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**Title:** The Corporality Aspect in Drama and Creativity of Children with Diverse Needs for Hubristically Motivated Expansion

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## **The Corporality Aspect in Drama and Creativity of Children with Diverse needs for Hubristically Motivated Expansion**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this article is to present the authors' reflections on the role of corporality in drama and to indicate the specific nature of kinaesthetic and corporal creativity observed in children, dominated by diverse forms of expansion. The study consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. In the former one, the authors will present some fundamental scientific assumptions to justify their belief in relations occurring in the area of drama – corporality – need for expansion, which ensured also the space for empirical exploration taken up within the framework of experimental studies. Yet, before any observations made upon practical studies are discussed, we shall outline the scientific interpretation of assumptions verified throughout our study.

*Keywords: pedagogy of creativity, drama, children with diverse needs*

### **Some selected contexts for discussions on the body and corporality – role of the body in postmodernity**

The central point of reference of recent study has been the notion of the body, or rather corporality, thanks to which man not only becomes “visible” for his environment, but also liberates his personal self, embodied in him. Today, such forms of expression through the body turn into a challenge, as considering the perspectives and objectives of pedagogy we attempt, throughout the educational process, to elaborate the grounds for beautiful and noble “being” (i.e. manifesting oneself),

however at the age of the dominating tendency to “*commodify*” the body (...) this challenge appears extremely difficult to face. Current processes facilitating instrumentalization of the body provoke some thoughts where respect for the body and corporality becomes a unique, recessive, or even latent trait of contemporary people. This may be exemplified by the following statement: “A *consumer culture triggers “commodification” of the body (its colonization by different branches of services, revealing, differentiating and fulfilling its needs*”, (Jakubowska H., 2009, p. 20, as cited in Baldwin et al., 2007, p. 308), or a thought by M. Foucault (1995) quoted in the paper by K. Krasoń (2013, p. 114) The body “*authenticates*” a person because thanks to it she/he is visible, therefore it also wants to be recorded, records everything, all that in a transient and superficial manner ...” (Krasoń K., 2013, p. 114, as cited in Horney, 1993, p. 94)

The quotations chosen from among numerous ones, undoubtedly vivid, manifest the concern about the approach to the body showed by contemporary man. The body has become an element of the market game, a permanent element adding impetus to the demand and supply mechanism. It appears as a conglomeration of traits and needs, to be then colonized and annexed. Also, the rule of the so-called biopower (Jakubowska H., 2009, p. 20) has recently become truly tangible, manifested through the cult of the body it rules, or rather, through which it rules. Taking into account that throughout the post-industrial age and consumer culture man has been reduced to a purely organic “formation”, the more important are any steps taken to revive the ideas of a complementary approach to the spheres of *soma* and *psyche*. Unfortunately, considering today’s reality, it may be assumed that such a focus on the body is far from well-balanced as, treated marginally, it happens to turn into a “tool” ruled by the mind, overwhelmed with fear or, on the contrary, is idolatrously sacralised. Finding, then, the golden mean requires understanding and acceptance of synergy occurring between the body and soul (self-awareness), which should open the area for educational activities, accomplished through art.

Contemplating one’s own corporality may be achieved through a variety of artistic forms, e.g. fine arts, music, and particularly theatre and drama.

## **Body and corporality in drama**

In drama, similarly to theatrical patterns, the body plays a specific role, namely that of expressing oneself. It is through the body that “knowledge is acquired”. It makes it possible to perceive reality in a sensual way, thus underlying sensations,

experience, emotions as well as any change within the cognitive structures, which is fundamental for the shaping of identity. The body-identity relation is two-directional, however some specific apology of the body and of corporality, discussed in the context of their role in drama, is the consequence of the basic assumption, well documented now in the area of neurodidactics (e.g. Żylińska M., 2013), stating that “activity carves the brain”. Obviously, the notion of activity is extensive and complex, yet activity is associated here with some specific acts, where movement, any form of expression, any action observable directly or contained by the sphere of observation and reflection or acts of creative or analytical thinking require fundamental awareness of one’s body. Any form of human activity is directly associated with or even determined by the ability to receive stimuli, where soma and psyche act inseparably. Drama makes it possible to understand the essence of one’s corporality and extends the opportunities of employing the body as the means of communication. It ensures better chance for realizing one’s own concept (“self-feeling”) and being aware of others (Poston - Anders, 2012). The body has been programmed to perform the kinetic function, so important in relieving, learning and transgression. Under appropriately arranged conditions, corporal experience and acting through the body affect transformation in the realm of “psyche,” which enables nearly permanent transformation of the human being.

