



Navigating the Fog

Agency, Clarity, and Plurality in
Contemporary Voice Pedagogy.

A qualitative investigation into the
lived experiences of singers and
teachers by Peter Dodsworth.

Vocal Learners Face a Highly Plural and Contradictory Landscape



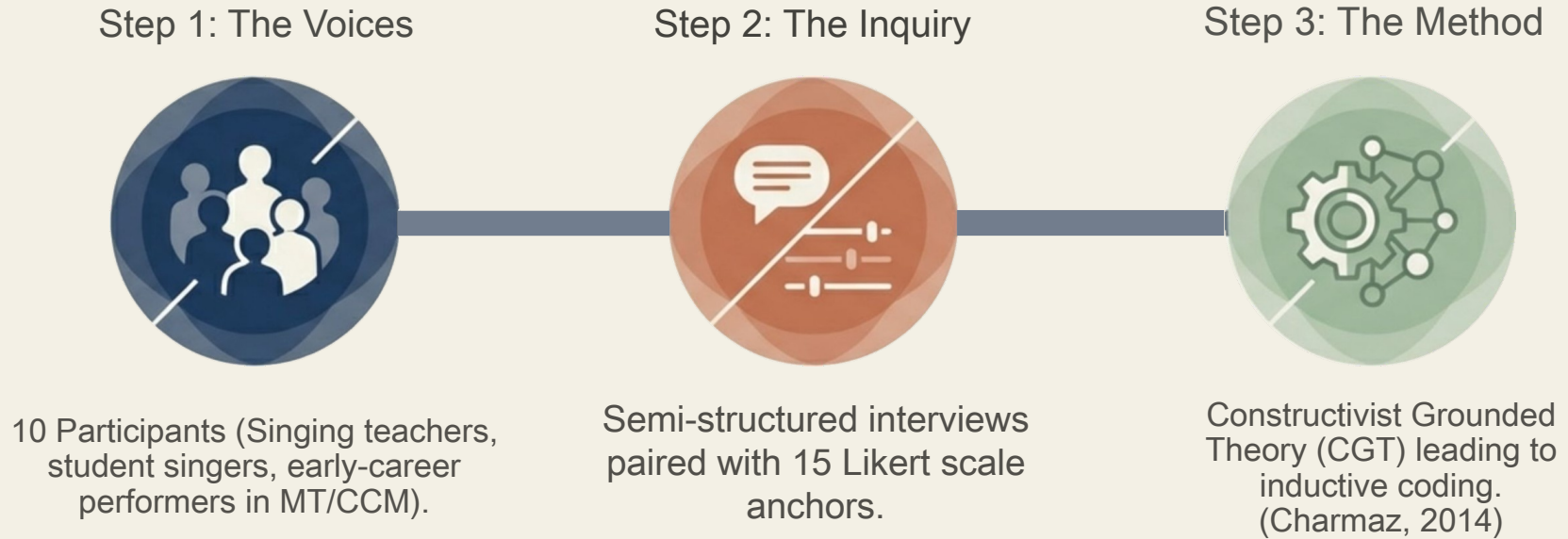
Evidence-Based & Scientific
(Anatomy, Acoustics, Motor Learning)



Heuristic & Experiential
(Metaphor, Imagery,
Lineage)

