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Introduction and Rationale

After experiencing vocal nodules as a performer, questions of voice health and holistic wellbeing have become central to my practice. I am passionate about ensuring that performers are equipped with the knowledge they need to maintain a healthy instrument and work with greater ease. As an actress and director based in Trinidad and Tobago, I frequently observe directors telling actors to “project,” without providing the technical guidance necessary to do so safely. This highlights a broader issue within the Caribbean performance context: while regional talent is widely recognized, there is limited research that addresses sustainable, embodied approaches to vocal freedom.

Although I was born and have lived most of my life in the Caribbean, my performance and professional experiences abroad have exposed me to a variety of creative processes. While I recognise the value of diverse approaches, over the past five years as a full-time practitioner, I have become increasingly committed to supporting other performers in caring for their vocal instrument, particularly after witnessing challenges many face during rehearsal processes.

One of the primary motivations for pursuing an MA in Voice Pedagogy was a desire to deepen my understanding of the singing and speaking voice, and to help Caribbean practitioners in developing techniques from a more informed and sustainable foundation. Preliminary research revealed a notable lack of vocal pedagogical investigation within the Caribbean context. As a Caribbean national, I consider it important to contribute to this gap in scholarship in a way that can support future practitioners.

My longstanding interest in the relationship between breath and voice has informed my understanding of breath as foundational to healthy and expressive vocal production. During my undergraduate studies, I was introduced to the techniques of Kristin Linklater and Catherine Fitzmaurice, both of whom view breath as central to vocal and physical release (Citation). Of particular significance is that both theorists were practitioners, grounding their methods in lived experience and applied voice work. This literature review therefore examines the breath-based practices of Linklater and Fitzmaurice from a practitioner’s perspective, with the aim of exploring how these methods may support vocal freedom, sustainability, and expressive performance within a Caribbean context.

Planned Programme of Study

Research Question: How do Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices inform the actor's physical and vocal freedom, and what insights might this hold for a Caribbean performance context?

An actor's voice and body are fundamental tools of the craft, and effective use of these tools is closely linked to sustainability and career longevity in performance. . Linklater (2016, p. 2) refers to *The Actor's Quartet* , and states that the voice, body, emotion and intellect work together in the creation of character "under the alchemical guidance of imagination." As an actress I have found this approach valuable in my own practice, particularly noticing the central role that breath plays in supporting and freeing the voice. Below I will explain the aim and objectives of this research project:

Aim

To explore and critically analyse existing literature on the breath-based practices of Kristin Linklater and Catherine Fitzmaurice, in order to understand their effectiveness in freeing the actor's voice and to consider their potential relevance within a Caribbean performance context.

Objectives

- To develop understanding of the relationship between the breath and voice.
- To describe the core principles and philosophies underpinning Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices.
- To analyse existing studies, practitioner accounts, and testimonies that discuss the effectiveness of these techniques in supporting vocal freedom and projection.
- To synthesise key findings on how breath-based approaches contribute to the release of physical and vocal tension in actors.
- To reflect on the potential benefits and applicability of Linklater and Fitzmaurice breathwork within a Caribbean performance context, identifying it as a gap in current literature.

Personal Learning Outcomes:

- To enhance performance confidence through the exploration of breath-based practices and to promote the integration of practitioner-researched methods within actor training contexts.
- To become a more confident and capable researcher in areas related to voice and breath, enhancing my practice through informed enquiry.
- To facilitate voice and breath workshops across neighbouring Caribbean islands, helping to cultivate more informed and technically equipped Caribbean practitioners.

Methodology

Research allows us to navigate complex questions and generate knowledge that benefits both society and educational practice (UIC, 2025). While using multiple research methods can provide richer and more detailed insights (Davis, Golicic et al., 2011), this study relies solely on a literature review, as it involved systematically gathering and synthesising existing research (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Tranfield, Denyer et al., 2003). Given that Linklater and Fitzmaurice are considered foundational figures in contemporary vocal pedagogy (Schlichter, 2014), this review examines the practicality and effectiveness of their breath-based theories through practitioner testimonials and previously published research.

Because this study examined individuals' experiences of breath-based techniques, it adopted a phenomenological–hermeneutic lens within an interpretivist paradigm, foregrounding both the lived experience of participants and the interpretation of meaning embedded in those experiences. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the nature of experience from the perspective of those who have lived it (Connelly, 2010), while hermeneutics involves interpreting human behaviour and the social world (Chandler & Munday, 2020). Situated within interpretivism, which emphasises meaning, experience, and human understanding (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022), this combined approach enabled a nuanced exploration of the embodied and personal dimensions of breath-based vocal practice. The following section outlines

the selected type of review, the search strategies employed, and the rationale for the inclusion of grey literature.

Type of Review

According to Hart (1998) and Levy and Ellis (2006), a literature review establishes a study's theoretical foundation, identifies the research problem, justifies its significance, and validates the chosen methodological approach. For this study, a narrative literature review was selected, as it enables the synthesis of existing knowledge while supporting critical and interpretive engagement with a broad body of work (Sukhera, 2022). Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) identify four commonly used forms of narrative review: general, theoretical, methodological, and historical. This research adopts a narrative review with both theoretical and methodological emphasis, allowing for critical engagement with existing research and practitioner testimony, and supporting an interpretivist exploration of breath-based voice practices and their relevance to Caribbean performers. A theoretical review examines how existing theories frame and inform the research topic, while a methodological review evaluates the strengths and limitations of research approaches and offers direction for future inquiry (Ahmad, 2025).