## **Pantomime and movement in drama**

The capability of corporal representation of a character, understanding oneself and one’s body through movement (pantomime) are key issues. Stimulated in a creative manner, movement is the natural activity of children, who mimic and join drama games already in their earliest years. Making use of movement (the body) and pantomime develops consciousness of one’s own body (“I” related to others), awareness of the body and of its abilities to “communicate” (stories, narration) and to express emotions. Miming can be defined as communicating through gesture and action and it is primarily non-verbal. It is a commonly used term and most students tend to engage easily in mime-based activities. Miming is particularly helpful for enhancing students’ knowledge of non-verbal communication (body language) as well as characterisation.

Any practice the body is “involved” in determines knowledge, emotions, sense of satisfaction, happiness (or lack of it) as well as open-mindedness, curiosity and willingness to know and to learn. From the neurobiological standpoint, some

positive experience recorded by the brain and resulting from corporal sensations may induce certain chemical processes participating in the development of, e.g., intelligence, learning skills or competence. Therefore, from the pedagogical perspective, it is important to develop the capability of appropriate adoration of corporality, interpreted as respect for the body, thanks to which and through which consciousness, self-awareness and identity are built. The essence of drama is to “walk into” a situation and to experience what is partly fictitious and partly real. The body, or rather body-awareness, is a major factor of drama strategies, ensuring self-discovery, learning new situations and, most of all, relieving oneself of one’s own limitations, which cease to exist while acting, yet under the protective umbrella of fiction.

### **Drama as a teaching and learning method**

Drama makes use of and develops a variety of intelligence patterns and offers multi-sensory access to pupils with diverse sensory representation and learning styles. Drama strategies and techniques comprise and develop all types of intelligence. Drama allows pupils to receive and generate information through all sensory systems and different types of intelligence.

The most important among the types of intelligence, discussed in the context of the role of corporality in drama, are the following: spatial intelligence – drama makes use of both, physical and interpersonal space; in practical and symbolical terms we work using the body and space; kinaesthetic intelligence – in drama we use movement and a variety of gestures and paraphysical behaviours. This is especially true in the movement theatre and in dance, allowing for the development of motor coordination and a better awareness of one’s own body.

Focus on such selected types of intelligence results from the design of empirical studies, attempting at the description of the use of space as well as manifestations of their creative kinetic expression (corporal-kinaesthetic intelligence). The evaluated children showed different forms of expansion which is, according to the assumptions of the concept by J.Kozielecki, motivated hubristically, i.e. by the need to confirm one’s own value.

## **Basic assumptions of the measure of hubristically determined expansion – distinguished expansion measures**

The observation of children carried out during studies within an earlier project headed by K. Krasoń<sup>1</sup> effected a specification of forms of child expansion. The following forms have been singled out: positive affective expansion (PAE), positive rationalized expansion (PRE), ambivalent expansion (AE), passive orientation (PO), and ostensible expansion (OE).

All the distinguished types of expansion have been described in detail in the article *Hubristic need and the creative power of children during early school education and the contemporary educational challenge* (Łączyk M., 2015, pp. 307–324), so at this point only a synthesis of premises about this subject matter will be made. Their characteristics included in this study are necessary due to the fact that they constituted the foundation for the construction of a tool (the expansion questionnaire), which was used to gather empirical material at the pre-test and post-test stage of the study described in this paper. The expansion questionnaire was used to determine which of the children are more oriented towards transgressive actions, and which of them prefer adaptive behavior.

The first and most desirable kind of expansion, due to the potential achievements of children, is typical of children that are open, bold and tend to be balanced. They are not afraid of challenges. They undertake various tasks and usually their execution is crowned with success. These children are likely to experience success, so their hubristic need is satisfied and natural self-regulation of behavior oriented towards new achievements occurs. These new achievements are an indicator of transgression. It has been described as a positive rationalized expansion. Another possible type of expansion is identified based on similar characteristics and behaviors, but affective and compulsive behaviors are more pronounced in this case. This type of expansion also allows the child to satisfy the “need for growth” and is associated with activities geared towards achieving new goals. It has been described as a type of positive affective expansion. Another model of expansion is ambivalent, which means that the need for growth in the child is situationally stirred up. It is determined by their character, coupled with the situation that they find themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Project of innovational and scientific pedagogical experiment – *Updating the modal and creative potentiality as key competences of 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade pupils by integral cultural expression found in visual arts* approved and referred for execution by the Minister of National Education on June 24, 2014 (DKOW.WEPW.5019.15.2014). The experiment was conducted as part of the cooperation of the Pedagogy of Child Creativity and Expression Department of the University of Silesia with Helena and Ignacy Fick 1<sup>st</sup> Primary School in Mysłówice.

