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**Towards accessing Shakespeare's text for those
with SpLD (dyslexia): an investigation into the
rationale for building visual constructs**

Volume One of Two Volumes

by

Petronilla Whitfield

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Arts Education

University of Warwick, Centre for Education Studies

January 2015

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Finally I must thank the Arts University at Bournemouth for their financial support of this study.

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. The work presented, (including data generated and data analysis), was carried out by the author.

A small part of this thesis, (in Chapter One), has been published in:

Whitfield, P. (2009). Shakespeare, pedagogy and dyslexia. *In*: Cooke, R., ed. *The moving voice: the integration of voice and movement. The Voice and Speech Trainers review 6*. USA: Voice and Speech Trainers Association and University Readers, pp. 254-262.

Abstract

This study explores the premise that some acting students assessed as dyslexic show a proclivity for processing the written text through non-verbal, visually-led mediums. It seeks to develop, and test pedagogical strategies that might cultivate this visual preference in order to facilitate the reading and acting of Shakespeare's text by those with dyslexia. Aiming to ascertain what is meant by the term dyslexia and how it is manifested, there is a focus on practice guided by theory and subject-specific knowledge. The researcher aims to improve the current situation by contributing to the scarcity of research about the teaching of acting students in higher education who are dyslexic, specifically in the reading and acting of Shakespeare.

The review of the literature supports the author's claim that facilitation of the individual with dyslexia can be overlooked in actor training, while, in the teaching of the acting of Shakespeare, there is a promulgation of methods which can undermine the abilities of those with dyslexia.

The methodology is case study, integrated with action research, set within a constructivist - interpretivist frame-work. Twelve acting students assessed as dyslexic are studied, and their experiences recorded. In addition, four action research cycles are instigated, with an incremental development of pedagogical strategies. These focus on the linking of text with art and movement, combining reading theory with acting methodologies, and comparison between Stanislavski's and Cicely Berry's physicalisation of the text. These methods are trialled for their value to facilitate memory, accuracy, interaction with the text, acting, and to inform teaching procedures.

Analysis of the data suggests that the devised strategies were efficacious, to an extent, in supporting these twelve individuals with dyslexia into acting Shakespeare with fluency, whilst developing their meta-cognitive skills, artistic ability and self-belief.

The implications of this research are that these visually-led methods can facilitate the teaching of those with dyslexia, and accommodate a realisation of Shakespeare's imagery. The thesis concludes that further research should be undertaken so that the voices of those with dyslexia are heard, and that knowledge gained can be disseminated amongst the actor training community.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1. Introduction

This is an enquiry that seeks to explore the visual preferences of some acting students identified as dyslexic, in order to facilitate their procedural learning, expressive faculty, and reading of Shakespeare's language. It also sets out to critically examine the author's pedagogical practice in the teaching of Shakespeare to acting students identified as dyslexic and to question how her practice might be improved.

This investigation into dyslexia and the correlating difficulties has originated out of artistic performance practices. However, reconnaissance within the author's familiarised territories of acting methodologies and the various strands of pedagogy for actors, has not rendered sufficient specialised knowledge to adequately answer the questions posed. In order to engage with the extensive body of research surrounding dyslexia, and with a range of theories which might offer explanations about experiences in working with dyslexia, it has become necessary for the author to step outside of performance discourse and cross boundaries into research areas such as psychology, science, education and literary theory. This study is therefore an interdisciplinary study, where the research perspectives extrapolated from diverse fields have enabled a broader understanding of the impediments and strengths presented by dyslexia. This harvesting of theories from cross disciplinary sources - that of 'viewing one discipline from the perspective of another' (Stember 1991:4) and interdisciplinary sources - 'ideas in any field ... enriched by theories, concepts, methods from another (ibid. 2) has engendered innovations in practice and theory to feed back into the contemporary communities involved in the teaching, reading and acting of Shakespeare.

1.1 Background

I am a senior lecturer in Voice and Acting on the Acting (Hons) degree course at the Arts University Bournemouth. The Acting (Hons) degree course at the Arts University offers a three year actor training syllabus, with a balance of text-based practice, physical skills development, devising practice and recorded work. Although I teach several units across the three years of the acting degree, my principle focus is on Voice Skills and Shakespeare.