Narrative reviews frequently align with an interpretivist paradigm, as qualitative approaches facilitate deeper understanding of individuals' experiences and perceptions within specific social and cultural contexts (Sukhera, 2022; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In this respect, a narrative review is particularly well suited to the aims of the present study.

While narrative reviews have been criticised for potential bias, particularly due to selective citation and the absence of the transparent, reproducible procedures associated with systematic reviews, these limitations may be mitigated through the use of systematic search strategies (Ferrari, 2015; Ahmad, 2025). One such strategy is Boolean searching, which, as Yoshii, Plaut et al. (2009) note, allows readers to evaluate the rigour, transparency, and credibility of a review's methodology.

Despite these critiques, narrative reviews remain especially valuable in conceptually diverse, interdisciplinary, or under-researched fields, as they enable researchers to synthesise ideas, trace theoretical developments, and identify relationships between theory and practice that may not be readily captured through strictly systematic approaches (Ferrari, 2015). Within the field of voice pedagogy and breath-based

practices, much of the existing knowledge is situated in practitioner writings, reflective accounts, and qualitative studies; therefore, these sources were analysed in this study to support a more nuanced and practice-informed understanding of the topic.

Search Strategies

Search strategy

Wohlin, Kalinowski et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of a robust search strategy. As both Linklater and Fitzmaurice have developed distinct breath-based practices, their official websites were used as initial sources to identify relevant materials. These sites were located via Google using keyword searches such as *Linklater*, *Fitzmaurice*, *voice*, *breath*, *strategies* and *techniques*. Google Scholar was also used to locate academic literature; however, full-text access was not always available. Consequently, the UWTSD library databases were relied upon to obtain complete articles and texts.

Seminal works in contemporary voice pedagogy, including Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice* and key texts on Fitzmaurice Voicework, were used as foundational sources for further exploration. Articles related to these practitioners were then employed for snowball searching. As Gomes, Mendes et al. (2024) explain, snowballing involves identifying additional relevant studies by reviewing a paper's reference list (backward snowballing) and examining works that subsequently cite it (forward snowballing). In this study, backward snowballing was applied to Weir Ouston's (2021) article *The Feeling Voice*. While many of the references identified were not directly included in this review, they provided valuable contextual insight and were noted for potential use in future research.

Boolean Search Strategy

A Boolean search strategy converts a research question into a searchable string for locating relevant literature (Aliyu, 2017). To locate relevant literature, Boolean operators were used to combine key terms related to voice pedagogy, breath, and actor training. For example, the following Boolean search string was applied across databases such as Google, Google Scholar and the UWTSD library portal:

"Linklater Voice" OR "Linklater technique" AND "breath" OR "breathing" AND "actor training" OR "voice training" AND "vocal release" OR "vocal freedom"

This search strategy allowed for the retrieval of sources that addressed both Linklater's approach and breath-based voice work within actor training contexts, while excluding unrelated material.

A similar search string was used for Fitzmaurice Voicework:

"Fitzmaurice Voicework" OR "Fitzmaurice technique" AND "breath" OR "tremor" AND "actor" OR "voice practitioner"

Boolean operators such as AND, OR and quotation marks were used to narrow, broaden, and refine search results, ensuring that relevant peer-reviewed articles, practitioner writings, and grey literature were systematically identified.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Patino and Ferreira (2018) explains Inclusion criteria specify the characteristics required to address the research question, while exclusion criteria identify factors that may compromise validity or outcomes . Below I will place the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for this research.

Inclusion Criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and reputable grey literature.
- Sources that explicitly discuss Linklater Voicework and/or Fitzmaurice Voicework.
- Literature addressing breath, breath-based voice practices, or actor voice training/techniques.
- Studies and practitioner accounts focused on actors, performers, or professional voice users.
- Qualitative, mixed-methods, and practice-based research, including practitioner testimonials.
- Sources published in English.

- Literature published between 1976 and 2025, reflecting both foundational and contemporary work.

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies unrelated to voice, breath, or performer training.
- Research focused exclusively on medical or clinical voice pathology without relevance to actor training.
- Sources addressing voice training in non-performance contexts (e.g., call centres, public speaking only).
- Opinion pieces lacking theoretical grounding or practitioner relevance.
- Duplicate studies or sources with insufficient methodological detail.
- Articles unavailable in full text after reasonable attempts to access them.

Justification for Grey Literature

Grey literature encompasses materials that are not formally published through academic or commercial publishers but are produced by organisations or individuals for whom publishing is not the primary function (Young, Premji et al., 2023). As this study examines practitioner-led techniques and their effectiveness for voice practitioners, excluding practitioner perspectives would be limiting. Grey literature is not bound by conventional academic structures and can therefore offer richer detail and a style that is more accessible and practically relevant to practitioners than traditional scientific papers (IWH, 2007). Consequently, this review draws on both peer-reviewed sources and relevant grey literature to provide a more comprehensive and credible understanding of the practices under investigation. The grey literature included in this study consists of practitioner reflections, dissertations, and workshop notes.