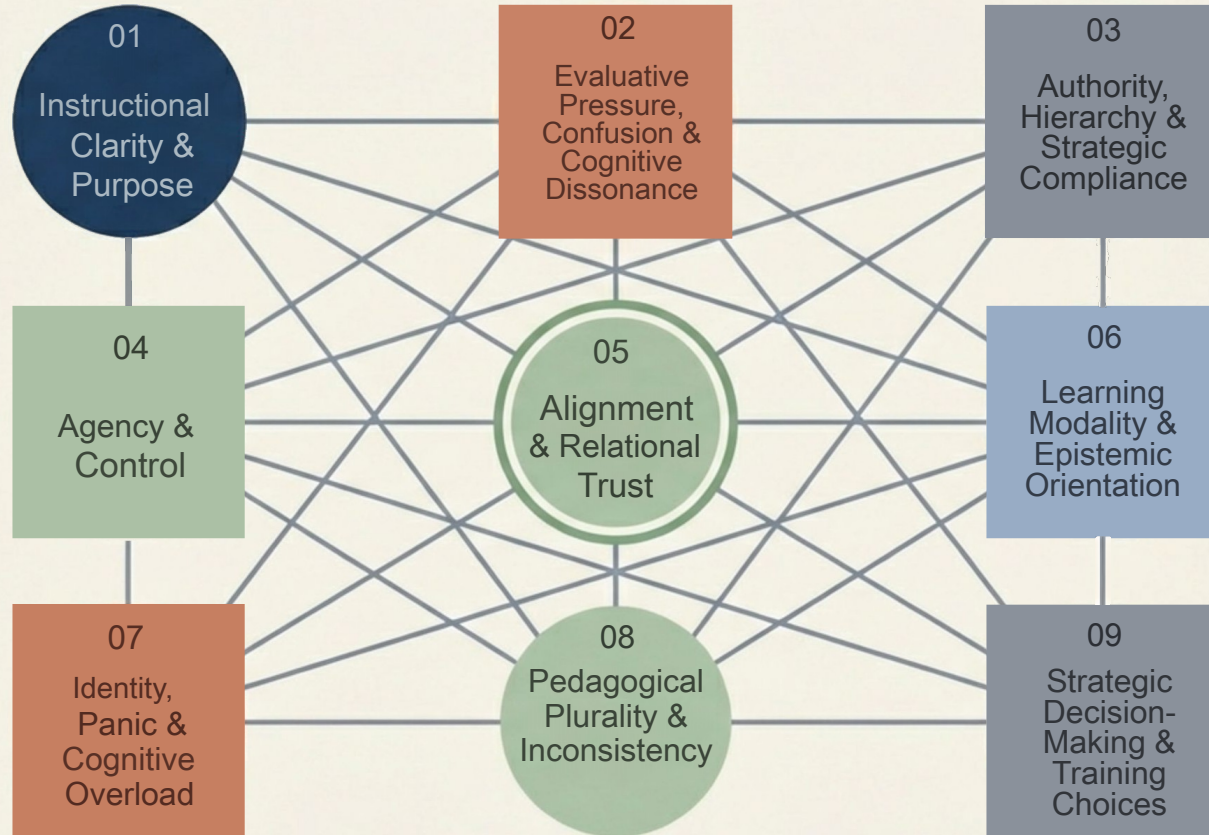
The **tension** is not which method is right, but how learners navigate these contradictions without losing their sense of competence.

Listening to the Lived Experience of the Learner



This inquiry shifts from reflexive self-inquiry toward primary, participant-informed research. It explores how pedagogical conditions are received, not just how they are intended to function.

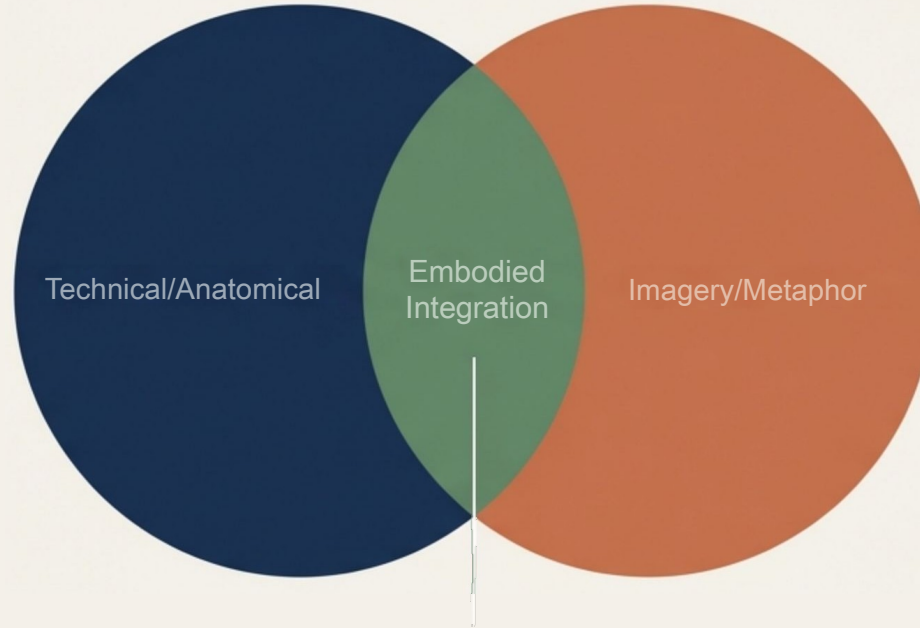
A 9-Part Framework for Mapping Pedagogical Experience



