

## How is Dance Literacy So Important? Teaching Dance Composition and Motif Writing using Krashen's Second-Language Acquisition = Pure Smart Play

By: [Teresa Heiland](#)

Heiland, T. (2006). How is Dance Literacy So Important? Teaching Dance Composition and Motif Writing using Krashen's Second-Language Acquisition = Pure Smart Play. Proceedings of National Dance Education Organization, Annual Conference, Long Beach, CA, (185-199).

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**Keywords:** dance literacy | dance education | dance composition | Stephen Krashen

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October 18 - 22 2006

Long Beach, California

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## **How is Dance Literacy So Important? Teaching Dance Composition and Motif Writing using Krashen's Second-Language Acquisition = Pure Smart Play**

**Teresa Heiland, PhD, CLMA**

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The purpose of a liberal arts education in dance is not only to teach students about dance, but also to enable them to draw on the various modes of discovery and analysis through dance that we provide so they can go forward with stronger methods of analysis, acquisition, and self-confidence in their lives. The act of using symbols to mark a concept in a dance, or the process of defining what a concept in a symbol can mean for "me," has brought out an awareness of movement concepts very clearly. While there is a clear path towards literacy in dance by having students read a dance score or to understand concepts about dance from symbols that we see or write, I clearly see something else occurring when motif writing occurs in a creative classroom. Language acquisition is happening. While Motif Description is not a discursive language, it is a symbol system that communicates and helps people to become grounded to create, synthesize, and communicate.

Krashen insists that "language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill," but it does require "meaningful interaction in the target language [dance] – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances, but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." My non-majors in my intro to choreography classes grasp the concepts of the Elements of Dance deeply, quickly, and can discuss what they see in other dances very quickly because they symbols have provided road markers for ownership of the language of dance through play. Through play with motif writing in a dance

class, students are learning to solve problems, examine ideas carefully, support understanding with evidence, and incorporate and synthesize information.

For about thirty years, dance educators have been speaking about the supposed benefits of dance literacy for dancers, dance educators, the field of dance, and for non-dancers who study dance in short term courses such as choreography or dance appreciation. Some dance educators have emphasized using self-generated, non-criterion based written and spoken language in the classroom as a way to generate a community of empowered aesthetes.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> A good number of educators emphasize a combination of everyday language and Motif Writing or Labanotation, which provides the framework for unveiling the Elements of Dance.<sup>5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13</sup> Others discuss the importance of using a layered combination of criterion-based everyday language, Laban movement analysis, Motif Writing, and biomechanical/kinesiological language.<sup>14,15,16,17,18</sup>

Brenda Pugh McCutcheon encourages dance teachers to extend the teaching of the Elements of Dance by embodying each element, exploring it, creating with and critiqueing it, writing it, discussing it, and reflecting on it because “the elements—basic to all dance—are also basic to understanding dance, creating dances, and responding to dances.”<sup>19</sup> Because the elements comprise a language that is both kinesthetic and cognitive, and can be performed, written, and discussed, she recommends we use Laban Movement Analysis and Laban terminology as basic dance terminology because they apply to all dance styles and can be introduced gradually according to level of the students. McCutcheon believes Labanotation and Motif Writing should be part of a dancer’s education, and that Motif Writing has broad applications in education as an introduction to Labanotation, as well as for its own value in the creative process. The importance of literacy for the field of dance, especially dance

education, is well supported with theory. The field of dance education could use more evidence to reveal what these tools actually provide our students.

Dance, like a painting or a movie, can be created or experienced without speaking about it, but an arts discipline experienced with analytical discussion of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor experiences is better grounded in academe than one without inquiry. Language is required. Inroads towards communication already exist. Ballet has its French terms for steps and hip-hop has its terms, each to expedite information sharing. These nicknames of, for example, *pas de chat* or *C-walk* provide communication, so long as we know the genre. In each instance we recognize the name of a step; we know we belong to a collective, a body of knowing dancers who share similar cultural interests and goals. We can communicate in our “tribal” language with members of our group who understand us, which is known as a speech community. For example, a speech community can consist of first (second, third...) English speakers and thus be able to discuss dance using the everyday terms of the Elements of Dance. Another speech community might be an international group who doesn’t share the same language, but who share Motif Notation as a way of communicating. Motif Notation represents a second language, or third as the case may be. When we think about being dance literate, or ensuring that our young dancers become literate, what about dance and dancing do these nicknames? They offer an understanding of the culture and milieu of a dance genre, certainly, and we would never want to lose the ground upon which each dance technique or style was built. However, imagine the level of communication, aesthetic clarity,

