfortunately, having that break from practicing DA twice a week had subsequently made me feel awfully vulnerable again which in turn made me extremely frustrated. My time away from the space made it feel as though I was once again a stranger to it, and it a stranger to me. The frustrations I had felt at the end of my first year breakthrough were still present in the form of body and voice tension but not as powerful, they felt much lighter in comparison to my experiences in the first year. Looking back, I was very clearly confused, lost and suffering from the frustration that everyone told me would come but no one could tell me when. I remember at some point in the middle of the second semester Eva Slavíková<sup>17</sup> asked us "are you frustrated with DA yet?", I remember looking at her wanting to say yes but also no at the same time because I wasn't sure if my frustration was just because of every day stressors or if it was the "DA frustration", the very one I was warned about, the one that everyone experiences at one point during their DA explorations.

In the process of one of my DA sessions, I noticed my concentration had gotten considerably better. I was able to focus on one impulse at a time as well as control the speed at which I spoke in. Unfortunately, more often than not, I was leaving the space unsatisfied with my time there because I was so focused on concentrating on just one impulse I would lose all

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<sup>17</sup> Eva Slavíková MUDr, one of the pedagogues at DAMU who teaches Dialogical Acting, Psychology and Introduction to Authorial Acting. Also the Head of the Authorial Acting Program at the time.

the rest. Once I felt I was done with that one impulse I would often find myself feeling bored and empty in the space, and all those impulses that I once had would somehow vanish. For example I tried experimenting and being more playful with the sounds that I was creating in the space, such as how I pronounce words, or the way I make certain sounds, like grunting and growling out of anger. Sadly, almost every time that I came back into the space so did one of my inner partners. This resulted with me being ambushed and attacked by that same old inner control freak who would criticize everything I was saying and doing. I was well aware all throughout that this was a character of my own creation but because of their presence I was noticeably shyer and once again struggling with being kind to myself. That was when I decided to take the pedagogues'<sup>18</sup> advice and just try to find an inner partner who could be kind to me and use them to interact with this inner control freak, and then see if I can use this frustration and anger I felt towards them and play with it within the space.

The first time I attempted this I really enjoyed the play in the space, for every negative thing the negative inner partner would say, the positive one had to find a positive thing to say back to them as a counter. the negative partner spoke in English and the positive one took the form of my grandmother and spoke Serbian. I felt how with every negative word my body would start to shrink but then with every positive I felt some confidence come back and so my posture would improve. There was a certain kind of gentleness that came with speaking Serbian when I was imagining my grandmother, it felt almost as though with each positive word I could physically feel a pat on the back and it felt like my body was showing it. Instead of being crouched all the time and in one spot it felt as though my body was suddenly using up more

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<sup>18</sup> The pedagogues I am referring to are Zuzana Pártlová PhD, Václav Trojan PhD, Marianna Kozak MgA, and Eva Slavíková MUDr., all of which of have assisted in leading the DA classes throughout my studies.

space because of the positive reinforcement. It wasn't always this successful, but then I would just remind myself that this is a process and that not everything can and will be perfect, what is important is that we allow ourselves to be open and playful.

#### 1.4 Play

Then came my last official year at DACP, and I find myself looking at where I am, and how I still feel lost. I am still searching for something. I am still searching for home. Thus the question, "Why am I here?" I came here with the intention of learning how to be a better actor, a better person for the world, and a better me, for me. I suppose I am here to find myself, and the only way I can see a successful way of doing that is to play. So I guess I'm here to play. Fink's work was always mentioned and highly recommended to us precisely because of the similar motivations of play within DA. What Fink reflects on in the beginning of his book *Oasis of Happiness: Thought toward an Ontology of Play* is just how connected play is in our everyday life and how "play is universally known"<sup>19</sup>. Precisely because of this extensive experience with play, one would think it would be logical to be able to utilize it more but instead, as we grow older, we are discouraged from it. Instead of involving play in our everyday lives we are told that there is a time and place for it. Personally, I don't believe that to be true, in fact after my experiences with DACP I only then truly understood the importance of play and not only in our department but within our personal lives too.

To be playful in the space is something I would consider a 'rule', again I say this lightly, in the world of authorial acting, especially considering the amount of times it was mentioned in each of our feedback sessions and in every other class that we took part in, even though there are no real rules. Nevertheless, it is an important part of performing and an important part of