Learners Prefer Integrated, Embodied Knowledge Over Rigid Binaries

4.22/5

Strong endorsement for imagery-based teaching.



1.56/5

Low agreement that switching between technical and imagery is confusing.

"You need both of them in order to really thoroughly understand something." (P4)

Clarity isn't about choosing science or metaphor. Abstract explanations without sensory translation cause cognitive overload.

Confusion Emerges Within Pedagogical Climates

3.11/5

The Surface:
I don't understand the exercise.



Massive variability across participants on assuming I am doing something wrong when confused.

Beneath the Surface:
Evaluative pressure, time scarcity, institutional hierarchy, fear of exposure.



"I must be wrong, because you know more than I do." (P4)

Confusion is rarely just cognitive. Under assessment conditions, it is deeply emotional and automatically internalised as personal failure.

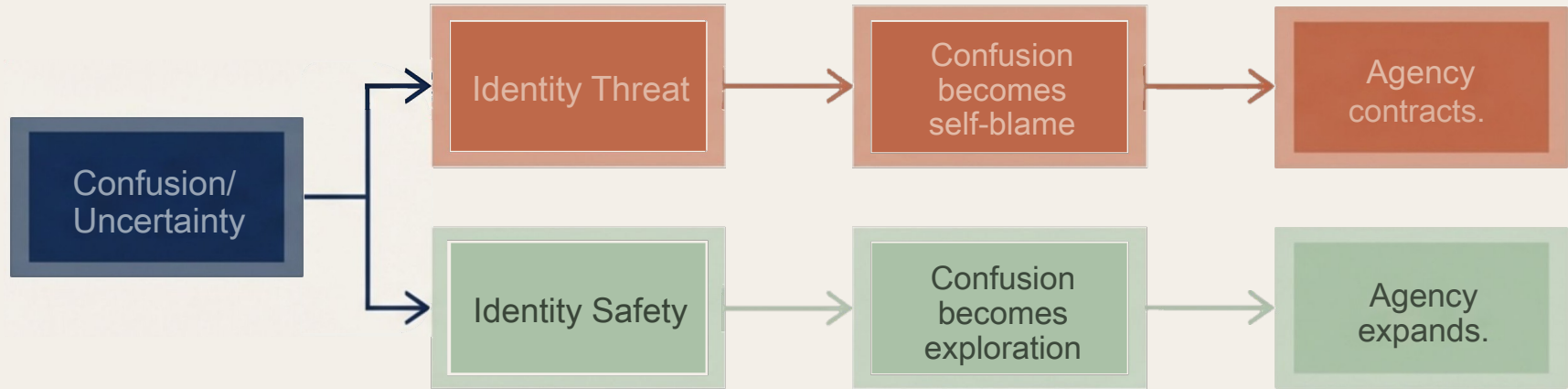
Unexamined Authority Fosters Strategic Compliance Over True Agency



"I didn't want to waste a minute of this lesson with a question." (P3)

Learners often default to strategic compliance (nodding along) to protect lesson time, please the teacher, or avoid looking ignorant. Agency is not a given; it is relationally negotiated.