Literature Review

The human voice is the means through which we communicate with the world, conveying not only our ideas but also our emotions and personality (Tiwari and Tiwari,

2012), yet in some rehearsal processes it is observed to be overused and misused. Directors rarely intend to harm an actor's voice; rather, they rely on inherited practices that encourage actors to "project" so that the actor builds strength, clarity and become more professionally viable. In the Caribbean, actors are often encouraged to push vocally with limited guidance on how they should do this safely and sustainably.

From this perspective, my research question emerges: *How do Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices inform the actor's physical and vocal freedom, and what insights might this hold for a Caribbean performance context?*

In this review I will discuss the relationship between breath and voice, outlining the core principles underpinning Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices, discuss practitioner testimonies regarding the effectiveness of these methods and explore the applicability of these practices within a Caribbean performance context.

What is breath and its relation to voice?

Breath can be understood on multiple interconnected levels. Physiologically, the lungs draw in air, extract oxygen, and deliver it to the bloodstream, where it is transported to the tissues and organs that enable movement and speech (Canadian Lung Association, 2025). Humans breathe automatically approximately twelve times per minute, and this respiratory cycle, alongside the heartbeat, constitutes one of the body's two primary biological rhythms (Parkes, 2012). As oxygen is essential for survival, breathing functions as a fundamental life-sustaining process (Sportscare, 2025). Indeed, breath operates as one of the body's primary regulatory systems, and as Del Negro, Funk et al. (2018) note, humans breathe continuously from birth until death. In this sense, breath can be understood as a vital lifeline.

The term *voice* is often associated with the linguistic construction of social personae (Keane & Webb, 1999); however, from a physiological standpoint, voice production involves the complex interaction between the larynx as a sound source and the vocal tract including the oral and nasal cavities, which together generate a wide range of vocal sounds (Ghazanfar & Rendall, 2008). Voice is a constant presence in both everyday natural environments and social interactions (Berlin, Rolls et al., 2004), functioning as a primary means through which humans connect, communicate, and express emotion. Nevertheless, vocal sound only occurs when air from the lungs passes rapidly through the vocal folds, causing them to vibrate (National Institute of

Deafness, 2023). Breath and voice therefore operate in tandem; it is only when breath initiates that the voice can respond. As Schlichter and Eidsheim (2014) argue, voice plays an integral role in human ecology, linking breath, body, emotion, culture, and community.

For actors, understanding this relationship is essential, as breath awareness directly influences vocal expression and focus (Stage Music Centre, 2022). Fitzmaurice (2015) notes that the vibrant human voice emerges from the way the entire body responds through breath to both internal and external stimuli. The actor's mind, or will is understood as conscious motor control, and is associated with voluntary breathing, serving as a conduit for expressing both the actor's and the character's thoughts and emotions (McAllister-Viel, 2009). The impulse to speak arises from the kinaesthetic sensation of the body preparing to supply breath as fuel for voicing (McAllister-Viel, 2009). Through this process, immaterial thought is transformed into playable action, with conscious breath awareness and motor control forming the foundation of this approach to actor training.

Actors are often required to perform for extended periods, sometimes several hours a day across six days a week, which can result in long-term vocal damage if adequate voice care is not prioritised. Simon Russell Beale, one of the pioneers of British theatre highlights a seven hour work day at the national theatre, then a tech week which is often grueling for the cast and crew (BBC, 2013). Gates (2022) further explains that professional equity actors performing up to eight shows per week require structured voice training to minimise the risk of vocal disorders. When an actor connects deeply with breath, voice, and text, moments of heightened authenticity and performance "magic" can emerge (Weir Ouston, 2021 p.1). While the audience ultimately receives the sensory and emotional impact of the performance, the process itself may hold profound significance for the actor. As Weir Ouston (2021) suggests, the thinking-feeling voice carries rich resonance, emotional depth, and meaning, engaging the hearts and minds of the audience while supporting the actor's expressive and embodied presence.

The importance of vocal training is recognized in the Caribbean and is often incorporated into the rehearsal process, though it is rarely treated as a central focus. As performances approach and rehearsal pressures increase, tensions can arise, and directors may become frustrated; in such situations, less experienced actors are often observed to push their voices beyond healthy limits. Developing greater awareness of breath and voice, supported by appropriate exercises, would therefore

be highly beneficial for Caribbean actors, enabling safer, more sustainable vocal use under performance pressure.

What core principles shape Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based voice practices?

Kristin Linklater is widely recognized as a foundational figure in contemporary voice work for actors (Linklater Voice, 2018). Linklater's first book, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language* (1976/2006), was followed by *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (1992). A trained actor from the London Academy of Dramatic Arts, Linklater drew on her own performance experience to develop breath-based practices that address the common challenges actors face in using their voices safely and effectively. Figure 1 illustrates the Linklater Voicework Progression, outlining the structured sequence of exercises designed to free the natural voice.