in. Such a child oscillates between adaptation and transgressive objectives. The latter two types of expansion are the apparent expansion, manifesting behaviors that enable the child to draw attention, but have nothing to do with progress. Finally, a completely defensive type of behavior has been defined, referred to as passive orientation. This type of behavior completely dissuades the child from transgressive actions and generally indicates lack of hubristic motivation.

An important assumption (appearing as interpretation of the specification scheme for particular expansion types) is associated with the hubristic need, which, expressed generally by Józef Koziński (2002, pp.118–119), decides upon dynamized human behaviours in terms of positively understood self-promotion. (Koziński J., 2002, pp. 118–119). Such a need is responsible for motivation to undertake tasks – “challenges”; increased greed; evidence of one’s own effectiveness; it facilitates transgressive activities and it may be assumed that it is their driving power. Its nature or force is diverse depending on the child’s experience. Those who build favourable opinions of themselves, associated with the experienced satisfaction of cause will rather tend to confirm such merits and exploit situations making it possible (challenges). Manifestations of this are different.

## **Methodological grounds for the Research**

The empirical material below is the result of studies conducted by Alicja Gałązka, PhD, and M. Łączyk, PhD. The objectives of the investigations were as follows:

- to establish the forms and measures of expansion in the children evaluated as well as manifestations of their corporal-kinaesthetic creativity;
- to establish potential changes in expansion, manifested by children, as well as changes in their corporal-kinaesthetic creativity due to drama applied.

The method of study was an individualized experiment.

Variables: X – drama, Y – corporal-kinaesthetic creativity; kinaesthetic-corporal; y<sup>2</sup> – expansion.

Taking into account the experimental nature of the study, assuming concurrence of particular traits and, first of all, changes in the affected spheres, the following hypothesis was made:

Drama activities will enhance strengthening of hubristic motivation, hence the changes in children’s expansion as well as alterations in the sphere of kinaesthetic-corporal expression (creativity).

**Procedures and population.** The study was carried out from February to April, 2015 in a private, bilingual nursery school in Tarnowskie Góry. It comprised a group of 9 children, aged 5. The first stage was a pre-test in the area of kinaesthetic-corporal expression (creativity). During the second stage, an experimental variable (drama activities) was introduced. Stage three was a post-test to evaluate manifestations of creativity and kinaesthetic-corporal expression as well as expansion forms preferred by the children.

## Test results

Potential indices of corporal-kinaesthetic expression

- harmony of movement;
- agility;
- suppleness, springiness;
- motor skills (large, small);
- precision and flexibility in bodily expression of diverse emotional states;
- narration through movement;
- imagination and kinaesthetic expression;
- sense of balance;

### Points scored by children in the area of expansion

| Score     | Children<br>lp. | Expansion measure |     |    |    |    |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|-----|----|----|----|
|           |                 | PRE               | PAE | AE | PO | OE |
| Pre-test  | 1               | 9                 | 6   | 2  | 2  | 2  |
| Post-test |                 | 9                 | 5   | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| Pre-test  | 2               | 7                 | 5   | 6  | 3  | 7  |
| Post-test |                 | 8                 | 4   | 3  | 0  | 0  |
| Pre-test  | 3               | 5                 | 7   | 4  | 1  | 4  |
| Post-test |                 | 8                 | 6   | 3  | 1  | 2  |
| Pre-test  | 4               | 4                 | 3   | 3  | 3  | 2  |
| Post-test |                 | 5                 | 3   | 2  | 3  | 0  |
| Pre-test  | 5               | 2                 | 0   | 8  | 6  | 7  |
| Post-test |                 | 5                 | 2   | 5  | 4  | 7  |
| Pre-test  | 6               | 2                 | 6   | 5  | 2  | 5  |
| Post-test |                 | 3                 | 5   | 2  | 1  | 2  |



| Score     | Children<br>lp. | Expansion measure |     |    |    |    |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|-----|----|----|----|
|           |                 | PRE               | PAE | AE | PO | OE |
| Pre-test  | 7               | 1                 | 5   | 6  | 3  | 4  |
| Post-test |                 | 3                 | 5   | 4  | 2  | 2  |
| Pre-test  | 8               | 7                 | 7   | 4  | 1  | 3  |
| Post-test |                 | 8                 | 6   | 3  | 1  | 1  |
| Pre-test  | 9               | 6                 | 8   | 5  | 4  | 2  |
| Post-test |                 | 7                 | 6   | 4  | 2  | 1  |

## Synthetic result

The results in randomly selected children (presentation) indicate that drama is a method which, in the case of children showing dominant **rationalised** or **positive affective expansion**, does not alter the mode of their performance significantly. The children usually scored similar values during the pre-test and the post-test and, more importantly, the nature of their expansion did not change.