and empowerment dancers and the field of dance could have were its dance community to possess a common language. Stephen Krashen, applied linguist at University of Southern California, says that ‘communication’ is the main function of language and language is a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages.<sup>20</sup> Certainly speaking in one’s first language, be it English, Turkish, Afrikaans, or Tagalog, is what members in a classroom likely have in common. Specific terms about dance, that we call the Elements of Dance, will readily support a discussion that is more focused towards dance as an art form. Students learn the terms in, let’s say, English that dancers use to clarify what they are doing with their dances and dancing. The students new to these Elements of Dance will gain understanding of this palette of dance possibilities and can use these everyday terms to describe what is happening in dances. Teachers of choreography classes can quite successfully teach choreography classes using these terms of the Elements of Dance. I, and many of my colleagues, also teach using Motif Writing. My hunch was that some students find Motif symbols fun and engaging, as if they are playing a game to stimulate creativity, while others feel somewhat stunned when invited to “play” with symbolic references that are, at once, foreign and feel structured and binding. When I started using motif symbols in my class, sure, some students expressed worry about memorizing them, but my students seemed to know the Elements of Dance faster, would speak more readily about what they were trying to do with movement, and could discuss easily what they saw their classmates were working on and achieving with their dances. I felt my students were much more literate after I began using Motif Writing, by more literate I mean: more able to speak and write about dance, more accurate in their use of language, more apt to be able to discuss what once seemed like an abstract, and more part of a verbal community. The Motif Writing allowed them to be literate in the Elements of Dance, and the symbols offered a new type of second language acquisition that allowed them to communicate dance ideas

with each other, to take notes that had lasting meaning, and they could ask specific questions to their teachers and other members of a larger literate dance community. Bucek explains that Motif Writing, used as a tool in learning, breaks down literacy boundaries, essentially cultural boundaries, and enables dancers to represent the physical in written and spoken form and their intellect into physical form.<sup>21</sup> These were my hunches about using Motif Writing, but I wanted to know the students’ experiences as well so I could understand if my hunches really were accurate. We’ve been discussing dance literacy for ages, but how do we research it.

When I was learning the meanings and functions of Motif symbols, I recall sometimes having great fun, and generating material with playfulness, even silliness, but I also recall instances when I felt pressured to memorize too much too fast. I panicked so that I couldn’t retain the movement generated from using the symbols and my energy got stuck in Bound-Flow in a way that made me feel like I wasn’t enjoying dancing at all. The symbols made me feel as if I were drawing only on the right side of my brain, and my emotions were stuck in a holding cell. There was a disconnect in my learning, yet I still had a strong hunch that these symbols were a foundation to something so important for me. We do need dance literacy, don’t we? We keep saying we do.

Much emphasis in academia has been placed on how students best learn a second language, but we could do more to understand how dancers actually function, experience, and learn using Motif symbols. My goal while teaching was to use these symbols and to foster a balance between creating dance and nurturing literacy. My main hunch was that, as a dancer who lost her flow one day while using Motif symbols, I should introduce Motif Writing in a way that encourages a balance between Free-Flow and Bound-Flow and finding a way to teach literacy that doesn’t feel like it’s separating the two halves of the brain. McCutcheon says it is important to make “aesthetic vocabulary central to your

aesthetically driven curriculum...and each dance lesson must have as one of its goals *to enable students to experience the joy of dancing.*"<sup>22</sup> Joy and play, at any age, are essential parts of a learning process that allows for teamwork, risk taking, creativity, and testing one's ability against others. Play, as an important part of learning, is most often discussed as important for children ages one to three. Daniel Goleman reminds us that play is essential for creativity, and that it never wanes so long as we play, experiment, and take risks. He says four tools are necessary: faith in your own creativity, absence of judgment, offering precise observations, and having penetrating questions.<sup>23</sup> To get creativity going, we first have to pave the way, then gather our ideas, let them incubate or simmer, allow yourself to daydream so your inspirations can flow naturally, put your skills with the Elements of Dance to work so you can shape your ideas, and then be persistent as you polish to the finish. But where does Motif Writing fit in? The teacher has to creatively weave play and work together so it contributes to the gathering of ideas stage. The one thing we should be careful not to do is to overload learners with too much conceptual material too soon. Krashen says we should use Lev Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZoPD) and add one more layer.<sup>24,25</sup> Vygotsky's theory about learning is that there are two developmental levels that determine the learning process: egocentricity and interaction. Basically, we are looking at what people learn on their own and what they learn interacting with others. The distance between what a child can learn when playing alone, and what a child can learn when interacting with others is called the Zone of Proximal Development. Krashen states that the best way to learn language is to always work with ZoPD+1, which means you layer on new language, motif symbols, and concepts that are just above the students' abilities using a meaningful context and a collaborative and interactive model.<sup>26</sup>