Identity Safety Mediates How Learners Process Confusion



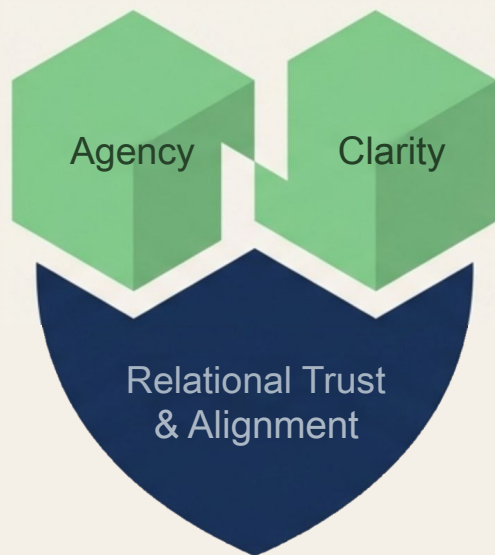
"Am I a singer?" (P6)

Clarity is not merely instructional; it is identity-regulating. Without identity safety, cognitive confusion rapidly escalates into existential panic.

Relational Trust and Alignment are Prerequisites for Learning

4.78/5

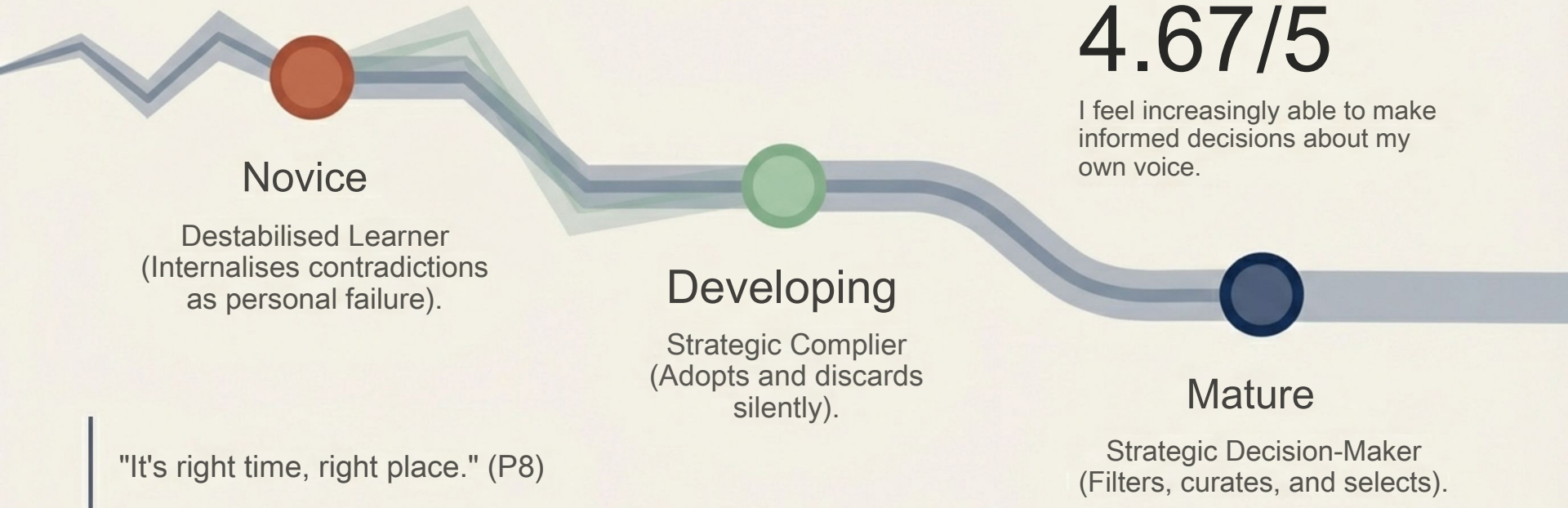
Feeling understood by my teacher is important for my learning. (The highest agreement across the study).



"Trusting a teacher means you can question what they say." (P6)

Trust is not blind compliance. True trust expands agency. Learners must feel their individual goals and learning modalities are deeply understood.

