Gesturality and technology: restricting or expanding?

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The research conducted focuses on studying how a technological tool like MotionComposer (MC), which "transforms movement into music" (Bergsland & Wechsler, 2014, p.1), shows varying gestural behaviors in people of different age, gender and training, some of them with disabilities.

The technology is twofold: to begin with, it adapts to the individual needs of the persons, improving their quality of life; however, this adaptation is controlled by governments and technology corporations, and generalization, standardization and homogenization are threatening the gestural idiosyncrasies of people. The term coined by del Val (2009, p. 129) is Panchoreographic, defined as "a set of globally spread technological devices, characteristic of the culture of leisure, information and communication technologies (...) that distributes standard choreographies onto the bodies. "

Various types of interaction have been studied with the MC in 170 participants of different age, gender and training, some of them with disabilities. Only two of the six different environments offered by this device have been used. Fields and Tonality were the ones chosen, the first being more causal and the second more random.

Diversity vs homogeneity

After analyzing the video recordings of the various participants' interactions, it has been shown that there occurs a constant dialectical tension between gestural diversity and standardization. These differences do not appear to respond to gender, age or disability factors, but to the training or experience of the individual. Some people, or at some times, the said individuals interact with the device in a very stereotypical way, using a learned and standard gesturality. Generally, it has been found that this type of gestuality is more common in dancers or people with training in dance. Other people subordinate their gestures to what they hear, trying to control the device as if it were a musical instrument. The type of gestures used in this case is exploratory and much less stereotyped than in the previous case. Musicians or people with musical training tend to use this type of interaction. Others explore the device at bodily level, and feedback sounds inspire them to move, thus creating a feedback between gestuality, sound and body awareness. It has been observed that this type of interaction is more common in people with training in dance and music.

Differences in the exploration of the Fields and Tonality environments have also been found. The gestures found in Fields are more diverse (in terms of body part involved, location, novelty, use of space), while those in Tonality are more stereotyped. The gestures in Fields were more discreet, smaller and jerkier, as compared to the more continuous and fluid ones in Tonality.

Gestural idiosyncrasy

Although certain commonalities among some participants were observed in this study, it has become apparent that each person has a rich, irreducible gestural vocabulary of their own, and that making use of a technological tool to which we are not used makes it possible to bring out the gesturality which comprises

part of the individual assets of each person, and which is then liable to become an intangible collective asset.

Changing perception and body awareness

The MC can provide a feeling of listening to our body, and so it can expand our body awareness and change the way in which we perceive sound by promoting enactive perception.

Gestural amplification. Invitation to difference

The difficulty (a certain indeterminism) in controlling sound invites participants to explore new avenues of gestural interaction. Therefore, the MC (technology) extends gesturality and invites escaping the norm and the stereotype. It is not necessary for the indeterminacy to be absolute; in fact, riskier results were found in Fields, which is a more causal environment than Tonality. We believe that a certain amount of control is necessary for the participant to "cling" to the experience, always accompanied by some degree of uncertainty.

Therapeutic, educational and artistic possibilities of the MC

The MC takes individuals, with and without disabilities and of different age and gender, to the same competence level, thus transgressing the musical-artistic expressive possibilities. It allows enlarging the expressive capacity in people with and without disabilities by exposing soft skills not evidenced or socially considered..

References:

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