I learned how to teach from Ann Hutchinson Guest's text *Your Move* and from using a model

offered to me during the Language of Dance certification courses I took under the tutelage of Dr. Guest and Tina Curran who each direct a Language of Dance Center, one in the UK and one in the USA.<sup>27</sup> When I became a Certified Laban-Bartenieff Movement Analyst, I began incorporating many new symbols and concepts. The LOD framework focuses more on body in relation to space, and while the Laban system uses these same symbols, there are many other concepts and symbols that I learned about that connect my inner being and emotions to the outer world. These new symbols of breath and shaping were where I decided to begin from with my students, my desire being to invite them to feel who they are first and then to find space around them.

## Methodology

In order to conduct my action research of my teaching-learning process, I used qualitative research methods of journal writing using prompts and interviewing. Because I was the teacher-researcher, and the grader, I had to keep emphasizing that I wanted all their thoughts, the happy and frustrated responses, so I could really understand their experience. I allowed them to write anonymously if they chose, so as to protect their privacy if they wished to reveal that they truly didn't like something I was doing. I wanted to gain a student-centered reality. I taught each course introducing the Elements of Dance gradually through various assignments throughout the semester. As I introduced the Elements of Dance, I also introduced the accompanying symbols that represent those Elements, and I continued to bring large flashcard-like symbols as constant reminders of symbols and concepts. At the end of the first semester, I restructured my teaching so that I would go more slowly, as students insisted I went too quickly. I repeated the course and taught with what felt like more clarity. During both courses I gathered student's impressions by asking students to answer some questions

in their journals about their experiences using symbols, their comfort and curiosity with them, and what these symbols brought about for them emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

### **Analysis**

To analyze my findings, I gathered student writing and categorized these by topic. I also created a simple database so that I could cross-reference patterns of likenesses between first and second term, major of study, students with prior dance training, and gender. Findings are revealed in story-telling and anecdotal comments that point to themes within the teaching and learning.

### **Stance of the Researcher**

I could have worked straight from the *Your Move* text, but I also wanted to incorporate concepts of Laban Movement Analysis. For me, my body, and what I feel supports all movement, so I analyzed possible approaches and decided to start with feelings, the body, the center and how it flows to make shapes and lines. What I am feeling in my body dictates where I go in space, so I decided to begin with concepts about shaping. My goal was to encourage dancers who can flow with shaping, breathe with support, and who gradually reach farther and stronger into their kinesphere.

### **Findings**

What really happens for choreography students when teachers incorporate Motif Writing in our classes? Educators clearly have hunches about teaching and learning in the classroom and apply educational theory when structuring curricula. Knowing full well that students experience learning differently one from the next, in part due to biological heritage, preferred avenues of development, formative effects of culture, and the role of tools, symbol systems, media, etc., educators use a broad array of approaches to

activate the varied multiple intelligences of all students.<sup>28</sup> Since 1983, in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Howard Gardner has been giving teaching and learning styles theoretical validation with his concern that our generally accepted framework and understanding of intelligence, which usually validates and measures linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, should include musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, inter-personal, intra-personal intelligence and, more recently, intelligence about nature. He expresses that we have a variety of types of intelligence and each experiences facility with them to different degrees. When brain activity is tracked, we can see that different areas of the brain are used when we are accessing various types of intelligences. As study of the human brain progresses, we, teachers, can continue to explore how our methods of teaching influence our students learning so we deepen our understanding of how dance educates the students who come to us to learn. Through better understanding of our students, we can usefully apply our knowledge to how we frame, teach, and promote our dance education curriculums.