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<sup>19</sup> Eugene Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness: Thoughts Toward an Ontology of Play." (Spring, 2012) 2

authorial acting; so in the other disciplines at DACP such as Body in Motion, Speech, Singing, Authorial Acting, Dialogical Acting,<sup>20</sup> amongst others, we were always advised to let ourselves be playful, to follow and connect with our voices and bodies. It was only then we could truly accomplish each task or at the very least begin the process. By allowing ourselves to be playful we allowed ourselves to be free and experimental and by doing so we as a result allowed our bodies to be free as well. While practicing DA I found myself constantly thinking about this idea of play. What does it truly mean to play, when is it the right time to play. Isn't playing something that is actually intended for children? Well, practicing DA also allowed me to sometimes find answers for these questions. Depending on the day and the situation I would find myself in I would find different versions of answers. Play sometimes meant just being, it sometime meant letting lose both physically and mentally, but most of all, to me it meant to be completely open. To let whatever needs to happen, happen. To feel whatever I need to feel, to laugh, jump, scream if I feel like I wanted to. To play is to be free. There should be no restriction with age or anything as such, Vyskočil said in one of our Klauzury exams, and I am paraphrasing, that in DA we must learn to let our inner child out and only by doing so can we truly play. Through this I learned that we all have a child inside of us, one that just wants to experience the world with a fresh pair of eyes. Play isn't something that should restrict us, quite the opposite, just like any actor we must be open to all of the endless possibilities and only with them can we explore. Only then can we play.

Throughout my studies I was asking the assistants a lot of different questions to try and make sense of this frustration. Questions like “how do I pick and choose just one impulse from

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<sup>20</sup> These are all the basic disciplines at DACP where one develops their personality and individuality and their possibilities through acting disciplines.

the million that bombard me in my head?” Or, “what suggestion could you give which I could continuously use when I need to balance my inner partners when one is being much more dominant than the other resulting in me feeling physically stagnant in the space?” I was worried at first that asking myself or others these questions would hold me back from improving but now I see it’s done the opposite. By asking myself these questions I slowly began answering them on my own through my experiments in DA. It’s allowed me to dive deeper into my explorations and experimentations. I was given some feedback to think of someone existing or even a made-up person who makes me happy and to use that inner-partner when my aggressive/angry/sarcastic ones come out. At first it was a hard task to do because I felt like I was being fake, and inauthentic by purposely trying to make an inner partner. However, now I feel that by searching for these inner partners I had allowed myself to be what I needed to be when I need it and thus introduced new and exciting inner-partners such as “Happy Dappy Yappy” who apparently resides in Happy Dappy Yappy Camp in Happy Dappy Yappy Land. This inner partner was a representation of what my inner child could be. They helped me be playful, with my body and my voice. With them there was not one moment where I wasn’t using my body and paying with the space. This opened doors to other inner-partners some of which took the form of my father, and grandmother.

### 1.5 The online experiences

The end of my studies at DACP were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of it, a lot of our lessons were held online until further notice. I ended up going back to the UAE for a few months during this time seeing as Prague was in lockdown and there was no reason for me to stay there. While I was in the UAE, Prague slowly began lifting their restrictions and many universities started having in person classes. Seeing as I was not in Prague we decided to try a hybrid online Dialogical Acting session. My first experience with it was quite interesting. I was not in one of the more common spaces for DA, I was in my own home,

using the passage between bedrooms as my space while on a call with my colleagues and the assistants<sup>21</sup> all of whom were in our classroom back in Prague. While writing this paper, I remembered that I had initially used that same passage way for my audition into the Authorial Acting Program. I remember how scared I was that I would mess up while singing or do something ‘bad’ or fall and that that could maybe cost me the audition. It’s funny now, looking back at the me then and the me now. I find this coincidence kind of beautiful in itself, how full circle I have come as a person as well as an authorial artist.

Being in this new old space, one that I have passed through for many years never paying much attention to it felt very strange and equally nice because it was something new. There was a different energy present, I somehow felt more comfortable to use my body to speak in both English and Serbian. I felt freer to experiment and explore what my body could do and how. At this moment I honestly wasn’t too concerned about searching for a connection between the language I spoke and how my body reacted to it, I was giving more attention to being present in the space and being my most authentic self. This allowed me to utilise even this small space more spontaneously. However, now when I think about the experience with this in mind, I believe that it is possible that the reason I was so comfortable was precisely because I was in a place where I felt most comfortable, I was in my own house, the one place where we can truly relax and where we can be as vulnerable as we please without any fear because no one was watching. I, on the other hand, did have other people watching, my colleagues, through an online call. I recall both the assistants and my classmates giving feedback that supported this. They all commented on how much more visibly playful I was even after not practicing DA for

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<sup>21</sup> Eva Slavíková MUDr and Pavel Zajiček MgA. were the ones who lead the hybrid (in person and online) DA class.

so long. I could move and talk more freely. I clearly was not concerned about anything, I was simply just playing and my body responded more naturally. There was more energy in each little movement I made. I was pacing myself well, I didn't speak too fast or too slow. I followed each impulse through, and most of all I was so clearly interested in what I was doing that it was also visible physically visible because of how much I was enjoying myself.

