

Samanta Franco
Student ID: 2319578
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Module 6
BMPF7329D: Work-based
Learning Project (Extended)

‘Singing “truthfully under imaginary circumstances”: an exploratory empirical study into how a Meisner-inspired approach could function as an external focus of attention in emerging singers’ technical training’

Context and Justification

- Need to find accessible strategies to improve technique in young singers attending half-hour lessons
- Interest in using acting as an imagery tool to elicit external focus of attention in singers (Robertson, 2025)

Aims and Objectives

Develop strategies to improve vocal technique by integrating acting and singing

Put them into practise with students

Deepen my understanding of the topic by linking it to emotional imagery and primal sounds (Chapman, 2017)

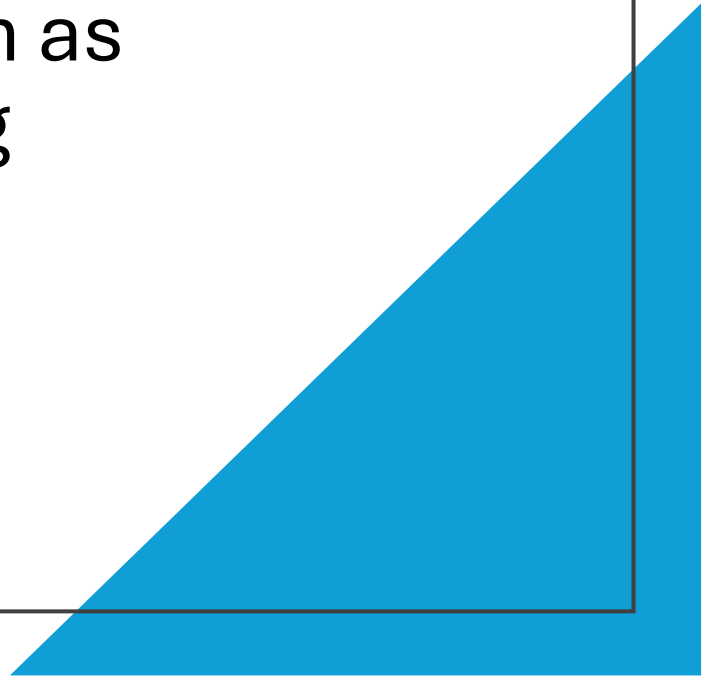
Meisner Technique's principles



Spontaneity
and
attentiveness
to a partner
(Silverberg,
2010)

Research question:

How does Meisner-inspired work function as an external focus of attention in emerging singers' technical training?



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Methodology and Methods

- Interpretivism- Qualitative methodology
- Action research: individual weekly interventions over 4 weeks
- Sample: 6 female adolescent singers with some acting experience
- Data collection: Anonymous written journals at the end of each intervention and a focus group
- Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interventions

All exercises were attached to an imaginary scenario and explored specific primal sounds or emotions (cats' sounds; whiny sounds, etc.)



Weeks 2 and 3: interactions/prompts, to elicit spontaneous reactions and focus on me