I aimed carefully to provide a course curriculum (See Appendix C) for which Gardner might garner approval. I incorporated visual artwork, poetry, music, motif symbols, concepts about bodies, language about dance, relationships and solos, and artwork and photos of landscapes. All the ingredients were planned, and I just had to share it using my best pacing, attention, and judgment. All the creativity is important to me, but the research is about the Motif Writing and literacy. My main goal with this population of student dancers is not to bring about advanced dance literacy via Motif Writing, but I am aiming to guide students to a level of literacy that empowers them as dance makers and as writers and communicators about dance. Meanwhile their understanding of movement possibilities, such as actions of the body, energy use, shaping, and spatial clarity are explored and become recognized as a large family of movement

possibilities with clear subsets. When I teach using Motif Writing as a thread that ties the Elements of Dance and dance making together into a system, teacher-student and student-student communications are more frequent and empowered. Language use in student papers reveals a lively interplay between intellect and feeling and between systematic communication and metaphor.

As I reveal my findings and analyses I will also intertwine the theories about Second Language acquisition that I learned only near the end of my study, but that reassured me that the approach I was honing was a viable method. Most of these theories are about learning a discursive second language, which the language of Motif Writing can be, but does not have to be to be useful. The important aspect of revealing Krashen's system is that it reminds me that play and work must be balanced together for learning to take place.

Bryan, a biochemistry major who took my class with his engineering buddy, felt Motif Writing helped him cope with dancing which he had never done before.

Working with symbols is great. At the first day of class, we needed something to get us started; these motifs were very helpful towards helping us get a good footing in the class. I like how I can choose different ones to compose a dance of my own style. I also enjoy how I have the motions available to me, instead of trying to make up my own. The symbols also give me some security on knowing that there is motion to use. The symbols make me feel that I can dance with the best of them.

Symbols help us to learn and communicate, to create a culture of communication with common ground, so to speak. Motif Writing has created the means for action for my beginner dance makers. Because of the common language supported by the playful use of symbols, students gather language naturally while they are making their

own dance projects. Communication surrounds the dance making and practice of speaking about dance supports the gradual ownership of a language of dance. My desire is for students to own and use the terms of the Elements of Dance to communicate aloud and in writing, not merely to create a group of dance appreciators, but to empower their understanding of their movement and their movement ideas. A more advanced dancer might label a familiar dance movement a *sissonne*, and a beginner student, or even an experienced modern dancer, might be intimidated by not knowing the ballet term. If the beginner can describe the movement with a language that is neutral to all dance forms--and the ballet dancer can understand it--then we have created dance literacy. Gardner believes symbols are the beginning of building culture. "Symbols pave the royal route from raw intelligences to finished cultures."<sup>29</sup>

Adults gain in complexity and lose the play that they had as children. Adult dancers are quite able to travel the royal path of learning new symbol systems, known as "second order" symbol systems—or in other words, they are symbols that represent symbols—because they are systematized to carry out complex cultural tasks such as performing ideas from the palette of the Elements of Dance. Humans ages five and up are able to invent related symbols, known as "third order" symbols, as they need to communicate ideas in more detail than the second order symbol allowed.<sup>30</sup> Coincidentally, prior to age five, children use symbols playfully, yet, beyond age five, people young and old alike insist on using the symbols accurately to obtain the symbol skills of his culture, and, in a sense, the fun about symbols is over. "...until this time, much of the mastery of symbolization has taken place in an informal, almost invisible manner... [schools are where] children are introduced to, and come to master, the principal notation channels of their culture.' Gardner believes students shift into a more literal understanding of a symbol and, then, the creative experience of informally teasing out unusual associations



and departures is lost to a somewhat prosaic experience.<sup>31</sup> For example, Stephanie, who has danced a lot, would go back to her old comfortable moves and suddenly realize they weren't serving her new dance, so she found that

...working with symbols is very helpful in creating new movement because it was a great resource when I was stuck in a piece of choreography and I could either go pull randomly from a group of symbols or look at the pages of symbols and figure out which ones were meaningful to my dance, or if I had been avoiding using some of the palette of symbols that might support what I am making. The symbols also pushed and challenged me to explore new and different ways of moving. I had previously choreographed in the same patterns, but when I wrote the symbols out first in random order, I was able to create a challenge for myself, which was often a very different way of moving than I am used to. It really pushed me to explore different movement, shapes, and patterns of movement on the floor.