My formative years of training in acting and teaching, twenty years of professional experience as an actress (including being a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company) followed by fifteen years of teaching in drama schools and universities, lend me a critical proficiency in my subject area.

1.2 Statement Of Personal Values

Gadamer (1984) argues that our inherited prejudices are brought into our interactions. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, originating in childhood as we absorb and incorporate dispositions and structures into our experience, reminds us that our culture, and therefore our nature, is 'what one has become' (Bourdieu1993:234). I acknowledge that my view of reality and truth is situated within the confines of my historical, cultural, gender-based and linguistic constructed experience, embedded through my upbringing, education and work. This background context influences my assumptions.

My formative years of life experience have shaped my moral principles, some of which fundamentally contribute to the drive behind this study.

i) *My Childhood in Africa*

I was born in Central Africa and spent much of my childhood and early adulthood living in various African countries. As I grew up, I frequently witnessed examples of the fact that there are those who are denied the opportunity to achieve their human potential. I recognised that this thwarting of capabilities is often caused by extrinsic factors, such as poverty, racism,

sexism, inequality, power domination, lack of opportunity or cultural restrictions.

Following my experiences as an actress at The Space Theatre in Cape town, (one of the first multi-racial theatre companies in South Africa during the apartheid years in the 1970s), I came to understand how erroneous was the dismissal of individuals as 'inferior', 'stupid', 'not able' or 'not allowed'. My realisation of the iniquitous waste of aptitude, or in some cases, the flowering of it (despite abject disadvantage) planted within me a strong sense of the need for justice, value of the individual, and recognition of ability and opportunity.

ii) My Assessed Learning Disability

In 2007 I was assessed by a chartered educational psychologist at the Arts University, as having a specific learning difficulty, in the form of a severe level of dyscalculia. The evidence included, '... significant weakness in maths skills; the pattern of relative strength and weakness in the cognitive profile between abilities and processing skills; and the significant discrepancies between the measures of attainment and ability' (Roberts, 2007:2). In areas of intellectual ability, especially in verbal comprehension and verbal abilities, I achieved high average to superior scores. The measures used in the assessment report were: Wide Range Achievement Test, Revision 3 (WRAT3) subtest in Arithmetic and the Mathematics Competency Test (MCT). To assess ability and cognitive processing: the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Third Edition (WAIS-III) (Roberts, D. 2007).

I spent my school days defeated by an inability to do mathematics, but countered this block by achieving excellence in the areas of English, Art, Drama and Dance. Having trained from the age of ten to eighteen years of age at Arts Educational Schools (a vocational school for dance and drama) the value given to my artistic capabilities overshadowed my mathematical disability. My teachers' acknowledgment of my abilities resulted in an entrenched idea of self - worth, despite my dyscalculia. In my subsequent career as a professional actress, I did not need mathematical prowess to

achieve some success as a performer. Through my career choice I was protected from my disability.

Conversely, in my life outside of acting, I have had to devise coping strategies of survival; finding ways to deal with the disadvantage of this deficit. In my daily life, numerous situations continue to arise where there is a need for enterprise to manage. Although I do not have dyslexia, my dyscalculia lends me an empathy and concern for those with the apparent blocks caused by dyslexia. I can identify with their feelings of humiliation, fear and frustration, situated in an environment where the majority can do it, but the minority cannot, despite possession of other abilities.