Week 4: Removal of interactions

Ethical and insider researcher considerations

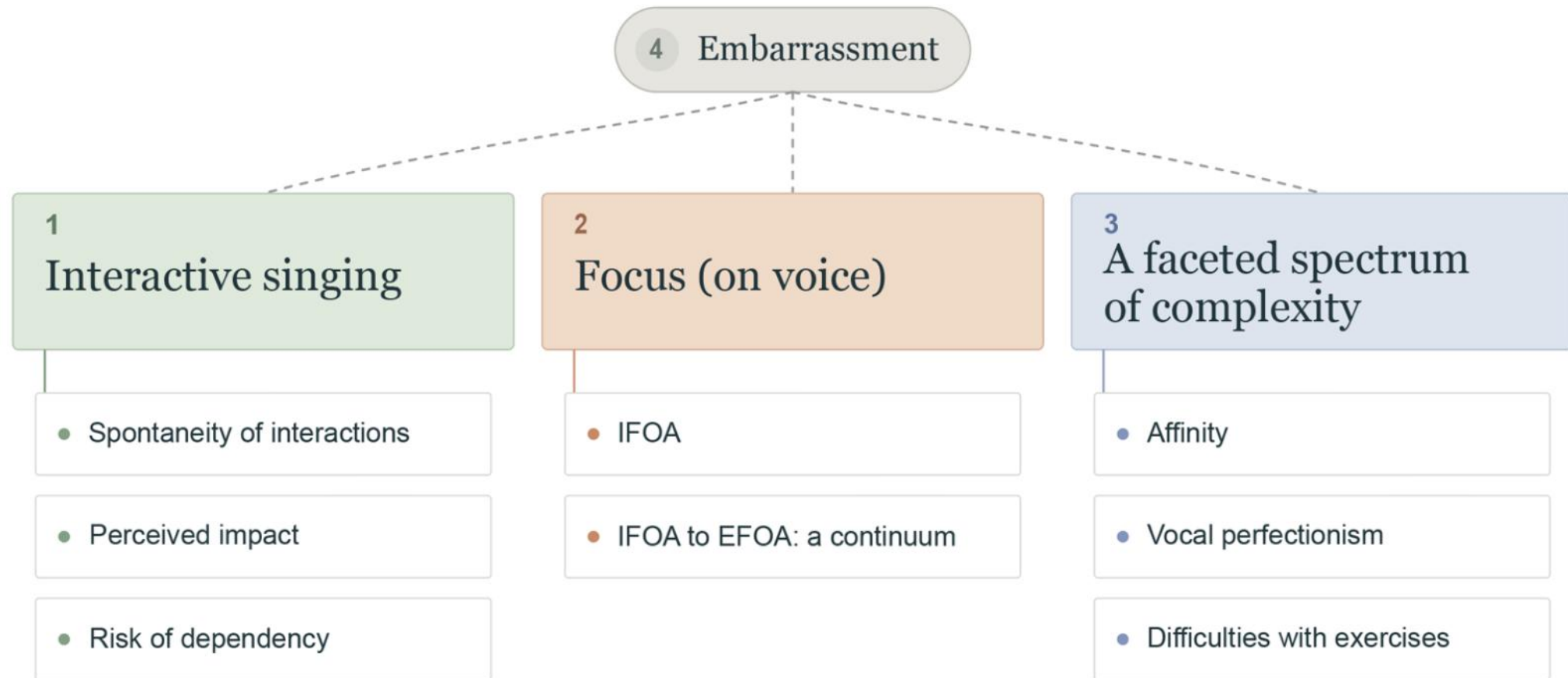
Ethics

- Consent from participants' guardians
- Monitoring of participants' vocal and emotional well-being

Insider researcher

- Ease recruiting participants
- Existing rapport
- Students might feel coerced to participate or provide confirmation-biased feedback

Findings



Interactive Singing

Interactive Singing: Spontaneity of Interactions

- Exercises felt more conversational and natural
- Greater context in exercises, stopping participants from "just singing for the sake of singing" (Focus Group, Participant 2)
- Protection from embarrassment

Interactive Singing: Spontaneity of Interactions

*[...] imagine walking
down the hallway and
you're hearing
someone meowing [...] I
don't want to be the
only person heard
meowing. I want us to
be[...] together in this.
(Participant 1, Focus
Group)*

- A shared experience and working with a partner may mitigate feelings of embarrassment (Lee, 2009)

Interactive Singing: Perceived Impact

- Sub-theme based on participants' self-assessment
- Generally improved self-efficacy, including greater ease and expanded vocal range

Possible reasons:

- Singing without explanations (Kelly, 2025)
- Observing a more experienced singer: vicarious experience (Bandura, 1997; Xu, 2026)

Interactive Singing: Risk of Dependency

I felt like something was missing when the interaction wasn't [there] (Anonymous Journal, Week 4)

- Possible embarrassment of doing interactive exercises alone (protection against embarrassment was removed)
- Possible teacher dependency
- Skill retention may not have occurred (Crocco and Meyer, 2021)

Interactive Singing: Risk of dependency

I've been doing [the interactions] for like a few weeks, I kind of already just had them in my head. So [that] made it easier to just like... think about it. (Participant 6, Focus Group)

- Acting experience: a possible predictor of greater ease at imagining interactions (Panero et al., 2016; Celume, Besançon and Zenasni, 2019; van Mulukom, 2025)
- Removal of interactions may need to take place over a longer period, depending on each student's ability (Tomlinson, 2001)

Focus (on voice)

[...] it's a singing lesson. The entire point of it is to sing and we do that with our voices. (Anonymous Journal, Week 2)

Focus (on voice): IFOA

IFOA: Internal Focus of Attention; Biomechanics of voice, or a particular part of the body (Wulf, 2013; Banks et al., 2020)