Steven Krashen insists it is better to acquire our communication tools naturally, rather than to force them by over practicing grammar and syntax. I know from personal experience with Labanotation that learning symbol systems can be fun, but also overwhelming and intimidating. My students told me several times that I was going too fast. If symbols are truly the beginning of dance culture, then there must be ways we can unfurl these symbols in a way that feels natural and playful, a way that draws people to communicate. When I went too fast, I got responses like this one from Lisa, "Not everyone sees life in order, categories, and in compartments." Clearly she was feeling pressured. Parallels can be made between symbol acquisition past age five and second language acquisition—culture is communication. How do teachers "create" communication in the classroom without creating a sort of pressure

that happens in many second language classes—a student slumps down hoping the teacher won't call on him/her? Steven Krashen believes the mode of play of the five year old must be intertwined into a structured teaching method in which there is no pressure to memorize, only to practice and explore. Language acquisition will follow; therefore, students may try to learn, but in reality will acquire their new communication tools naturally as they incorporate concepts, creativity, meaning, and play. In Krashen's view, acquisition is the natural assimilation of language rules by using language for communication.<sup>32</sup> (This solidifies my reason for incorporating motif symbols in the classroom without over emphasizing grammar. I keep the concepts simple and let the students play with it and ask questions. But I do offer the symbols in a particular order, so people layer on the symbols gradually. They play with them making them as complex or as simple as they need to express themselves. There are endless ways to use the symbols as teaching tools in a classroom.

Various layers of theoretical understanding of language learning have guided teachers in classrooms. Many of the following are still used in our K-12 schools and in colleges and Universities, as each has its strengths. As with all teaching theories, educators are consistently sharpening their tools and digging deeper to see what variations work better. Krashen believes that some things could be done differently, and when I learned about his ideas, these ideas clearly aligned with mine. I share them today, so we who use Motif Writing to teach can all benefit from the years of study those other fields have provided us.

### **Theories of Language Acquisition throughout history**

1. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" described earlier.
2. Skinner's "verbal behavior," learning occurs from positive

- reinforcement.<sup>33</sup>
3. Piaget's view of learning, including language, as age-oriented stages of cognitive development based on sensory-motor skills gained through interaction with the environment.<sup>34</sup>
  4. Cognitive Psychologist's (Piaget-based theory in which meaning, knowing, and understanding of new experiences take place by relating them to existing cognitive concepts. Second language learning is seen as building up of knowledge systems bit by bit in individual ways until experience and practice create enough of a base for communication to occur.<sup>35</sup>
  5. Discourse theory (Del Hymes) is based on language use. Language development occurs from taking part in communication. The speaker knows discourse theory, grammar and vocabulary, knowledge of rules of speaking and social conventions, and how to use the language appropriately from experiencing environmental factors and receiving positive stimulus.<sup>36</sup>
  6. SpeechActTheory is based on speaking as having its spoken literal meaning and its intended implications. This kind of understanding is complex and cannot be learned early on in language study.<sup>37</sup>
  7. Universal Grammar theory refers to the idea that learning a language can be based on understanding its grammar system and that a second language, having a grammar system, can rely on the grammar system of the first language as a base from which to grow.<sup>38</sup>

Many second language classes have used methods described above and, in, four years of school, only about 5% are retained as second language learners. Most lose interest because they are

processing most of language learning in the part of the brain required to understand grammar and syntax—the part of the brain that “doesn't want to make mistakes.” The right side of the brain (except for people who are left handed due to the sides of the brain being switched), encourages playfulness without fear and playing with meaning. The right brain encourages taking chances, enjoying, doodling with concepts, as it were.<sup>39</sup> A discussion with a student brought me to a fork in my teaching road. My choreography classes of my younger days encouraged mostly right brain play, building, doodling with dance, and playing with meaning because I had had many inspiring classes like these. My classes felt good, but, a student came to me and said, “We made such great projects, but I'm not really sure what I learned.” He was being honest. By not bringing in the activity of the grammar and syntax of dance making into my class, I wasn't presenting an intellectual understanding of the framework for making meaning in dance. Krashen says we should balance the creative exploration side with the grammar side of learning in a ratio of 75 to 25% respectively. Yes, I presented the grammar of Elements of Dance, but somehow the concepts weren't sticking with the students. It seems now, when I bring together Motif Writing with the Elements of Dance and making dance through play, many parts of the brain must be activated because the students catch on very quickly. Sometimes paving new connections in the brain can be painful at first. Sandy noticed something felt different for her, “The symbols weren't really my favorite things, but I didn't hate them. They just made my brain think in a different way than I'm used to.” Synapses fire, bridges are built, and the brain actually grows. So students feel various levels of discomfort with the added responsibility of language, meaning, and creativity happening simultaneously. But they do know, and own, what it is they are learning. I wonder if the symbols connected to the concepts imply some level of importance that this concept was honored with a symbol and students apply a deeper attention to master the puzzle before them.