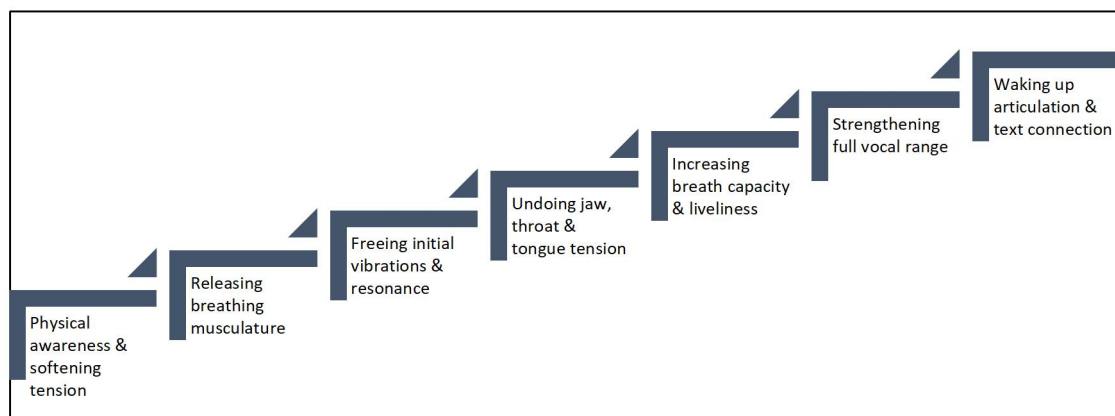


Figure 1: The Linklater Voicework Progression

Krell (2011) shares one of the most productive tensions in Kristin Linklater's work, stemming from the duality she draws from Shakespeare's rhetoric: the voice as both a natural birthright and a site of profound suppression. On one hand, Linklater asserts that the human voice is a natural birthright, which means everyone is born with the potential for a flexible and emotionally expressive voice that is capable of spanning 3-4 octaves, that articulates complex thought and feeling (Linklater Voice, 2019). In this sense, the voice exists within the body so it does not need to be trained to exist. However, she also acknowledges that this birthright is systematically suppressed. This suppression comes from social conditioning, cultural expectations, fear, trauma and censorship gradually limiting what the voice is capable of achieving (Cahill and Hamel, 2024). This tension between vocal birthright and suppression

extends beyond individual experience and can be understood within broader historical and cultural contexts, particularly in the Caribbean.

A significant insight, as the author argues that it has historical roots in the era of slavery in the Caribbean, when Africans were systematically prohibited from using their voices and bodies to practise their religions. In both academic and popular discourse, African-derived religions have long been understood as powerful expressions of African cultural resistance to European hegemony in the New World (Adderley & American Council of Learned Societies, 2006). As an enduring form of resistance and reverence, Afro-Trinidadians continue to practise Orisha worship today, which remains the only ritually structured African-based religion in the English-speaking Caribbean (Adderley & American Council of Learned Societies, 2006). Linklater's notion of the voice as a birthright that is habitually constrained can therefore be understood not only historically, but as an ongoing condition shaped by changing power structures.

In more recent developments, Caribbean voices have faced different but related forms of suppression, this time through geopolitical tensions that foster fear, instability, and self-censorship. Actions by the President of the United States toward Venezuela have raised regional concern, with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) describing these developments as a threat to the Caribbean's designation as a "zone of peace" (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2025). This contemporary context reinforces the historical pattern in which Caribbean voices and bodies remain entangled in broader structures of power, control, and resistance.

Against historical and contemporary silencing, Linklater's voice pedagogy is a counter practice. At the core of Linklater's work is the use of imagery in relation to breath, voice and body. Hillmer (2013); Weir Ouston (2021) notes that through imagery, Linklater enables students to explore unfamiliar vocal landscapes and experience processes such as breathing in ways they may not have previously considered. She goes on to outline what a Linklater workday looks like: day one focuses on "physical awareness: the spine," while day two emphasizes "breathing awareness" (Hillmer, 2013). Linklater (2009 p. 1) states "There is no correct way to breathe," explaining that individuals naturally adapt their breath to different activities because "breathing muscles are multifarious and adaptable" (Linklater, 2009 p. 1). Linklater understands that each character is different and the way in which an actor

approaches breath for these characters cannot be the same (Linklater Voice, 1997). However, Lee (2007) states that Grotowski believes better diction is what helps with developing a character. There may be merit in both theories. Linklater and Fitzmaurice developed these techniques primarily for actors, however many other voice users have seen its usefulness (Watson and Nayak, 2014; Linklater Voice, 2025).

Catherine Fitzmaurice’s practice, *Fitzmaurice Voicework: Embodying the Holistic Voice*, explores the relationships between body, breath, voice, imagination, and language to cultivate vibrant voices that communicate intention and emotion with ease and efficiency (Fitzmaurice, 2025). Like Linklater, Fitzmaurice also believes in the relationship of breath with the body and voice. Where they differ is Fitzmaurice views breath as reflexive, free, self-regulated behaviour (Fitzmaurice, 2015), and Linklater avoids prescribing one specific way of breathing (Linklater, 2009). Fitzmaurice (2025) urges careful and sensitive instruction is essential when working with breath, particularly in distinguishing survival breathing from intentional, communicative breathing. Figure 2 illustrates the core components of Fitzmaurice Voicework, including Destructuring, Restructuring, Presence, Play, and Applications, highlighting how each element contributes to developing a free, expressive, and embodied voice.