I felt as though I was cheating somehow because I had this privilege of experiencing this in the comfort of my home which allowed me to be so vulnerable. Although, I think that this is something that I needed to experience because for me this felt like a breakthrough moment in my experiences with Dialogical Acting. I realised that in order to become open and vulnerable in the space I really had to accept this space as my own. Before this I always saw the space as the classroom, yes I did use my imagination to manipulate the space in the past but subconsciously I always knew it wasn't my space. It was then that I realised I could find a home in the space too, regardless of where that space was, whether it was in my own house, in our classrooms at DAMU or any other space. Now that I had gained this experience I was so excited to go back to the classroom and explore Dialogical Acting again but with this in mind.

## **2 The Questionnaires**

### **2.1 The Research Method**

As I started writing and researching about my topic, I found that there was no existing research directly related to this question of mine, how languages and body language may affect the Dialogical Acting experiences. So, I decided to conduct my own as I was curious to see if any of the other international students who have or are still studying this same discipline noticed anything similar. Originally, I had intended on conducting interviews but wasn't sure



how to go about it in this paper so I thought that the next best thing would be to collect this data through a questionnaire<sup>22</sup>.

For the purpose of my research I had asked specific questions on this questionnaire which were focused on how languages effect body language in performance and their possible effect on the experience of DA. Once a few of the questionnaires were filled out I realised that that the way the questions were formed may have influenced the way people responded to them. I think that they may have been a little misleading which resulted with various different answers, some of which were not really answering my question. I thought about changing them before others had the chance to respond but then figured that this too would create a disbalance in the way people respond to them later and so I left them as is, and at least this way everyone responded to the same question. Also, during some informal conversations with some of the participants, I already discussed my topic and my plans for this paper with them before they were even sent this questionnaire. I would imagine that this too may have influenced their answers. In addition, I asked the participants to fill in their names, because initially I believed that this would be a better solution for collecting the data as to not mix what the responses were but while writing this paper. I realised that that too was an ethical error that could have been avoided. Nevertheless, after realising these ethical mistakes, I later contacted all of the participants that filled in the form and received confirmation from each of them that I was allowed to use their personal information and data in this paper.

The results varied depending on how each person understood the questions. Some spoke about the freedom their mother tongue gave them and the restrictions they felt speaking in a foreign language. Some stated the opposite. Some found that the languages affected their

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix p. 32 for reference of what the style of questions looked like.

comfort in the space was a more interesting topic, perhaps this is one I could consider looking into in my next experience with DA. Some did not even notice any specific changes to their bodily movements and gestures in relation to language as this was not something they found relevant enough to give attention to during their time in the space as I did.

## 2.2 What we Found

In one of the responses, my colleague stated that in their DA sessions, they sometimes felt as though they were in a state of panic and they noticed that speaking in their mother tongue, Farsi, helped their body and voice relax more<sup>23</sup>. However, they also found that when trying to do DA in a language foreign to them, such as Czech, where their vocabulary was limited it did limit their verbal expression. Although, they also think that since they could not speak it as fluently it encouraged them to be more playful and made DA happen more effortlessly. I can agree that not limiting ourselves to one language allows us to be more open to seeing how deep our exploration can go while practising DA and I can sort of relate to this student because of my rare attempts speaking Czech in DA. Trying to speak a foreign language, one I'm still learning did allow me to be more open but it also made me feel quite trapped. Although, I understand a little Czech and am able to speak it in its most basic form I was never comfortable speaking it all the time. I usually end up mixing between the languages because I forget a word for something, so I would say it in another language, a sound, or an action of some sort. I suppose in this way I was also encouraged to try and be more experimental with my way of expression without focussing how I spoke the language.

Similarly, a graduate from the DACP Czech program, also found that the lack of vocabulary while speaking a foreign language in DA allowed her to engage more actively

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<sup>23</sup> Hesam, 21.07.2021, Appendix, p.40

with the body and voice in order to express herself more and communicate what she was feeling/seeing/doing in the space<sup>24</sup>. However, she also suggests that while speaking in her mother tongue, Czech, she found that because of her close relation to her mother tongue, she does not see it as an object as she does with other languages. Speaking her mother tongue allows her to get deeper into her experience in the space in DA but it did also mean that by speaking in her mother tongue she would have to work harder to activate herself psychosomatically and make more effort to really address her speech. I feel similarly to this because when I am in the space I am usually speaking English as it is the language I speak most fluently, I tend to find myself overthinking what it is that I am actually saying and the results are usually me getting stuck on words and then with my body. Sometimes this is helpful because it leads to an exploration of words that I can find enjoyable to say and repeat in a loop, and that encourages me to be more playful with them by trying to say them in different intonations and speeds. Yet it is also quite restrictive, as it brings back this feeling of insecurity which is difficult to work with while in the space. It restricts my interaction with my inner partners and forces me down a path of what is and is not correct, which is where the inner control freak comes in. At times, I am able to pull myself out of the continuous loop of self-criticism by bringing in a kinder inner partner, one that usually takes the form of my grandmother. On some occasions it works, but in others I end up giving myself a long lecture as to why what I am saying is incorrect.