Krashen and Tracey Terrell a teacher of Spanish in California fashioned a model of their own to frame how they believe language learning shouldn't be thought of as learning at all, but as acquisition, and I believe acquisition is happening when my students are feeling happy and comfortable making dances and learning, or should I say acquisitioning, motif. Their "Natural Approach," as it is called is regarded as a comprehension-based approach because of its emphasis on exposure to input and exploration of watching and listening, and with dance we'd be exploring ideas we are drawn to and ready to do in that moment, rather than practicing grammar immediately and showing we know the concepts.<sup>40</sup> I recall the day I felt panicked and bound with fear of forgetting my dance made from symbols. Instead of memorizing, communication is the goal, as it is the main function of communication. Meaning is the most important part of communication and sharing meaning will happen in a natural order, in its own time.<sup>40</sup> While the student certainly was creative and engaged his cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities during dance making, his lack of ownership of the intellectual material underlying it was a result of my teaching process. I hadn't offered enough ways for him to grasp the concepts in order to be able to speak about what he had played with in movement. We teach in a myriad of ways, and evolve as our liberties to make change allow us to grow. What happens to the field of dance in K-12 if we continue to teach without a common language with which to discuss what we experienced, performed, saw, and learned? My dance majors tell me that they were all raised dancing in studios in which they were silent and they copied their teachers' steps. They asked me why I thought they hadn't learned about the Elements of Dance until college. Change in dance teaching is evolving, but slowly. The teaching methods that grounded in research on brain-based teaching and learning are trickling down to the studios slowly. We are headed for dance literacy, but the road is a long one. Our field is relatively young and the road ahead is bright but long. Through the

creation of frameworks and standards, the field of dance is showing there is much to be learned through experiencing dance, and we are building curriculums that demand the respect given other art forms.

Because dance is a performing art, most of the time in the studios is spent on skill building, and rightly so. Dancers focus on improvement of balance of strength, flexibility, proprioception, musicality; interpretation of emotions and ideas; designing creatively with movement, and commitment to achieving goals required by the teacher. Teachers are most inclined to grade students' performance of bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, musical, and intra-personal intelligences. As with grading creations or performances in any art form, assessment must be handled with rubrics based on subjectivity of teachers and sometimes by students through carefully planned self-assessment. Literature over the past three decades reveals that dance educators envision dance at the center of a core curriculum.<sup>42</sup> Curricula are set in place to spring dance into the schools, but what support might Motif Writing offer the field in terms of revealing less subjectivity in terms of successful learning. I think you know where I am heading. What exactly was that student learning in my class? He was learning so many things that I recall feeling shocked at his question. But dance is faced with not having fully implemented all its support systems and communication tools. Motif Writing, a dance language available to all of us is seldom taught to children because, well, we probably have had little experience ourselves or we learned Labanotation later in life and it felt crammed into us, and not natural. Children who learn Motif Writing under age five will master so fast and they'll use it in a snap. After age five or so, we must have motif introduced in ways that feel natural and fun, so they sink in without any struggle. Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic have been the core of education since the beginning of Roman civilization, and history and science came shortly after.<sup>43</sup> While we cannot predict how dance education will fit into our current

public schools due to socio-economic and political trends, we can keep building literacy so we raise happier more playful children who feel invited to see and support dance in adult life. Dance literacy is the beginning of building a broader dance community because a language community is built on common ground.

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## **APPENDIX A ANALYSIS OF STATISTICAL DATA BASED ON INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENTS**

### **Between First Term Teaching and Second Term**

When comparing the first semester to the second semester, I felt my teaching was much more grounded the second term. I was focusing on not going too fast because students during the first term told me I was too revealing too many symbols and ideas too quickly. During the first term, 13/17 students had a positive experience, 5 were feeling so-so about motif symbols, and only one really disliked the process because she felt there was little emotion and feeling in the symbols. During the second term 13/16 had a positive experience, 1 had a stressful time and felt things were going too quickly, yet also thought it was fun, and 3 didn't really care for it much. The only big change was that people in the second group were more definitive about what they liked or didn't like.