In his *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner 2006: 51) the psychologist Howard Gardner states that there are those who might demonstrate less ability in some of the traditional areas of what has been culturally termed 'intelligence', but who might possess a giftedness in another kind of intelligence. Some educationalists, such as the philosopher in education, John White (in Cigman & Davis 2009: 241 - 259) have criticised Gardner's theory of developmental intelligences, arguing that the realm of the mind differs from the development of the body and does not unfold into a recognisable 'end state', which can mature no further. White opines that to judge an individual's intellectual maturity is controversial, as levels of intelligence can be assessed in differing ways about which there is no consensus. White opines that Gardner's theories are merely '...wobbly constructions with no empirical discoveries as a scientist', arguing that Gardner's variety of intelligences are simply 'the author's value judgements about what qualities he thinks important' (ibid. 245, 254). Despite such critical appraisals, I believe (and have observed) that individuals can demonstrate multiple forms of intelligences and manifestations of abilities (sometimes in attendance with disabilities) which are frequently not recognised, valued or provided with an advantageous environment in which to unfold or grow; (see also Montgomery (2003) and the concept of *Double Exceptionality*, where it is specified that a giftedness can co-exist with dyslexia, and thereby not be nurtured).

Within actor training environments a privilege and credence can be given to those that fulfil prescribed criteria. Those who might not readily fit into the established expectations can be excluded. This limits the realisation of individual capabilities and the development of (what some might consider) 'deviant' voices, individual potential and a flourishing of the human spirit.

1.3 Context

There now follows an overview of the historical context and assumptions which determine my priorities in training methodology for the acting student in the reading and acting of Shakespeare, as held at the beginning of this enquiry. I then proceed to clarify my focus of training interests within this investigation. While only briefly presented below, various methods and ideologies in working with the text are explored more deeply throughout this study.

In my own training as a drama student in the early 1970s, when working on Shakespeare's text, an emphasis was placed on a psychologically - real approach, with a rejection of the perceived to be artificially mannered 'verse speaking declaimed style of the 1940s and 50s' (Martin 1991:32). In accordance with the fashion of the time, I was instructed to disregard the poetic structure in which it was written and to utilise a prosaic style of communication, aiming for a feeling of inner conviction and naturalness, making no adjustment in my spoken style between a contemporary or classical text.

According to the Shakespeare director Peter Hall and voice practitioner Patsy Rodenburg, a decline in a specialised teaching of Shakespeare had become commonplace in some actor training institutions from the 1960s onwards, and a concern had arisen apropos the lack of knowledge demonstrated by some young actors when joining the classical theatre companies (Hall 2003:11, Rodenburg 2002: xii, Rokison 2009: 9). Peter Hall (founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company) stated that the recognition of rhetorical device in Shakespeare's text was not adequately being taught in actor training, nor being passed down from experienced actors to younger actors in the dying repertory theatre system, where Shakespeare has become rarely performed. Since then, there has been an effort by Hall, and Rodenburg (amongst others,

such as Berry 1993, 2000, 2001, 2008, Houseman 2008, Noble 2010, Block 2013, Ford Davis 2007, Carey & Clark Carey 2010, Linklater 1992, Crystal 2009) to establish an actors' classical training foundational knowledge which gives the acting student the 'basic tools to start work on Shakespeare' (Rodenburg 2002: xii).

In order to inhabit both the language and the role presented in the text, the actor needs to communicate 'an understanding of the language and how it works' (Rodenburg 2002:4). In conjunction with structural observation, the vocal delivery should encompass a corpus of technical skills in order to embody length of thoughts, communicate argument and support passionate feeling and elaborate language. This requires physical training to build a dynamic breath support system underpinning vocal resonance and projection, a flexible vocal range to express the richness of heightened language, and a muscularity of articulation to enable a clarity of word.

At the beginning of this enquiry it is acknowledged that some aspects of my approach to teaching Shakespeare are classically orthodox and Anglo-centric in nature, rooted in my working experiences with the Royal Shakespeare Company theatre directors Peter Hall and John Barton (both students at Cambridge University, influenced by George Rylands, and F.R. Leavis and his close reading strategies; this is further discussed in Chapter Five) and the RSC voice director Cicely Berry (who originally trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama). In her comprehensive history about theory and practice in approaching Shakespeare, the Shakespearean academic Abigail Rokison has highlighted the pervasive influence on much of the work that is created at the RSC (and the National Theatre) as originating from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Rokison 2009:30). My pedagogical syllabus is shaped by my training as a voice teacher at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2001/2, in particular by the principal teacher of voice and text and Shakespeare voice director David Carey; in conjunction with leading vocal practitioners Andrew Wade, Patsy Rodenburg, Lyn Darnley, Barbara Houseman, Kristin Linklater and Joanna Weir - Ouston. All of these teachers have been employed as voice coaches working alongside Cicely

Berry at the RSC (except for Kristin Linklater and designated Linklater teacher Joanna Weir - Ouston). In conjunction with their practical teaching, many of these individuals have published material about their approaches to Shakespeare's text, which I have studied (Carey & Clark Carey 2010, Houseman 2008, Rodenburg 2002, Berry 1993, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008, Wade 2007, Linklater 1992, for example).