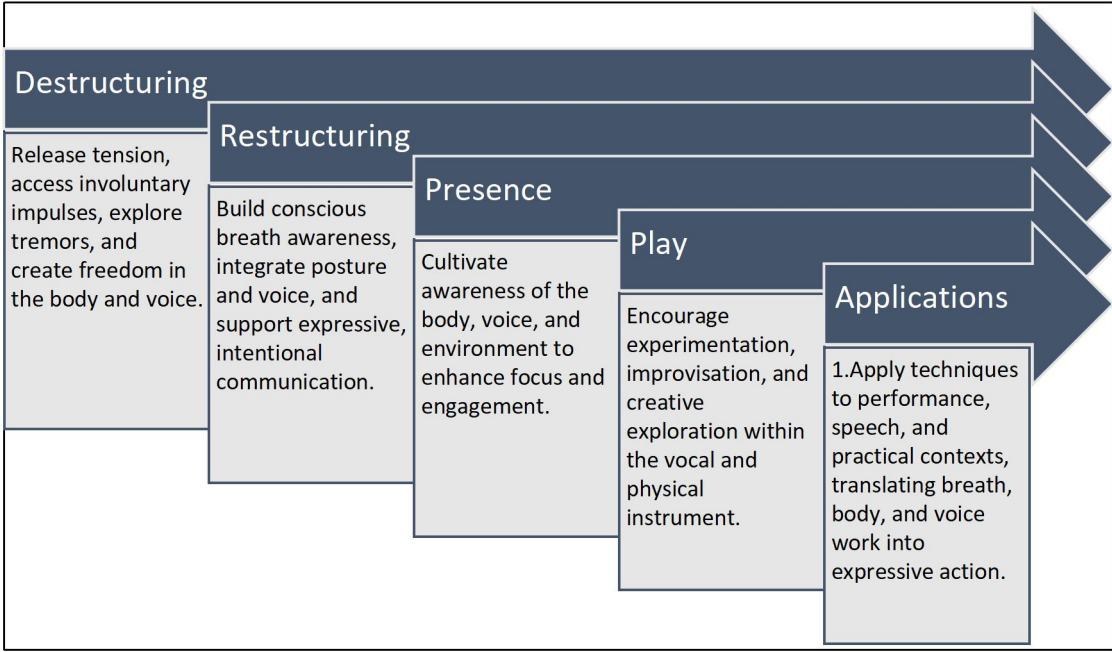


Figure 2: Core Components of Fitzmaurice Voicework

Watson and Nayak (2014) note that Fitzmaurice's approach is designed to enhance the effective use of breath in voice production through two complementary phases: Destructuring and Restructuring. These phases align with key elements of her method, fostering both freedom and focus in voice work (Watson & Nayak, 2014). Destructuring helps students release tension, access involuntary impulses, and experience greater flow (Morrison, Kotzubei et al., 2017). Tremors may be explored either independently or under guided instruction, following a sequence of exercises developed over time; however, there is no fixed or prescribed regimen that must be adhered to in this work (Fitzmaurice, 2015). Restructuring enhances breath awareness and can occur before, during or after destructuring, further develops conscious breath awareness and supports effective vocal expression (Morrison, Kotzubei, et al., 2017).

Just as Linklater's voice practice holds particular relevance within a Caribbean context through its emphasis on release, breath awareness, and reconnecting to the natural voice, Fitzmaurice Voicework also offers valuable tools through its distinct processes of destructuring and restructuring. These practices may be especially beneficial for Caribbean actors who carry personal, historical, or embodied trauma, as they provide structured pathways for release and regulation that can support greater vocal freedom, presence, and authenticity in performance.

What does existing research and practitioner testimony reveal about the effectiveness of these methods?

It is important to examine existing research alongside practitioner testimonials, as these sources provide a foundation for evaluating how breath-based voice practices may be understood and applied within a Caribbean context. Research examining the Linklater Voice Method offers insight into both its effectiveness and the conditions under which its benefits may emerge.

Nilsson, Laukkanen et al. (2022) investigated the effects of sixteen months of voice training with student actors applying the Linklater Voice Method. Their findings demonstrated significant improvement in vocal dynamics, suggesting that Linklater Voicework has a notable impact on vocal function. The authors emphasise the importance of extended training periods in allowing the voice's full range of capabilities to develop, highlighting time as a critical factor in evaluating the method's effectiveness.

Further research exploring the therapeutic potential of the Linklater technique was conducted by Amr (2013), who examined its short-term effects on two women with muscle tension dysphonia. This study focused on subjective outcomes following five consecutive days of Linklater-based work. The findings revealed divergent responses: one participant reported negative self-perceptions of vocal change, while the other experienced positive vocal improvements. These contrasting outcomes suggest that responses to the Linklater technique may vary on an individual basis and reinforce the importance of considering personal experience and duration of training when assessing effectiveness.

More recent research by Loth and Pensalfini (2024) examined the integration of Suzuki and Linklater techniques within a four-day workshop setting. Participants reported that, despite methodological differences, both approaches were compatible with their emphasis on grounding and centring the body. Notably, Suzuki-trained participants highlighted the effectiveness of Linklater's work in releasing tension in the neck and jaw, while one participant observed that the practice of releasing thought reduced self-consciousness in speech. Across the study, participants consistently referenced Linklater's techniques as contributing positively to their performance process.