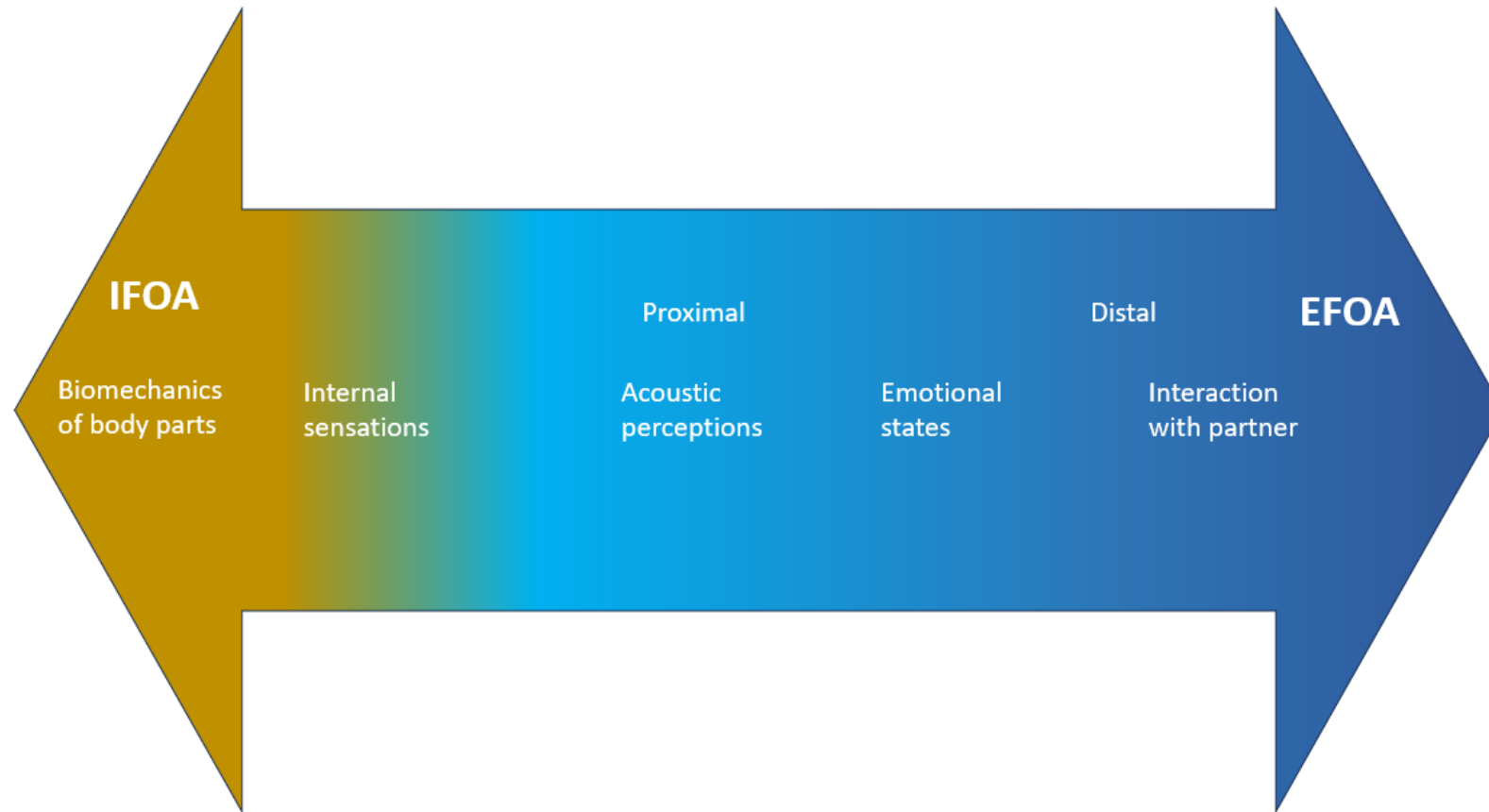
- Participants heavily relied on perceptual feedback, important for learning (Crocco, McCabe and Madill, 2020; Gürel and Şakalar, 2026)