Cicely Berry's prevailing influence in methods of engaging with Shakespeare's text is evident in the comments of her colleagues and the replication of her work amongst practitioners. David Carey stresses that 'Cic was my great mentor' (Carey in Saklad 2011:60), Andrew Wade asserts 'without question... Cicely Berry is my mentor', and that 'working with Berry was a great gift' (ibid. 253), Patsy Rodenburg records that Berry is 'brilliant at text work' (ibid. 222) and theatre director Adrian Noble describes her as, 'one of the most influential figures not only at the RSC...but in world theatre' (in the Forward in Berry 2001). Berry presents her teacher Gwyneth Thurburn (then principal of the Central School of Speech and Drama) as her mentor and 'a great inspiration to me'. Berry explains, '[h]er work was never narrowed down to the technical details of voice. She believed that one's voice was an integral part of oneself and needed to be opened to express oneself fully' (ibid. 50). Berry was employed at the Royal Shakespeare Company in the early 1970s and has developed her idiosyncratic exercises on exploring Shakespeare's text through working with many of the Royal Shakespeare directors such as Trevor Nunn, Peter Brook, Terry Hands, John Barton, Adrian Noble etc. (ibid. 50). Berry has disseminated her exercises and ideological views towards the voice and text in numerous publications, which have become established internationally as seminal working manuals for teachers, directors and actors. Berry specifies that:

It is not that the actor should for a moment sacrifice his [or her] individuality to a generalised poetic form; rather he [and she] must gather his genuine response and release it through the discipline of the structure – and when this happens it can be very powerful.

(Berry 1993:33)

I have absorbed the foundational training acquired from the practitioners above, and apply their methods in my own teaching, encompassing a scrutiny of Shakespeare's writing. As Hall states, 'Shakespeare's beginning is the word, and his end is also the word' (Hall 2003: 209) while Rodenburg urges the actor to 'serve Shakespeare' (2002:53 - 54).

Rokison has considered the impossibility of defining what might be identified as the authentic rendition of Shakespeare's text. She underlines that Shakespeare's text is not a single entity but a body of writing that has become a 'multifarious beast' contributed to by copious editors throughout the ages, removed from the original author's intent (Rokison 2009:37). In the training I have received, authorial authority is commonly given to Shakespeare as a single entity and it is stressed that the first Folio is, 'as close to Shakespeare as I can get' (Block 20013: xiii), and the 'purity of the Folio text ... reveals the clues for the actor who can hear the shape of the original play' (Hall 2003:22).

Hall deliberates that:

Shakespeare's text is scored precisely, Shakespeare tells an actor quite clearly when to go fast, when to go slow, when to pause, when to come in on cue. He indicates which word should be accented and which word should be thrown away...The actor's task is to engender a set of feelings which will make this textual shape, this end result the true one. This brings us closer to Shakespeare's meaning than any other form of analysis I know.

(Hall 2000:41)

English literature scholar Phillip Davis, clearly understands the rationale for an actor's excavation of Shakespeare's coding, remarking: '... [h]ere 'language' is no longer...merely the words as 'pictures', but means working out of the impulsive laws of the whole underlying matrix, the very shapes and spaces and niches out of which all things come into being in the drama' (2007: 8). In a thick analysis of Shakespeare's writing Davis echoes Hall, arguing that, '... Shakespeare's implicit voice directions to actors ...are a form of slow motion

eye-map for actors' voices that offer deep insight into the workings of the human brain' (ibid. 69).

