

Teacher Presence

A brief overview to start you thinking about this topic. You can also access my chapter from the book *Building Skills for Effective Primary Teaching* (Paige, Lambert and Geeson, 2017) alongside this overview.

First Thoughts: When you hear the term *presence* what do you think it means? We use the phrase a lot in teaching and I have seen it written in many report and targets for trainee teachers e.g. *You have good presence in the classroom.... Have more presence and develop your use of voice.* But what does this mean...?

1. Techniques: Look at these teachers in the classroom (real teachers in year 5 or 6 who have agreed to be part of my research study). Would you say, from just these still photos, that they have presence? If so, what gives you that impression? Do you agree with my ideas?

- Open Body Language
- Good posture
- 'Grounded Stance; (notice both feet are equally weighted on the floor)



Open palms are a good strategy for discussion and 'openness'

- Eye contact
- Expressive and enthusiastic
- Palms down are a good strategy for being firm or emphasising a teaching point

Body Language has been (and continues to be) studied in detail and some researchers have looked at this in the context of education. Our body language can say a lot about what we are feeling and thinking about ourselves and those around us. It communicates a lot.

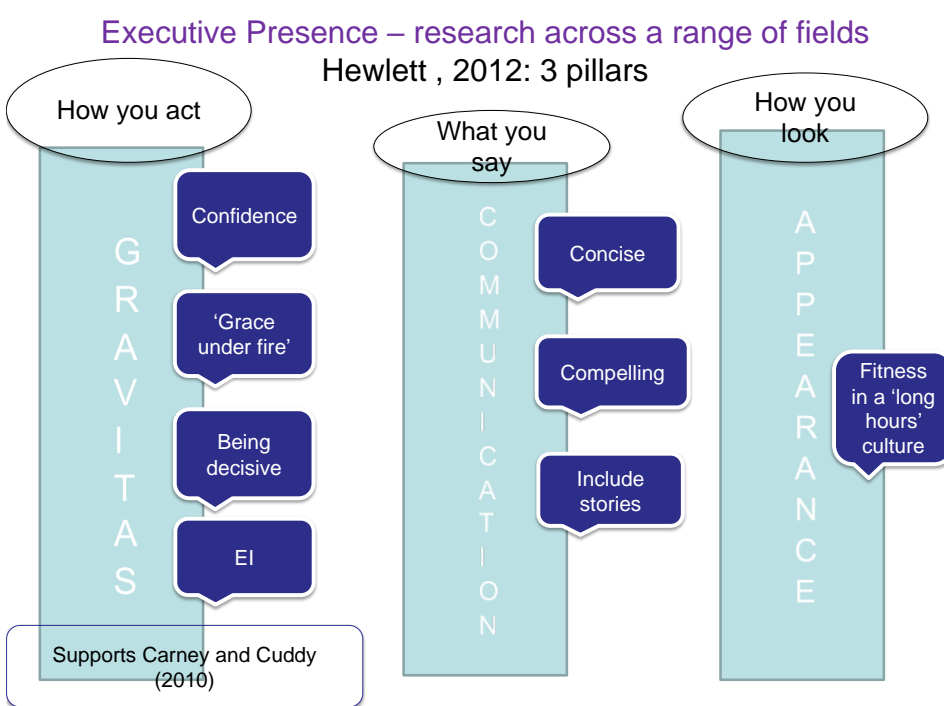
Rosenthal and Ambady (1993) started to look at impressions created in the classroom over 20 years ago and how important body language is to communication and impressions of the teacher. They showed students 3 clips of 30 seconds of a teacher without the sound (so just body language). Students made judgements based on aspects such as 'likeability'. When researchers returned after a period of time when extended interaction with the teacher had been held, the results were very close to the original judgements.

Rosenthal continued this work with other researchers (in a university education environment) and used micro-analysis of video recordings to find some common behaviours of lecturers who were perceived by students to be effective:

- *Expressive in hand, body and face
- *Stand rather than sit (to gain whole group attention)
- *Move around the space
- *Strong orientation towards the audience
- *Relaxed and demonstrate positive non-verbal behaviours (this would be smiling, open palm gesturers, open body language, good eye contact).

Babad, Avni-Babad and Rosenthal (2004).

Hewlett also attempted to identify what presence is in her study of successful executives across a range of fields. This information was from interviews.



The Dr Fox Effect!
If you are finding this interesting, have a look at this You tube clip. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcxW6nrWwtc>
It is a dated study, with some criticism attached, but it starts to highlight how the way we communicate, the techniques we use, can 'win over' (or seduce as Nuftalin, the researcher here, phrases it) an audience. Even an informed academic audience

2. Authentic Self and relationships: It is not just technique.

In my own research on this topic, an important realisation has been that technique is not longstanding. You have to find you own sense of genuine or 'authentic' self. The teachers in my study say that *reflection* has been key for them. They also say that *confidence*, and developing your own style, is important. Amy Cuddy talks about her research on developing confidence through 'power posing' at this clip: https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en (see Carney et al, 2010, below)

Relationships emerge as really important both in my own research and in the literature. Especially in a primary school, eventually technique alone will be exposed. You need to develop Connection with your students; get to know them, demonstrate your care for them in the words you Say and the tone you use, alongside your open body language. For good communication, these things Need to be in unison: what we say, how we say the, and our non-verbal accompanying actions.

The model on the right is taken from a small study I undertook with trainee teachers at the end of their PGCE year.

References:
Babad, E., Avni-Babad, D. and Rosental, R. (2004). Prediction of students' evaluations from brief instances of professors' nonverbal behaviour in defined instructional situations. *Social Psychology of Education*. 7:1 pp 3-33.
Carney, D., Cuddy, A. and Yap, A. (2010). Power Posing. *Psychological Science*. 21:10 pp 1363-1368.
Rosenthal, R. and Ambady, N (1993). Half a minute: predicting teacher evaluations from thin slices of non-verbal behaviour and physical attractiveness, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64:3 pp443-441.