Another participant had difficulty with speaking English and because of this language barrier he would mostly be quiet and keep to himself, that was until he began practicing DA.

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<sup>24</sup> Markéta. M, 17.07.2021. Appendix, p. 38-39

In DA he<sup>25</sup> found a way to express himself more freely by speaking in Gujarati and Hindi<sup>26</sup>, speaking these languages allowed him to be more fluent in his physical expression which allowed him not to get too much in his head about what it was that he was saying and doing but just allow himself to be free. By trying to speak in English he found that he would have a lot of difficulty because he would be so concerned about using the right words to express himself that it would directly affect his physicality in the space.

Another student,<sup>27</sup> however, states that the language is but a nuance of the thoughts you have in your mind and that the real connection lies between the thoughts of the person and their body. They continue to support their thoughts by saying that even though speaking in their native languages made their DA experience more enjoyable and easier to improvise with, they do not believe that the language is what was connected to the body. In fact they state that the biggest reason to some of the difference in body language is more likely influenced by our traditions, culture, way of living, routines, habits etc, all of which are subconsciously processed and then shown through our body movements. I understand what they mean, and I do agree with them that the way our body moves is also influenced by our traditions and culture, however, I would assume that would then mean that the language is a part of it as well. As I believe that culture and language are intertwined. When we learn languages, we automatically learn about the culture. There is a lot of history and meaning behind the creation of words and more often than not these languages are accompanied by

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<sup>25</sup> Nirav, 12.08.2021, Appendix, p.43-44

<sup>26</sup> Gujarati is a language that is most commonly spoken in one of the Indian states in the north-west part of India called Gujarat. Hindi is the national language of India and comes from the Hindu Culture.

<sup>27</sup> Antonio, 1108.2021, Appendix, p.37

gestures as well. “When you lose a language, a large part of the culture goes, too, because much of that culture is encoded in the language.”<sup>28</sup> There is a lot more research which investigates the connection between language and culture, many of which agree that you cannot have one without the other. When you are learning a new language, you are not just learning new words you are also learning about the culture. So, once you begin speaking the language you are better able to express yourself precisely because you will understand the deeper meaning of each word you speak. With this in mind, I would certainly say that yes culture does influence the body but that then means that language does too, because the two are connected after all.

### **Conclusion: The Body of Home**

Looking back at my experience and research, I can now see that there really is more to the connection between the body and the language that you speak and all of the different and yet similar experiences we have shared in the space. I do wish that I had taken more time to create perhaps a more ethical and better formed questionnaire, as I feel that it would have helped with getting deeper into the topic at hand. However, while I was writing this paper, I realised how difficult of a topic this was to discuss and even go deeper into. Attempting to explain something physical is something I found very difficult throughout this process but I

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<sup>28</sup> “Kenneth L. Hale, Linguist and Activist on Behalf of Endangered Languages, Dies.” *MIT News / Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, 11 Oct. 2001, 30 Aug. 2021 < <https://news.mit.edu/2001/hale>>.

feel that the challenge of writing this paper did help me step out and see everything from the outside which helped me come to the realisation of certain experiences.

Part of the challenge of writing this paper was also trying to find what really was a necessary part of the process of discovery for this topic. I admit I had difficulty sticking to the topic throughout this paper, partly because I realised that in order to notice the connections between the body and language I had to notice other things first, like the speed at which I talked, or the frustrations and critical inner partners I had to deal with while in the space. All of this was part of the journey of discovering this topic. However, through this process, I learned that even though I did not find one definite answer that answered my question, I did find ways in which I could perhaps explore this topic further.

Throughout this research I found that connections between my body and the languages I speak may also exist because this same body reacts to what I do, how I feel, and what I see. This same body lets me explore and allows me to search and find all of these new and exciting inner partners, each of which teach me something new about myself, about my studies, and about what it means to bring out your inner child.

Yes, I am from Serbia, my blood is Serbian, but every time I go there people don't hesitate to remind me that I didn't grow up there so I could never possibly know what it truly means to be from Serbia. I didn't have to experience life as a 'true' Serbian. Yes, I was born and raised in the United Arab Emirates, but I have no real substantial connection to the UAE, I don't have their passport, I have no relatives from this country, I am not Emirati. So, once again I am not from there either. I am constantly asked by people in both places why I don't go back home? Don't I want to be in my own country? And you know what, they are right, I do. Yet, I am from both of these places, but I belong to neither one of them in truth, so where do I go. Where is home?

What I have learned from Vyskočil and my work with Dialogical Acting is that there are really so many possibilities for so many different questions. So many in fact that I don't believe I could ever find answers for all of them. As I am writing this I realize where home really is. Home was always with me. It is a part of me. I always felt most myself and most at home when I was on stage or in the case of Dialogical Acting, in the space. I am my most authentic self when there. I am both from Serbia and from the UAE but they are not my home, they are just places that helped create who I am as a being. My parents and my brother are also responsible for who I am today and thus a part of me, therefore they are also my home. Prague is where I had to learn how to stand on my own two feet and live on my own and is now a part of me. So, Prague is home, too. My friends are home. Home is with all my inner partners, they are a part of me, they helped guide me through my explorations in the space. My body, my movements, my gestures, my voice, all of the languages that I speak, they are all home because they are a part of me.