This view of Shakespeare as author directing through the text can be appreciated if adopting the perspective of reader-response theorist Georges Poulet, who, in antithesis to Roland Barthes's *Death of the Author* (1972) reflects on the remarkable transformation wrought through the act of reading. He suggests that the reader's mind becomes impregnated by the writer, emerging into a shared consciousness. Poulet considers: '[t]his 'I' who thinks in me...is the 'I' of the one who writes the book'... 'I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels and suffers within me' (Poulet in Tompkins 1980:45 - 46). The actor Simon Callow brings an additional perspective to Poulet's theory. In an actor's notes he advises:

you must look for the character located within yourself...another person is coursing through your veins, is breathing through your lungs, but of course, it's not. It's only you – another arrangement of you. Only then will the energy spring from within, instead of being externally applied; only then will you have renewed the umbilical connection between the character and the author.

(Callow 1984:166)

Questioning the actors' methods of examining Shakespeare's text for so called legitimate 'meanings' theatre arts scholar William. B. Worthen conveys bemusement about the reverential observance of 'an absent authority' in the 'ghostly presence of Shakespeare'. He queries why actors do not want to be driven by their own creations, rather than being 'released into a physical freedom in training, but restricted by the presence of the author' (Worthen 1997:140, Worthen in Bulman 1996: 25). For Worthen the supposed significations promulgated as Shakespeare's meanings, are not immanent in the text, but constructions of the individual's making of worlds, through their own ways of reading, thinking, and acting in shared cultures. He proposes that in reifying Shakespeare, the actor impoverishes their own performance,

turning away from admitting their responsibility of their own contemporary culture-making and critical activity (Worthen in Bulman 1996: 12-25).

It is an actor's common practice to attempt to decipher the possible codes buried within a play text so as to shape decisions of intricate detail on characterisation, subtext, motivation and style. As Rokison acknowledges, 'clearly the text and its form are the main tools of the Shakespearean actor and director' (Rokison 2009:3). Additionally, the authority given to Shakespeare and the text demonstrates an aesthetic and literary sensitivity and appreciation for the ingenuity of the incredible language and poetic form displayed in Shakespeare's writing.

Conversely, I also recognise and support the critical appraisal posed by Rokison when she highlights how many actors unquestionably accept and reiterate what Barton, Hall or Berry (and others) proclaim as 'the rules about speaking Shakespeare' as a complete, non-negotiable authority (2009: 13).

Although I teach the fundamentals of Shakespeare's structural form as a component of the Shakespeare syllabus, this classical training does not preclude an engagement with less orthodox approaches and the freedom to embark into non-traditional postmodern performance, embracing contemporary exploration, world cultures and technology, where, in some instances, the text might play a secondary role to innovation in communication, and performance style.

1.3.1 *The actor's presentation of the authentic self*

Significantly the research investigations in this study do not focus on adherence to the assigned 'rules of the text'. Much of my focus centres on a more deep-seated component of what acting can entail, such as the 'confrontation and plumbing of the human potential' (Harrop 1992:81). In an analysis of the psychology of acting Harrop refers to acting as a search for the self, a testing out of many selves, with the merging of the 'I' of the character with the 'I' of the actor (ibid.27).

The phenomenological experience of speaking Shakespeare's text is emphasised by Berry when she declares that the actor must allow the words to act upon them, and, crucially, that the actor must feel true to their own sound in its expression (Berry 1993:30). What constitutes 'truth' has several connotations in acting; notions of truth can relate to behaving realistically within the situation of the play (Harrop 1992: 79) while Hall, acknowledging the artificiality of performance, replaces the word 'true' with 'credible' (Hall 2003:15). For those who study voice and expressive human sound, the authentic 'true' voice is deemed to originate from deep within the psyche and body, 'without artifice, ...posturing...or masking' (Cooke in Boston & Cooke 2009: 174).