Linklater's approach centres on reconnecting individuals with the innate simplicity of natural breathing rhythms and impulses, aiming to develop awareness, flexibility, range, clarity, and power through the integration of breath, body, sound, and thought (Linklater, 2018). Central to this work is the principle of release. This concept aligns with Polyvagal Theory, developed by Stephen Porges, which offers a scientific framework explaining how neural circuits regulate defensive responses and promote states of safety (Porges, 2022). Viewed through a polyvagal lens, Linklater's active and alert release supports balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, fostering ease, presence, energy, and focus, and enabling performers to engage with relaxed muscularity and emotional openness (Weir Ouston, 2021).

Although Linklater's method was first introduced in 1976, its continued relevance is demonstrated through contemporary research. Evidence suggests that performers may experience meaningful changes in vocal and embodied awareness even within relatively short training periods, though longer durations appear to yield more substantial results.

Fitzmaurice Voicework similarly prioritises release, though it is achieved through tremor and vibration during the destructuring phase of the work. Fitzmaurice describes this process as a means of reducing unnecessary muscular tension (Watson and Nayak, 2014). Research examining the effectiveness of Fitzmaurice Voicework has produced largely positive or neutral findings. A pilot study by Watson and Nayak (2015) investigated acoustic changes in participants enrolled in a Fitzmaurice Voicework teacher certification programme. The results indicated improvements in maximum phonation time (MPT), suggesting positive outcomes for actors and professional voice users, while also noting the need for larger sample sizes to further examine pitch and loudness variations.

Neurobiological research conducted by Watson, Hirshorn-Johnston et al. (2019) employed functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to explore the effects of Fitzmaurice Voicework on the brain. Ten certified Fitzmaurice Voicework teachers participated, and the findings suggested that the practice may influence neural networks associated with focus, decision-making, and self-regulation. These results support practitioner observations and point toward potential therapeutic benefits.

Not all findings, however, are unequivocally supportive. In a preliminary study examining the effects of Fitzmaurice Voicework and stress reduction techniques on physiological markers and mental states related to performance anxiety, Hague and Sandage (2016) found that while participants reported reduced perceived performance-related stress, physiological measures did not support the original hypotheses. These mixed results highlight the complexity of measuring embodied voice practices and underscore the need for further research.

Based on the practitioner research examining participants engaging with Linklater and Fitzmaurice Voicework, it is important to acknowledge both the effectiveness of these methods and the nuances of their application. One key insight is that training duration significantly affects outcomes: Nilsson, Laukkanen et al. (2022) found that long-term Linklater training (16 months) produced measurable improvements in vocal dynamics, whereas short-term interventions, such as Amr (2013), yielded more variable results. This suggests that breath-based voice practices are cumulative and dependent on consistent engagement, rather than providing immediate or uniform effects.

Another crucial consideration is individual variability in response. Participants' outcomes differ according to personal experience, body awareness, and engagement

with the exercises, highlighting that both Linklater and Fitzmaurice Voicework are highly embodied and context-dependent practices. Mechanically following the method is unlikely to produce meaningful results; performers must actively connect with breath, release, and body awareness to benefit fully.

This variability also underscores the diverse ways Caribbean performers might engage with breath-based methods, shaped by personal training, exposure to performative culture, and socio-historical context, suggesting the importance of culturally sensitive adaptation and practice.

From a Caribbean context, how applicable and adaptable are these practices?

From a Caribbean perspective, practices such as Linklater and Fitzmaurice Voicework are both highly relevant and adaptable, though they benefit from contextual sensitivity. Grounded in the human body, breath, and voice (Fitzmaurice & Morgan, 2025), these approaches are inherently transferable across cultures. Caribbean societies are widely recognised for their expressivity, evident in speech, movement, music, and dance, a trait shaped in part by histories of resistance and survival following slavery (National Archives, 2025). Indian indentured labourers similarly resisted colonial control through deliberate acts that undermined authority (Mahase, 2008).

This legacy of resilience is vividly embodied in Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival, often described as "the greatest show on earth" (Visit Trinidad, 2025), a communal festival that celebrates freedom of expression, embodied release, and presence in the moment. Such values closely align with the principles underpinning both Linklater and Fitzmaurice practices.

Moreover, the Caribbean's socio-historical realities, particularly colonial legacies, racialised bodies, and inherited patterns of discipline and control, render practices focused on release, safety, and re-connection to the body especially meaningful. While these techniques can function effectively without modification, their relevance is strengthened through contextual adaptation. Integrating oral traditions, storytelling, regional texts, and Caribbean music can deepen engagement and ensure the work resonates fully within a Caribbean performance context, particularly within actor training, voice pedagogy, and performance education frameworks.

Critical Reflection

This research sought to address the question: *How do Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices inform the actor's physical and vocal freedom, and what insights might these approaches offer within a Caribbean performance context?* In order to respond to this question, it is first necessary to engage in critical reflection on my research process. Critical reflection involves examining one's practices, processes, and personal identity, while also attending to the external factors, policies, and individuals that may influence the choices made and actions taken (Sutherland, 2013).