### **Students with Prior Dance Training**

Ten of the students had trained in dance prior to the class. Seven of the dance-trained students liked it because it helped them focus emotions, gave a new form of communication to dancing, and liked certain symbols for how they supported the body use. Three of the dance-trained students "didn't love it, but could see how it could really be useful."

### **Based on Major of Study at University**

To discover whether a major of study might have some connection to the positive or negative experience with symbols, I took liberties and first split the group into two groups, the humanities and arts (humanities for short) in one group and the sciences, math, and business (sciences for short) in the other. There were 20 students in the sciences and 15 in the humanities. Sixteen science majors had a positive experience, with two not having a good experience and 2 feeling so-so. This makes an 80% positive to 10% negative ratio. Ten humanities had a positive experience, with 2 not having a positive experience, and three feeling so-so. This makes a 66% positive to 20% negative ratio. Clearly, the science majors liked this way of using symbols 14% more, and thus were enjoying the symbol use.

If I compare the major of study to the higher SAT verbal and math scores, I found that 2/15 (13%) of the students who scored higher on the math portion of their SATs were not as interested in the motif symbols as compared to 5/14 (36%) of the students who ranked higher on the verbal portion of their SAT exams.

There seemed to be no correlation between verbal SAT scores and liking and disliking the symbols, nor did the total SAT score have any relationship to the liking or disliking use of motif as a teaching-learning tool.

There seems to be some natural correlation between the lack of enjoyment in using symbols amongst the Theater major, and their explanations point to the fact that they enjoy working with their emotions. Symbols didn't represent emotions to them, yet two of dance-trained students commented how using symbols helped them to bring out their emotions more. The approaches to bringing out emotions and expressivity clearly can be found in differing ways.

| <b>Area of Study</b>  | <b>Positive</b> | <b>So-so</b> | <b>Negative</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Accounting            | 2               | --           | --              |
| Film                  | 2               | --           | --              |
| Liberal Studies       | 1               | 1            | --              |
| Theater               | 1               | 1            | 2               |
| Visual Art            | 2               | --           | --              |
| Communication Studies | 3               | --           | --              |
| Engineering, Civil    | 1               | --           | --              |
| Accounting            | 2               | --           | --              |
| Business              | 1               | 2            | --              |
| Political Science     | 3               | --           | --              |
| Biochemistry          | 2               | --           | --              |
| Biology               | 3               | --           | 1               |
| Natural               | 2               | --           | --              |

## **Gender**

While the balance of men to women is certainly far from even, I must pause to make note that all three of the men (100%) thoroughly enjoyed motif symbols. Of the women, 22 (66%) had a positive experience, 4 (13%) a so-so relationship with symbols, and 4 (13%) would prefer not to use them at all. More could be studied regarding gender, but it was clear during class that the men liked the symbols a great deal.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TEACHER'S JOURNAL NOTES ABOUT USING STEPHEN KRASHEN'S SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION MODEL**

In his book *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Krashen clarifies five key hypotheses about second language acquisition:

#### **1. The Acquisition-Learning Distinction.**

Adults have two ways to develop competence in language. Language acquisition is what I discussed earlier, when children under age five pick up language without realizing and they get the rules correct without knowing what they are. Language Learning, on the other hand, refers to the "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules and being able to talk about them.

Choose projects that inspire people to feel self-directed and creative. Offer something not too complicated for their first project, something playful. I used Haiku first. Words we know that are already used metaphorically and dancers turn into "third order" creativity. This gives a positive feeling for students. I introduce a few Elements and motif symbols at this time, and require that they explore these. I don't require that students work on rote memorization of the symbol, but I have it around and refer to what it represents quite often.

For my second project, I incorporate a similar "third order" assignment using visual art as an impetus for creating movement. During this assignment I introduce a few more Elements and Symbols.

#### **2. The Natural Order Hypothesis.**

The natural order hypothesis states "the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order." So when teaching any new language or symbol system, revealing layers of

grammar in increasing usability to the learner is essential.

What order to I reveal them in? Body, Effort, Space, Shape? Check in my notes about what I teach first, second, third. I keep revealing what we are learning, and reminding what we already know how to do.

### 3. The Monitor Hypothesis

Our first language, the one we learned subconsciously, is the support for how we use our second language. It is a voice that monitors and edits how we think in the new language. If there is enough time to edit with the first language, focus on form and rules, the second language can be used. If someone overuses their monitoring, they may not even be able to vocalize anything. If someone under uses monitoring, they speak with errors and communication is not clear. Students are more successful if their monitoring settles between the two extremes.