So in the end,

I am home.

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## Appendix

Below is the format of the research questions<sup>29</sup> used for the questionnaire. The responses were gathered over the course of 5 weeks, between July 7 2021 and August 12 2021. All the participants provided consent to both the use of their name and the use of their answers to be included in my thesis for the purpose of my research.

### Thesis Research Questions:

What is your name: <sup>30</sup>

1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language.
  2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language?  
Which languages do you speak?
  3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please Elaborate.<sup>31</sup>
  4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.
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<sup>29</sup> By asking these questions in this specific way, I hoped the participants would think about their past experiences and see if they could come to any new realisations as to how their body may have responded to the language they were speaking while practicing DA, whether native or non-native. Now looking at the different kinds of responses I received, I realise that they could have been formed better and perhaps more concisely.

<sup>30</sup> Once I began collecting the material I noticed the possible ethical problems that could occur by asking the participants to write their names so I contacted the participants after and received all of their approval to include their names as well as the samples of their answers in my thesis.

<sup>31</sup> Question 3 could have been either deleted entirely or changed to something that would have differed more from the first two questions seeing as majority of participants ended up already comparing their experiences if they noticed any at all within the first two questions and so this one was just unnecessary.

## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Markéta

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

I am used to do DJ in my native language (Czech) and never had a need to switch to any of the other languages that I know. I was curious, in fact, about the other languages and their creative potential in DJ, but surprisingly they never came to me naturally during my time in the space. Czech felt always natural and allowed me all experiments - changing articulation, prolonging vowels or singing...playing with the phonetics as well as semantics, noticing some specific words that I normally don't use. I think this kind of experience is difficult to have in non-native language, but I don't claim it necessary harms the overall experience, it is just different and probably brings different kinds of experience.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I speak English, Finnish and bit of French and as I said previously I have never used them during DJ. Maybe I used some English words but I do not recall using English continually during the time there. It would probably seem unnatural to me, maybe even like showing off a bit of "my language skills"...in any cases it has never happened to me, even when we were presenting DJ abroad (in Berlin) I didn't have a tendency to speak English and did the whole thing in Czech.

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

Can't tell.

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

Czech = the native one. I think I explained this in the previous answers.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Sasha

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

It feels more private because I know the audience in class can't understand what I'm saying. It's more freeing because of this and more personal to me, because I know what I say is only understood by me. I don't feel the urge to censor myself and the process seems more 'real'.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I used German and enjoyed it much more than English, but it didn't have that anonymous feeling to it (as Hungarian does). I found I smiled a lot more using German, as if proud that I could use it.

I used Romanian a few times but felt more ashamed to use it because I know I haven't practised it in too long of a time. Unfortunately, I didn't have the vocabulary at the top of my mind to continue using it, and ended up switching to Hungarian.

I used Russian a couple of times but I know that Slavic language speakers in the audience can probably pick up quite a bit, which was discouraging. But I love speaking Russian and hearing my own voice in Russian. I probably listened to myself and my voice most when using Russian. But it was also the most uncomfortable to use (besides English) because it was probably understandable to the audience.

Swedish – a new language to me. I tried experimenting with it and found it a very good exercise to try to remember the words in Swedish I have recently learnt. I felt limited by my vocabulary, but I refused to switch out of Swedish. I went much slower in Swedish, because I wanted to use the language and took the time to let the words I could use come.

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

I have not noticed except that I was smiling a lot using German.

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

Hungarian because I knew that no one in the class could understand me. It was nice to speak it too because I'm not living in a city where I hear it all the time and use it all the time around me.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Denis

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

I think it was way more easier using my native language. I could feel the change of my posture imidiatly after I start using my native language. It felt there is more freedom and better comfort doing it.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I would say using a non native language was more difficult while I was trying this discipline. I could feel that there was some boarder between my body language and what I was saying. The freedom of saying everything what's on my mind was more calculative. I felt even speaking Czech language was easier than English during DJ.

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

I think i already answer this with the previous question. For sure there was more stiffness throughout the body while I was using English than with my native language.

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

The most comfortable I felt was using my native language. I could express myself the most how I feel that right moment.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Jakob Keller

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

DJ in my native English was more free, and freeing, than using my almost-native Czech. I found that having few models in my childhood for Czech apart from my mother, I picked up a lot of automatic baggage onto my Czech, which has to do with intonation, vocabulary, but also body tension, body feeling. DJ helped me to identify these, and slowly dissolve them, eventually making my Czech DJ more similar to my "freer" English DJ. Using a totally foreign language, where I have no automatic baggage, where everything is CONSCIOUSLY done, is also a fun tool. One experiences totally new feelings.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

My experiences with DJ fit into several categories which are not strictly native and non-native. I would need more categories. My non-native, most interesting language to work on was Czech, for reasons mentioned earlier. I tried German and Russian too, to experiment with the body tension I felt when speaking these. Languages which are L2+ (second foreign language and more) are also interesting because they free us almost completely from automatic baggage, it seems to me.