Acting practitioner Robert Benedetti usefully illuminates the term *authentic* for the actor, which assists in explaining my concern for those acting students with dyslexia whose expression of an autonomous 'I' is impeded in their work:

...whatever "style" of theatre you are engaged in, your work must be *authentic*. This word literally means *self-authorship*, or *to be the author of yourself* ...Your deepest task is to be *trans-formed*, to allow your total personal energies to flow into a new form...to... *re-author* yourself so as to serve a precise and meaningful artistic function within the demands of your play.

(Benedetti in Worthen 1997:95)

1.3.2 The rationale for the focus on Shakespeare within this study

It is commonly asserted that in an actor training syllabus Shakespeare should play a central role as it can induce a significant advance in student learning due the requirement of intellectual, physical and technical proficiencies (Hall 2002: 12, Berry 1992: 9, Carey & Clark Carey 2010: xvi, Rodenburg 2002:14). My syllabus aims to give each individual the tools to be employed as professional actors in a classical theatre environment and to enable an acquisition of transferrable skills and knowledge which can be further utilised in other aspects of education, performance and life skills.

I believe that Shakespeare's text is a superb tool to work with; his understanding of the human condition encapsulated within exquisite language can illuminate and nourish the mind and soul, whilst engendering a physical impact. 'It makes me shake, this language', muses the actor Ben Kingsley. 'It is so strong, that if I let it push me, it's like getting a little vial of something and whacking it into your arm. It works on you' (Kingsley in Barton 1984:600). In an analysis of Shakespeare's potent use of words, Davis goes so far as to proclaim:

There is nothing more deep, more expressive of the source of human meaning and development, than Shakespeare's language – everything humans can ever think seems potential in it.

(Davis 2007:222)

Moreover, the 'otherness' of Shakespeare's language uncovers a paradox in the work of those with dyslexia. My annual teaching of the Shakespeare unit has revealed evidence that, for some of those with dyslexia, a confrontation with Shakespeare's text can block access to meaning and inhibit cognition, yet can also provoke a unique blossoming of artistic modalities. Aspects of this phenomenon are laid out in the content of this chapter and explored throughout this study.

1.4 The Reading Dexterity Required From The Actor

Being a professional actor requires an advanced skill in reading. The ability to read aloud fluently, whilst responding intuitively to the text and then further communicating that individual response to an audience is situated within a fiercely competitive environment.

Rodenburg, in her guide for actors' voice work (Rodenburg 1997) underscores this threat to employment opportunity, cautioning:

One of the most important skills an actor can learn is...sight-reading...It is sometimes appalling to discover an actor being unable to make sense of a couple of lines. The bad sight-readers missed their break. In one case a very ferocious director took a part

away from an actor on the first read-through because his initial reading was so bad.

(Rodenburg1997: 84-85)

Although Rodenburg suggests that the actor can 'learn' to sight-read, she also accentuates that, 'essentially there is no magic exercise you can follow, except to work on building a habit for sight-reading in your daily routine' (ibid. 86).

In his book wherein he advises actors on how best to gain employment, theatre director Simon Dunmore reveals the harsh assumptions to be found in the professional acting world. He approaches the subject of dyslexia, in audition reading, from his director's perspective:

I sometimes get the impression that some people use a 'degree of dyslexia' as an excuse to justify an indifferent reading. They seem to think that this 'fact' will excite a degree of compensation in the director's final assessment. Well, it won't. Medical science has made great advances in this area –with specially tinted glasses, for instance.

(Dunmore 2004:156-157)

By implying that dyslexia might be used as a manipulative tool to gain a sympathetic dispensation for poor work, by not alluding to the real challenges of dyslexia, Dunmore demonstrates a sparse insight or empathy for those who have a reading disability. In an instructional guide aimed at inexperienced actors, his words are likely to intensify the fears of those with a reading disability.

Dunmore's suggestion of tinted glasses might only be helpful for some individuals. The coloured glasses theory arises from the work of psychologist Helen Irlen (1991). She declared that those that have *Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome* can be assisted by using coloured overlays or tinted glasses when reading (DfES 2004:64). Reid (2009:14) asserts that the diagnosis of

Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome is controversial, that it is not clear what causes it, and contends that this is, 'one of the weakest visual-based areas in terms of research and theory'. Elliott & Grigorenko accentuate that the use of tinted lenses has 'questionable validity and no empirical support' (2014: xv). Singleton (in Reid, 2009:53-54) states that although more dyslexics than non-dyslexics report experiencing visual stress, there have not been many controlled tests on the efficacy of coloured filters or overlays on adults. Conversely, according to Singleton, there have been many tests on children, who have reported visual stress, where the benefit of tinted overlays in reading has been recorded (ibid. 52).