The group of “selected” children included a child (5) characterized by withdrawal behaviours, yet the post-test (after drama activities) results pointed to specific progress. The evaluation made showed that the pre-test results indicated high ambivalence of expansion with passive and ostensible orientation. In such a case, employing drama could play the role of a “corrective” factor, although it should also be accepted that the minor change “effect” in scoring was accidental or due to some other variables.

What is intriguing are the results of child no. 2, who showed high pre-test scores of rationalized positive expansion, yet it was assessed as one showing “ostensible” expansion (likely to manifest some type of confrontative expansion). Nevertheless, the post-test results showed a lower degree of precaution.

In child no. 3 the results revealed some progress.

In child no. 4 the scores were similar throughout the measures of expansion.

Child no. 6 was described by the pre-test as showing affective expansion patterns, however scored high values of ostensible expansion. Most probably, such a discrepancy was due to difficult explicit evaluation of predilection in the child showing remarkable lability during this period of development. This assumption is also true for other children, other results however, are rather dichotomous.

The results of the next child (7) may be interpreted in a similar way.

Children no. 8 and 9 show a high and also constructive scope of expansion (positive rationalized and positive affective), clearly dominating (considering the scores) the measures of ostensible, ambivalent or passive expansion.

The children participating in the study (thanks to intensification of drama) better expressed their emotions through the body (improvisation), showing also improved coordination, cohesion and fluidity of movements.

Observation of the children taking part in drama also showed that their expression as well as corporal-kinaesthetic creativity increased thanks to the use of drama activities.

## Discussion

The ability to physically represent character and understand bodies through movement and mime is central to effective engagement in drama. Imaginatively derived movement is a natural activity in children who mimic and engage in drama play from a very young age. Drama in the classroom can be linked to those prior ways of doing as long as a safe space is established that provides children with security and confidence of the teacher and their peers. Working on mime and movement activities early in a drama program provides foundational activities and skills that will support ongoing work across the other forms of drama and allow for tools to explore the various elements.

In general, drama activities for mime and movement were used to support:

- body awareness (one's own and in relationship to others)
- understanding of the body and its ability to communicate a story (mime)
- understanding of the body, its parts and their ability to express emotion
- early development of characterisation

Mime and movement activities are often closely aligned with drama games and so they also provide effective warm-up, cool-down and simply fun activities. It is crucial that plenty of time is spent working with children to develop body awareness and an understanding of how their bodies can be used as a powerful tool for communication and expression of their creativity. It is easier to understand emotions when performing a physical activity during interpersonal development. The group of children reading a story and then depicting the scene with toys were better at comprehending the text and emotions presented. This brings us to 'embodied learning'. Some of these 'languages' the body uses are sensory experiences (smell, taste, sound, touch, vision, etc.). They are essential in saving and processing new

information. Touching a soft bunny for the first time is a sensory and therefore physical experience. This sensation occurs in children's hands and is registered in their neurological system. This is a sensation that will stay with them, possibly coupled with an image or smell. The next time a child feels, sees or smells the same or a similar thing, he/she is able to recall the sensations he/she has felt before. Empathic processes can also be attributed to sensory experiences. 'Embodied learning' challenges the formal educational form of presentation in plenary instruction, with little differentiation in the levels of subjects and children generally sitting in rows or groups, at desks – designed to accommodate developing 'knowledge above the neck'. Up to now, children have been allowed to walk around only during very few subjects, mostly the 'playful' classes such as art and physical education. But there is much to be said for a change in these settings. If the physical movement primes other constructs (like language), then learning via movement may add an additional modality and prime for later recall of knowledge. If instructional designers create more opportunities for physical, embodied learning then children may be able to utilize more neural connections -via movement – to aid in recall of new knowledge. The conducted research proved that drama can develop children's ability to express their emotions and knowledge in a creative, kinaesthetic way.

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