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

Again, I feel the need for more categories than just these two here. I feel that investigating the body tension for longer DJ in L2+ would be very fruitful. My Czech DJ seems to evoke body tensions I would associate with my interactions with my mother in childhood. In English I am more free to investigate different body tensions of different sociolects, dialects, registers, social and fantastical situations. L2+ relativises everything to a degree I find I cannot do justice in this questionnaire.

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

They are all totally different for different reasons. I think a degree of discomfort is a sign that one is taking the exercise to where it could go, in the "right" direction. Comfort is usually a sign that I am not investigating things, the phenomena as they appear to me, to the fullest degree, honestly and rigorously enough.

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Sunday, July 11, 2021

## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Antonio Kitanovski

### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

For me doing DJ in my native language is much easier and funnier but of course if the audience understands Macedonian also. The energy and the response of the audience I believe it is crucial and very important, with this I mean not to entertain them. When u are in an empty space and everything goes well and you enter the state "Publick Solitude" your body starts acting according to your thoughts if you lose the thoughts you lose your body, the language is also important but I believe it is just a nuance of the thought you have in your mind.

### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

My first meeting with DJ was with non-native language and was very interesting. In the beginning, my brain was thinking and translating from Macedonian to English but later it gets free and started thinking in English. I was not happy because I was feeling like I was limited with words and that was a boundary for me in the empty space where you can almost do everything without boundaries. But also there were moments where I get surprised by the words coming to my brain inspired by the moment like something pull them from my unconscious and that was the happy moment. About the languages I speak Macedonian and English.

### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

Yes, there is a difference but I believe it is just a nuance of the thought and what I think that is important also is the unconscious, what our bodies do while we speak or move with this I mean something that is in us from our tradition, culture, way of living, routines, habits, etc and we do it unconsciously.

### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

Macedonian because I don't feel the limit for the improvisation. If I am in a DJ situation and don't have the right word for that specific moment I will lose the thought and with that, I will lose that specific moment also which I think is a problem. Fewer boundaries or fewer DJ problems :)

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Markéta Machková

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

My mother tongue is Czech. It is so close to me, or maybe it is so deep in me, it is so me, that I don't really know if I relate to it as to an object. (Which I probably do with other languages.) In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, this could mean, that I probably should act or perform more naturally or authentically when being (in the strong sense of the verb) in my mother tongue. And maybe it is so, but at the same time, my experience tells me that I too often happen to act on lower energetic levels, which results in illegibility of my actions both to me and to the audience. What I've observed, on the one hand, is that while being/acting in my mother tongue, I have to make efforts to really address my speech and to really activate myself in terms of my psychosomatics. I would say my mother tongue does not have much power over my body language in terms of being able to trigger higher energetic/tonus levels (which one needs in order to feel the "conductive empathy" and to be, speak and act in a performative and responsive way). On the other hand, once my psychosomatic condition and energetic levels are well set, it is of course easier for me to be and act in my mother tongue, especially when it comes to language-related playfulness.

A very special kind of experience has been to me the exercises we'd practiced in Jaroslava Pokorna's classes with non-sense poetry. We had to learn a poem by heart, in which words made no sense, they only sounded in a particular way and created some kind of a rhythm by the way they'd been put into verses. (It was a poem from Christian Morgenstern, translated into "Czech", or rather to the "sound and rhythm of Czech" by Emanuel Frynta). We'd worked with these non-sense lines through one whole semester, studying the effects it had on our body language, as we kept changing the intention of our speech. It was a very interesting study into active imagination with no explicit use of words-based language.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

So far, I have tried to dialogically act in English and French and I have also tried to act without any verbalisations. In most cases when I used a foreign language in DJ, it was based on a decision and motivated by the will to let other people understand. However, it also happens from time to time, that some situations I find myself in ask get expressed in one or another foreign language. I have probably also spoken German or its Berne-ish dialect in some attempts – just because some words or situations have naturally occurred in these (I've lived in the German speaking part of Switzerland for the past five years).

I have recently seen a video where a Czech teacher of English presented her pedagogic approach. Let me paraphrase her words. She said she had been viewing foreign languages as tools. As for example when you need to pick apples from a tall tree, you need a bar in order to get what you want efficiently. And thus, she had been offering her students the tool to efficiently get what they needed while expressing themselves in English.