To support this reflective process, I have adopted Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988), a structured framework designed to facilitate learning from experience. As one of the most widely used cyclical models of reflection, it guides practitioners through six interconnected stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan (University of Edinburgh, 2024). This section therefore reflects on my research journey by examining the processes, challenges, and insights that emerged through the study of Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) as a guiding framework (see Figure 3).

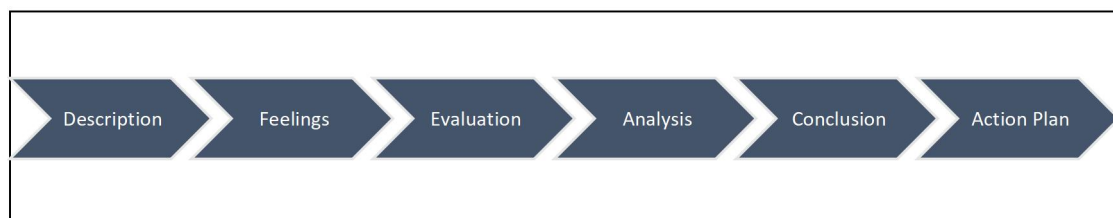


Figure 3: Six Stages of Gibbs Reflective Cycle

1. Description (What happened?)

After identifying a gap in the existing research, the first step in developing this study was selecting and refining an appropriate research topic (Coburn, 2024). A range of peer-reviewed articles and grey literature were examined using Google Scholar and Google, focusing on sources that detailed the principles and practices of Linklater and Fitzmaurice Voicework. Following this, the rationale was developed, as it is essential for justifying both the need for the research and the methodological approach adopted (Javernick-Will, 2018). An introduction was also constructed to

outline the key concepts explored in the chapters that follow (Eide, Josephsson et al., 2017).

The research then progressed to the methodology section. Given the nature of the topic, a phenomenological–hermeneutic lens was adopted and situated within an interpretivist paradigm, despite the study not involving primary data collection. Phenomenology explores how individuals or groups experience phenomena within specific social, cultural, or institutional contexts (Van Manen, 2017), while hermeneutics involves active engagement with texts in order to interpret meaning as it emerges (Gadamar, 2004). This approach acknowledges the role of subjectivity, which aligns with interpretivism’s emphasis on understanding meaning through human experience. Subjectivity and interpretivism therefore complement one another, as an interpretivist approach requires attention to participants’ subjective meanings in order to understand their experiences and the social world they inhabit (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022). In line with these philosophical perspectives, the study was conducted as a narrative literature review, enabling the synthesis and interpretive analysis of existing research and practitioner perspectives.

2. Feeling (What were you thinking and feeling during the process?)

I often heard, “Research is fun!” (Lam, 2008 p.1) from peers who are aware of my masters journey. However it did not always feel that way while working on this module. During the research process, I was initially confident that existing literature would strongly support the effectiveness of breath-based voice practices of Linklater and Fitzmaurice; However, as I engaged more deeply with academic sources and practitioner testimonials, I began to realize that the research was more nuanced than I anticipated. I found myself questioning how universally applicable practices were, particularly within a Caribbean context where cultural, climatic, and embodied experiences differ from those in which the methods were developed.

I also experienced moments of uncertainty when encountering conflicting perspectives, which prompted me to reconsider my assumptions and engage more critically with the material rather than accepting it at face value. At times, the volume of information felt overwhelming; as Dael, Meister et al. (2025) note, although the term is often used colloquially, it carries a powerful meaning. This sense of being overwhelmed ultimately encouraged me to refine my focus and become more selective in evaluating sources. Overall, my thinking shifted from seeking

confirmation of my initial ideas to adopting a more reflective and analytical approach to the research.

3. Evaluation (What was good and bad about the experience?)

The research for this study was robust, which enabled me to gain more knowledge from academic literature and practitioner-based insights on breath-centred voice practices, particularly those of Linklater and Fitzmaurice. Engaging with both scholarly research and testimonials allowed me to have a holistic understanding of how these techniques can work in practice since the techniques were primarily made for actors (Monteagudo, Sawyer et al., 2017). This strengthened my ability to compare theoretical frameworks with lived experience, which was a valuable aspect of this research.

A key limitation of this study was the scarcity of peer-reviewed literature, often regarded as the “gold standard” (Willis, Cobey et al., 2023, p. 2), that directly addresses the effectiveness of these techniques within a Caribbean context. This restricted the ability to draw culturally specific conclusions and necessitated careful interpretation rather than definitive claims. In addition, grey literature was more readily available than peer-reviewed sources, and maintaining an appropriate balance between the two throughout the research process proved challenging at times.

4. Analysis (What sense can you make of the situation? What did you learn?)

The primary research identified online and analysed in this literature review largely reflects the Western origins of Linklater and Fitzmaurice breath-based voice practices, which helps to explain the limited body of literature addressing Caribbean contexts. The contrast between academic research and practitioner testimonials underscores the experiential and embodied nature of voice training and highlights the importance of reflexive analysis. This process emphasised that voice pedagogy cannot be universally applied without critical consideration of cultural specificity.

The review also reinforced the importance, as a practitioner, of engaging with a range of techniques, including those developed independently. Different performers respond in diverse ways, and a flexible, open approach allows practitioners to recognise the varying effectiveness and relevance of techniques across individuals and contexts.