Offering symbols and having students work in pairs so they can privately discuss the concepts and ask for reminders if they forget symbols. Practice while making dance reinforces the concepts and the spoken use helps create empowerment with the language. Play.

### 4. The Input Hypothesis

Competency in a new language occurs when a student, at whatever particular level of competency he or she may have, has sufficient time playing with and communicating with just a little bit of new language information until comfort level is gained. Rules for use should be clarified after comfort is gained. Production ability emerges from the student and isn't taught to them directly.

### 5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The level of comprehension is raised or lowered based on motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

We have been discussing the benefits and uses of notation in the dance classroom for years, yet many college dance programs don't include much study of this to prepare our teachers for using it. Language of Dance™ center is a place to study.....

In 2001, the revised CA Standards and Frameworks for the Visual and Performing Arts included Motif Writing in the Dance Content Standards for advanced 9-12<sup>th</sup> graders in the section on Creative Expression: "Application of Choreographic Principles and Processes to Creating Dance by notating dances, using a variety of systems (e.g. Labanotation, Motif Writing, personal systems)."

While this is a minor inclusion, I must point out the implication in the state of California Standards for dance. Approximately 30% of the dance content standards for proficient students, and approximately 38% for advanced dancers, described in the CA Frameworks suggest teachers and students are using dance vocabulary, analysis, discussion, aesthetic discussion, meaning-making, and applying criteria to discuss dance. While the NDEO national standards for Learning and Teaching in the Arts does not specifically recommend teaching notation, approximately 21% of the standards suggest we give students opportunity to learn through dance by using vocabulary, analysis, discussion, aesthetic discussion, meaning-making, and applying criteria to discuss dance. This interlocution requires a structure, a culture of dance to support the student's own meaning making.



The standards are a guide for educators, towards excellence in dance education. My research shows that students gain a deeper and faster understanding of dance and its complex structures, meanings, and roles it plays in our lives when I teach the Elements of Dance alongside the symbols that represent the concepts.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **FOUR PROJECTS INVOLVING MOTIF SYMBOLS USED TO TEACH INTRODUCTION TO CHOREOGRAPHY**

1. Haiku study: Patterns of total body connectivity, Shape Qualities, Modes of Shape Change, spatial dimensions and planes, kinesphere, direction, level, pathway and modifying a phrase, Motif symbols and doodles, text, axial & locomotor

Goals: to get students to experience play and flow with creativity.

Working strategies and tools: doodles of movers, Haiku, metaphor, mirroring, journal writing, writing a simple motif and dancing it out

2. Art Cards Study: Shape-Flow Support, Approach to Kinesphere = Spoke, Arc, Carve, Shape-Flow, balance and fall, phrasing, stage space, action & stillness, facings, writing a motif.

Goals: framing a question for a dance that comes from the students themselves

Working strategies and tools: artwork, action and stillness plus transitions, writing a motif and you and a partner dance out your own readings of it and put them both in your dance

3. Relationships Study: Change of support, Locomoting with near and distant body parts, thirteen ways of relating to a partner, use of stage space, aerial movement, turns.

Goals: working with a group of people relating with layers of movement while exploring many ways of relating. Creating a narrative using the situations in meetings.

Working strategies and tools: Relating to each other and the environment by using photos and drawings of people and of landscapes and creating a variety of locomotor styles in which people might travel in various landscapes.

4. Solo or group dance of choice with personalized motif use based on your ideas.

#### ***BIOGRAPHY:***

Teresa Heiland, assistant professor at Loyola Marymount University, teaches Choreography, Conditioning, Pedagogy, Costuming, TourGroup, and SeniorThesis. Prior to PhD studies at NYU, she performed with Moving Target, a Zero Moving offshoot. She was soloist with New York New Music and Dance Ensemble. She taught six years at Grinnell College where she restaged L'apres-midi d'un Faune and studied Javanese dance intensively. Her choreography and her dancing have been seen in China, Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Indonesia, and the USA. She achieved CLMA (2004), is certified in Stott Pilates and Marie-José Blom's Advances, and she researches Franklin Method, body image, and dance-literacy.

1 LMU Drive  
Loyola Marymount University  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
310-338-4436  
Theiland@lmu.edu