Now, what have I possibly meant to say with this example? I guess I relate to foreign languages in a more object-based way. The less fluent I am in a language, the more tool-ish I view it. But as I've

already suggested on the previous page, this kind of language relationship gets me (somewhat paradoxically) properly engaged more quickly. In order to reach something/reach out to someone, I need to focus, raise my hand, grab the tool, move to a certain place, perhaps get on my toe tips, point and shoot/reach/lean/push/pull – whatever. I find myself more easily psychosomatically energize-able and activable while being in/acting through/using a foreign language. (I wouldn't use the verb "use" regarding my mother tongue in most cases). When it comes to further work (elaborating on topics, developing stories, playing situations...) I sometimes feel limited by the lack of vocabulary. However, (again somewhat paradoxically) this lack of vocabulary makes me engage more actively in the body and voice expression and communication.

**3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.**

I have already described the differences when it comes to the levels of energy and bodily engagement. This also relates to voice intensity. Optimate performance energy levels are more easily and more quickly triggerable and achievable for me while using foreign languages. Whereas in my mother tongue, I feel so close to myself (so one with myself), that I need more time and efforts to really address my speech and to hear it as well.

Thinking of the questions asked, I am not sure how body language is defined. And what comes to my mind now, might rather be related to physical aspects of speaking a language. To give an example: When I speak French and when I really need other people to understand the words I'm saying, I need to activate and engage my face musculature much more than when I speak Czech, German or English. I notice it and I feel kind of strange while doing it, not to mention the aches I experience in my face after long periods of conversation in French! So, I guess this physical aspect has to have some effects on my posture and gestures (or body language if you will), but I don't think I'm able to describe those without having focused on the topic on purpose. To give another example (which might highlight rhythm-related issues): I feel different rhythms in different languages and a very particular melody and rhythm in the speech enactments of people living in the German speaking parts of Switzerland, the more melodic and somewhat slower, the closer to the mountains as well as to the Italian and French borders. When I want to speak the dialect and want people to understand me, I first have to tune and reorganise myself bodily. For it is not sufficient (in order to be well understood) to just say the words in dialect! I have to use my voice in different registers and transform my usual tempo-rhythm. When I'm not able to do that, we can still communicate in standard German, but then we actually both speak a foreign language.

In any case, I think I am different persons in different languages. Not only because I appear differently in terms my body language, but also because I access different cultural resources in each one of the languages I speak.

**4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.**

Having this rich and varying (and sometimes confusing and exhausting) experience of languages and their worlds, I think, in this moment, I am probably most comfortable in a setting where all the people act in a language which is foreign to them. For then, I don't need to concentrate too much on the grammar and stylistic aspects of my speech enactments. Then I dare to play more easily. But all in all, I think the most far and the deepest I can go in DJ is still in my mother tongue and with audience whose mother tongue is the same as mine.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Hesam Hanafi

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

I would say that, my mother language was one of the vehicles to try riding, to help my nervous system calm down when in the DJ situation.

When one's system is in panic, there is no dialogue. All natural creatures close down when in they are in panic. They refuse to play, because survival has come to the foreground of the nervous system as The Priority.

Mother language is a strong helper when it comes to reducing panic on the DJ stage. Farsi did help my body-voice relax most of the times, specially when it was used in songs.

It is interesting that I tried Czech language a few times in DJ (I know like 20 Czech words in total). Having that extremely limited vocabulary forced me to slow down. Before I knew, my cheeks were smiling, my heart was playing, DJ was happening effortlessly, and I liked myself.

I would say one of the most useful linguistic vehicles I found was to say whatever I want to say but through random sounds.

For example: Instead of saying "I feel veery veery strange today", I would say: "DAI DEEL DEEEDY DEEEDY DESDERANG DOODAY"...so I moved it towards gibberish. It made miracles. Same thing was being told, but the Gibberish version was not heavy at all, not a burden at all, it was a pleasure to feel veery veery strange when the words were: "DAI DEEL DEEEDY DEEEDYDESDERANG DOODAY".

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

English puts the most amount of burden on my jaws (and that chain of burden goes down my spine to the whole body). I have noticed this in most foreigners who live in Prague (except those who grew up speaking English as well as their mother language).

But as I said, when my panic has arrived to a calmer place, English will be spoken through me with the same ease that Farsi or any other language would be)

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

I think I already responded to this one in the previous questions :)

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

honestly, not having a planned language to do DJ with was the best. The way babies speak was the best. Or if I had a plan, reminding myself to not be rigid about the planned language helped.

Monday, August 2, 2021

## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Polona Golob

#### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

When I would speak in my mother tongue, I felt the words were more meant "for me" alone, and not so much for the audience. The atmosphere was more secretive and private. Not because of what I was saying, but because no one else could understand me.

I also felt that my body and mind would soften, and less effort was required to "produce" something.

#### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I would only use English as a non-native language. But in comparison to Slovenian, I would play around more - use accents, change pitch or color of voice, create more characters. I would "play" more in English - playing, in the sense of "acting" or making up a story.

#### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

In Slovenian my body would be softer and more fluid, whilst in English it would be harsher, more expressive, less "private" and more "show off".

#### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

Hard to say. Hard to have a preference. Both experiences are "good", because each brings something different to explore. I would not say I experienced a language barrier.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Kierstan DeVoe

### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

When I first attempted DJ, I had great difficulty speaking at all. I found my body stiff and tense, and I was extremely uncomfortable in the space. I was consistently encouraged to provoke my inner partners, to engage them and start a dialogue. Over time, I developed this ability and found myself more and more at ease in the space. The more I was able to speak, to engage my inner partners in dialogue, the more I was able to free myself and engage in play.

### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I experimented once in Spanish, which I had studied for nine years before coming to Prague. I had a lot of difficulty maintaining the same flow I experienced when speaking in English. However, I often found myself speaking in Czech, not in full sentences, but in short phrases or exclamations. These moments always came as a surprise, and often encouraged me to play and experiment further.

### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

It has been a long time since I've been in the space now, and even longer since I spoke in any non-native languages in the space. All I can accurately say is that my native language offered me a more comfortable method towards dialogue, but speaking in non-native languages brought tension, which sometimes gave me more energy to work with.

### 4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.

I would say English, because I am more capable of expressing myself in my native language. However, I found the moments where I spoke in gibberish the most enjoyable, the most playful and free.

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## Thesis Research

### Approval Status

Not Started

### What is your name?

Nirav Prajapati

### 1. In terms of the effects of languages on body language in performance, how would you describe your experience with DJ in your native language?

As I recall, me having dj in fist year. I can tell now, that it was other side me of who does have fear or nervous behaviour in me. which I have hardly experience. First year of my study was one of them which happened after long time.

Reason why it happened because, I did not speak english at all. Maybe very less, thats why mostly I remain quit in general. I would speak when was necessary otherwise I did not speak. That behaviour continued in my study. On the other side I am also very stubborn, so mostly when it comes to study, in any class I tried to give my opinion, I did not care about how I am speaking but I knew that at lease they would understand what I was trying to say.

So in this case, because of the language in general (mostly in public place) I closed myself and did not allow to communicate. But not only that, when I closed myself mostly I was listening and grasping the language in oder to learn and speak up later in future. I think based on my experience, there is two kind of behaviour one who closed, they are usually very nervous and maybe panic and not allow themselves to open up. Second who is closed but passive active, which means being closed they try to learn more by listening and observing, which what I did.

yes little bit of fear and nervousness was always there but I ignore that part and try harder to learn more. That is why, mostly I was very calm and relax and try to enjoy my presence among with group of people.

In dj first year, I mostly speak in Gujarati (A language belong to one the Indin state in west part call Gujarat) which is my mother tung, but I did speak hindi (Hindi is Indian national language comes fro Hindu culture) some times as well. I would say mostly speaking of my native language makes me more fluent in my physical expressions. Which makes me not to think too mach and enjoy to dj moment but when I was trying to speak english I had to think of word which can express myself the way I want but then I get lost in language rather then enjoying my dj. which also minimised my physical movement and create the confusing expression inside me which projects outside of me (means you can see how my body behave when I am confused). so thats the difference I can tell.

### 2. How would you describe your experience with DJ in your non-native language? Which languages did you speak?

I guess, I have already said in first question.

### 3. Was there a significant difference in your body language when speaking one or the other? Please elaborate.

Coming back to your answer, the significant difference is my native language makes me more loud in vocal and my physical and facial expression. Loud in sense not over acted but more natural behaviour that I have gain throughout my child hood which can be loud for the other people from different culture. Which is fun I kind of enjoy that kind of event but I have seen people who does not enjoy they close themselves bit extra and try to behave in way that does not look loud for the others but it doesn't work.

I think because, they don't even know how not to be loud and on the other hand, what I believe is why do you have to hide your own cultural habit just because of the people from other culture? I guess best would be stay who you are and by the time people will accept the difference between your culture and there own culture and I think you would learn the same. so there is no need of changing.

**4. Which language were you more comfortable doing Dialogical Acting in? Please Explain Why.**

Coming back to your question, Its very good question. Because what I have experience in dj, I think language does not matter most of the time but obviously as a human behaviour we tend to speak every time and this is what happens in dj. because its not about what you speak. I guess its more about what you experience and it does not have to be spoken unless you have impulse and thats our natural habits. But speaking is also can be natural but thats exactly we are trying to figure it out while attending the dj. it means try to find the natural moment when you want to speak but not start speaking and trying to find natural moment, I guess that must be hard.

In my case most of the time I was trying to find a dj moment in myself based on what they(professors that I have dj with and what they talk about ivan viskocial) have told me. but yes when I speak any language my whole attention get on the language and meaning of my words that I have spoken and thats why I felt Im losing my dj moment then its very hard to come back. this is what I think but I don't know wether it make sense for you or not but its interesting process of me answering your questions which helps me to recall myself and that can be useful for my thesis.

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