Mature Learners Develop Meta-Agency to Navigate Contradictions

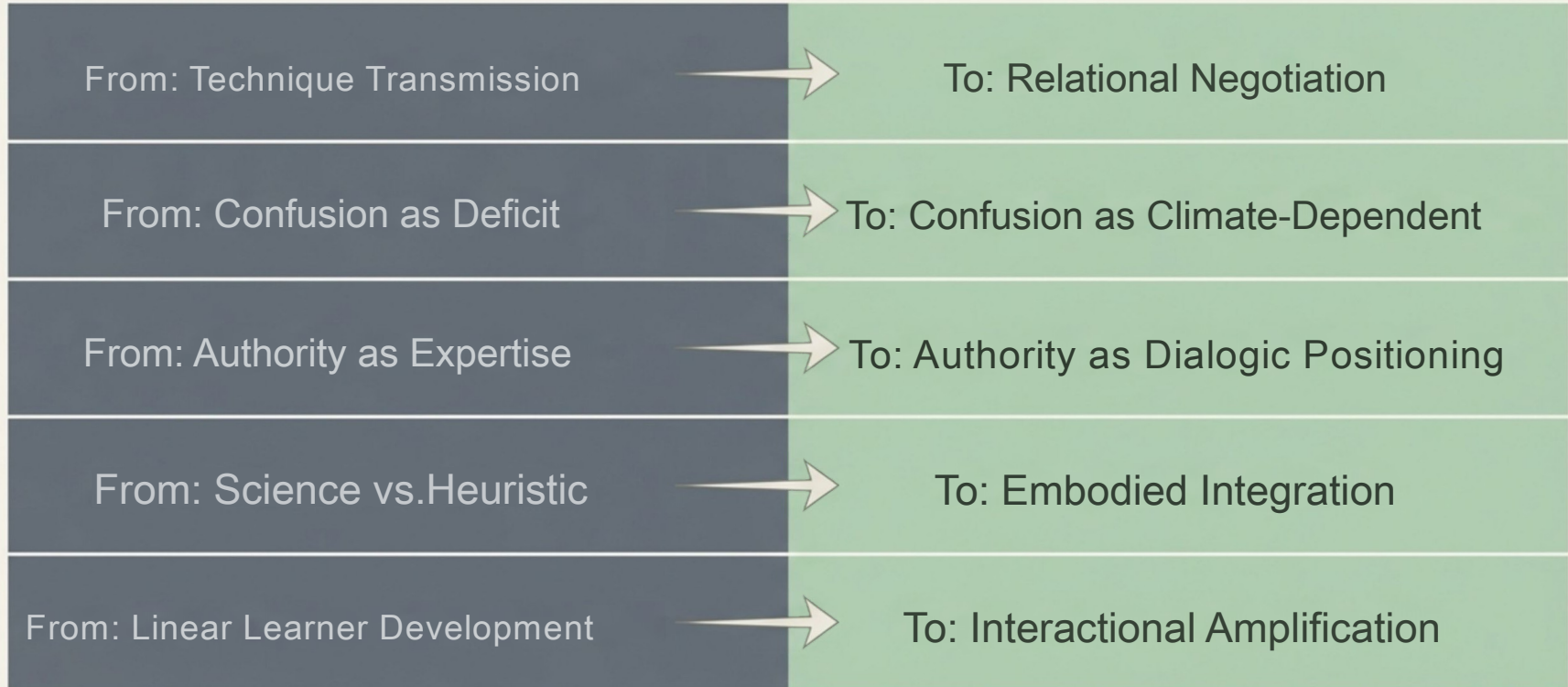


The Core Integrative Finding

Agency in voice pedagogy is
relationally negotiated and
conditionally amplified.

It is not a personality trait. It emerges under specific climates of psychological safety, dialogic openness, and contextualised explanation.

Repositioning the Pedagogical Paradigm



Negotiating Coherence While Preserving the Self

Participants did not simply describe learning how to sing. They described learning how to remain intact while doing so.

To learn to sing within pedagogical plurality is, ultimately, to negotiate coherence while preserving self.
(Dodsworth, 2026)

About the Research



Researcher: Peter Dodsworth

Context: MA in Professional Practice
(Voice Pedagogy), BMPF 7010
Work-Based Learning Project.

Invitation:

A call for ongoing reflective dialogue
within the MT/CCM vocal pedagogy community.

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