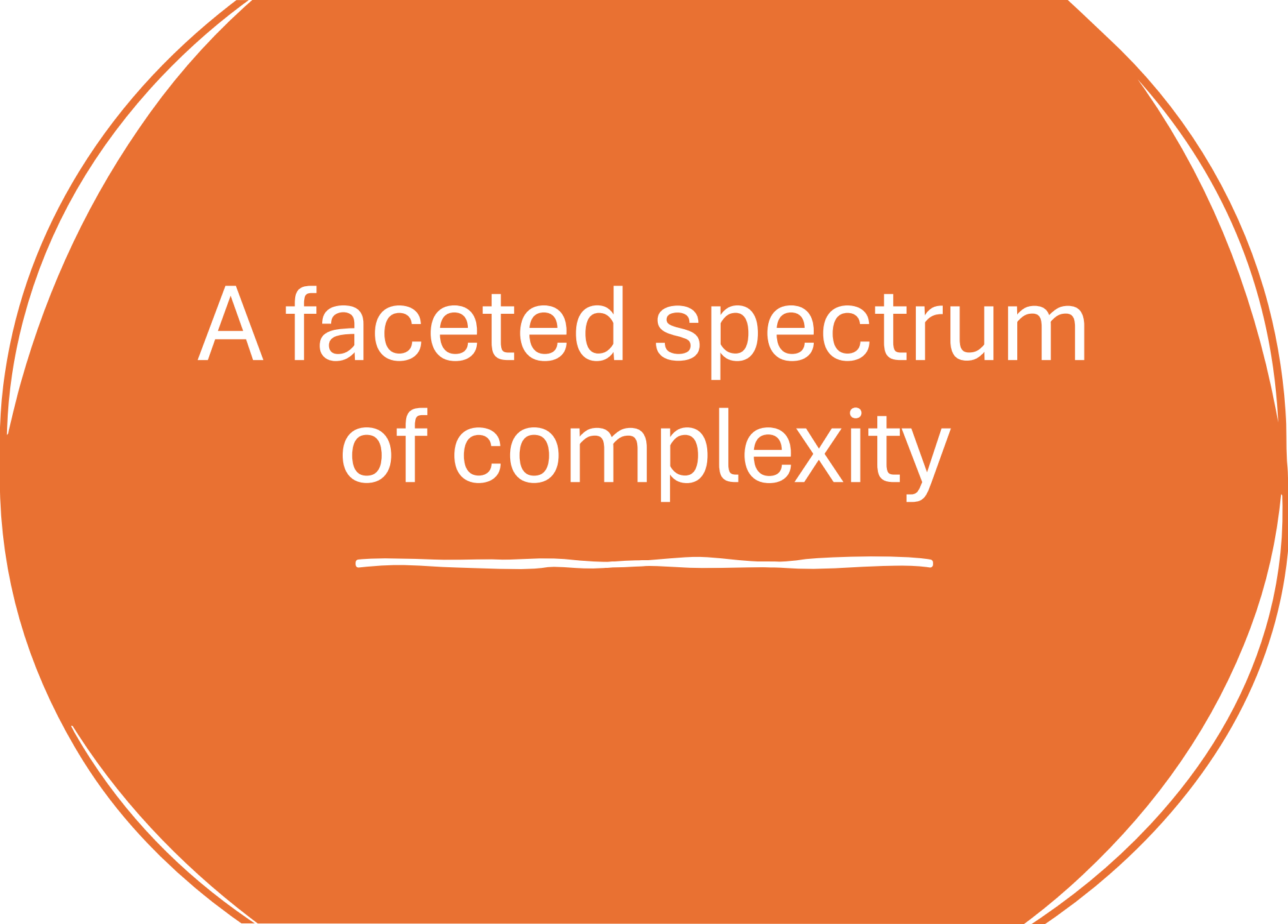
Focus (on voice)- Internal Focus of Attention and External Focus of Attention (EFOA): a continuum

- Focus on sound: proximal External Focus
- Interactions: distal External Focus

(Banks et al., 2020)

Focus continuum: depending on singers concerns at any moment



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A faceted spectrum
of complexity

A faceted spectrum of
complexity: Affinity

- Affinity: a sense of familiarity with something (Moreland and Zajonc, 1989; Stevenson, 2010)

I understand how it is to annoy [adults]. So I just transferred that into my singing. (Participant 1, Focus Group)

- Familiarity with imaginary scenarios helped engagement and immersion in them



A faceted spectrum of complexity: Affinity

- Lack of affinity: increased difficulty with scenarios
- Possible private embarrassment (Krishna, Herd and Aydınoglu, 2019)
- Acting experience helped mitigate impact of lack of affinity:

I feel like playing a character helps [...] feel that scenario. (Participant 6, Focus Group)

Future developments: Collaborate with students to come up with scenarios that feel more familiar, honouring the principle of personalised teaching (Brown, 2025; Revell, 2026)

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A faceted spectrum of complexity: Vocal perfectionism

- Studied population is particularly vulnerable to perfectionism (Sweet, 2015; Sand et al, 2021; Manternach, Clark and Sweet, 2024; Higgins, 2026)



A faceted spectrum
of complexity:
Difficulties with
exercises

- High pitches
- Whining
- Vocal fatigue: diminished self-efficacy (Xu, 2026)
- Lack of affinity
- Need to adjust difficulty level to singers

Limitations

Limited generalisability:
small, all-female
sample and qualitative
methodology

Some interesting themes
were not analysed (e.g.
eye-contact; teacher-
student dynamics)

Conclusion

Answer to research question:
Meisner-based approaches
may be effective at eliciting
distal external focus

Flexibility with each singer may
be essential for successful
implementation and to
mitigate identified pitfalls

Recommendations for future research:

Larger samples with male participants

Find a sample the balances experienced actors and non-actors

Longer study period

Reflection

- Wished to find more conclusive evidence about how certain emotions aid specific vocal qualities (LO1)
- Gained skills in research project management (LO2)
- Organisational skills need improvement (LO2)

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