5. Conclusion (What else could you have done? What have you learned overall?)

The reflective process highlighted the importance of approaching voice research with both critical awareness and cultural sensitivity. While the study deepened my understanding of the breath-based practices of Linklater and Fitzmaurice, it also revealed the limitations of assuming their universal applicability. In hindsight, incorporating a wider range of culturally specific sources earlier in the process may have strengthened the analysis and reduced uncertainty during evaluation. At the same time, the scarcity of research examining breath-based practices within Caribbean contexts underscores the need for further study in this area.

This experience reinforced the value of reflexivity, particularly in acknowledging personal bias and remaining open to alternative perspectives. It also demonstrated the necessity of balancing academic research with practitioner insight, while recognising the limitations inherent in each. Overall, the process contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how voice pedagogy must be critically examined and thoughtfully adapted to align with the cultural, environmental, and embodied realities of the Caribbean context.

6. Action Plan (What will I do next time?)

If undertaking this research in the future, I would adopt a more intentional and structured approach from the outset. This would include actively seeking Caribbean-based scholarship in order to rule out time constraints as a factor in the limited identification of regional research. I would also design the study as a primary research project to directly address the existing gap in Caribbean-focused voice research, incorporating practitioner interviews and earlier engagement with Caribbean performance traditions. This approach would ensure that cultural relevance is embedded from the beginning rather than addressed retrospectively.

Reflexive journaling throughout the research process would also be a priority to document evolving assumptions, responses to sources, and emerging critical insights. This practice would support greater self-awareness and strengthen the depth and rigour of the analysis.

Collectively, these strategies would enable a more culturally responsive, critically robust, and reflective approach to voice research in future academic and professional contexts.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how breath-based practices, as articulated by Kristin Linklater and Catherine Fitzmaurice, inform the actor's physical and vocal freedom, and to consider what insights these approaches might offer for a Caribbean performance context. Through a narrative literature review anchored in an interpretivist, phenomenological–hermeneutic framework, the research synthesised theoretical texts, empirical studies, and practitioner testimonies to deepen understanding of these breath-centred methodologies and their potential relevance beyond Western paradigms. The findings underscore that both Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's work contribute meaningfully to contemporary voice pedagogy while also revealing the limits of their application without cultural contextualisation.

At their core, Linklater and Fitzmaurice foreground breath as a dynamic intersection of body, voice, emotion, and imagination (Fitzmaurice, 2015; Linklater, 2018). Linklater's method emphasises the release of habitual tension, awareness of natural breathing rhythms, and re-establishment of the voice as a birthright unencumbered by social and psychological constraints (Linklater Voice, 2019). Similarly, Fitzmaurice's practice uses deconstructing and restructuring to liberate involuntary impulses and cultivate conscious, expressive breath use (Watson & Nayak, 2014). Both frameworks align with embodied theories of vocal expression that recognise the interdependence of physiological, affective, and cognitive processes in performance (Schlichter & Eidsheim, 2014). Research shows that engaging with these practices can improve vocal dynamics (Nilsson, Laukkanen et al., 2022), enhance phonatory control (Watson & Nayak, 2015), and contribute to neural patterns associated with focus and regulation (Watson, Hirshorn-Johnston et al., 2019). Such evidence supports the claim that breath-based voice work contributes to vocal freedom and sustainability, particularly when practiced with sufficient duration and sensitivity.

However, this study also highlighted the nuanced, context-dependent nature of embodied voice practices. Divergent outcomes in existing research (Amr, 2013; Hague & Sandage, 2016) and the variability of individual responses point to the

importance of personal experience and training duration in assessing effectiveness. Moreover, practitioner testimonies consistently emphasise that breath-centred approaches function optimally when embedded within supportive pedagogical conditions that privilege safety, curiosity, and gradual release (Weir Ouston, 2021). These insights underscore that voice work is as much an experiential and relational practice as it is a technical one.

Critically, while both Linklater and Fitzmaurice provide robust frameworks for understanding and engaging with breath and voice, their methods have largely developed within Western epistemologies. Epistemology relates to knowledge and our understanding of it (Steup, 2005). The review therefore examined the extent to which these practices resonate within Caribbean performance cultures, where expressive traditions are shaped by histories of resistance, embodied performance practices, and socio-historical legacies of colonialism and survival (National Archives, 2025; Mahase, 2008). The findings suggest that breath-based approaches speak to Caribbean values of expressivity and communal performance as epitomised in Carnival and other oral traditions (Visit Trinidad, 2025). Yet, the research also indicates that contextual adaptation, such as integrating regional music, storytelling, and indigenous performance forms, is essential to deepen relevance and resonance for Caribbean practitioners.

Ultimately, this study concludes that Linklater's and Fitzmaurice's breath-based practices offer valuable tools for fostering vocal freedom and embodied presence, but that their effectiveness within the Caribbean is contingent upon culturally responsive adaptation, critical engagement, and further empirical inquiry. Addressing the existing gap in Caribbean-centred vocal research not only enhances pedagogical equity but also expands the scope of global performance scholarship. Future research, particularly primary studies engaging Caribbean voice practitioners directly, is needed to more fully articulate how breath-centred pedagogy can be organically integrated into regional actor training and performance frameworks.

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