Singleton and Trotter carried out a test using coloured overlays on university students which compared individuals who said they suffered visual stress with those that did not. They then divided the group into half; those with dyslexia and those without any reading problems. They found that only the individuals who were both dyslexic and reported that they experienced visual stress improved their reading rate with coloured overlays (by sixteen per cent). The dyslexics who did not suffer visual stress only improved by three per cent. In addition, the non-dyslexic students involved in the test still read much faster than the dyslexics. The reading rate of the dyslexic group with a high visual sensitivity using a coloured overlay remained the same as the dyslexic group without visual stress (ibid. 53).

Singleton also highlights that some adults and children can be embarrassed about needing to use coloured acetate (ibid. 52). By suggesting the use of aids, such as the wearing of tinted glasses, Dunmore does not acknowledge that some actors would be afraid to draw attention to the fact that they needed additional paraphernalia to read in an audition. Hoping to gain employment, most actors would strive to appear extremely proficient, when being observed by a director.

Voice coach and theatre director Barbara Houseman shows more compassion for those that are frightened of reading, labelling it as a 'demon', that can place an actor into a '...fraught and pressured place'. She describes the reading

expectation for the actor: '[F]luency becomes the only goal and neither slowness nor stumbling is tolerated' (Houseman 2008: 36).

The need for this expertise is heightened when reading and acting in Shakespeare; the classical form demands more skilled integrated components from the reader than many contemporary texts. Royal Shakespeare director Adrian Noble foregrounds those requirements when he urges the actor to:

... read it out loud...It is important to commit to speaking out loud as the voice, the body and the brain respond differently from when you read silently. The energy necessary to deliver a Shakespeare line out loud somehow engages you directly with the language and the emotional and intellectual life of the character, so out loud!

(Noble 2010: 11)

Bakhtin's philosophical and cultural scrutiny of the variety of language dialogues within the novel, can usefully illustrate the artistic workings of reading-acting Shakespeare. His *Languages of Heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981) signifying the discrete but intercepting discourses within a literary text, give transparency to the particular layers involving the speech utterances of the reader within Shakespeare's writing. For Bakhtin the word 'utterance' held significance as 'appropriating the words of others and populating them with one's own intention' (ibid. 264). I can identify that 'utterance' as the actors' challenge.

The *Heteroglossia dialogue* has three forms encapsulated within the text, presenting imbrications of distinct voices. Adjusting Vice's (1979:19) concise description of the forms, to my own interpretation of working with Shakespeare's writing, I translate as follows:

Firstly, there is the written character's dialogue and internal speech. When reading Shakespeare, this becomes the actor-reader's interpretation, including the character's inner thought monologue. Brought into life by the actor's connotation, the words are radiated beyond Shakespeare's original voice.

The second form is in the written speech genre of the language used in the literary piece; I can understand this as a particular style of speaking Shakespeare and recognition of his structural form, such as iambic pentameter, caesura, enjambment, feminine and masculine line endings, antithesis, assonance, alliteration, rhetoric, suspensory pause, and so on.

The third form is the use of a culture's dialect and language, which can be identified as Shakespeare's unusual word invention and syntax, use of prose or verse to denote vernacular character or circumstance, and his presentation of the socio- cultural context of the Elizabethan, Jacobean period. All of these aspects must be meshed together into the reading 'utterance'.

1.5 The Reading Process

In underlining the complexity of the reading process, psychologists Jane Oakhill and Alan Garnham describe the task of producing a model of reading and its language processes as 'daunting', due to the mesh of component skills, sub-processes, and theoretical ideas (1988: 35).

A predominant theory regarding the reading process is the *Dual Route Approach* (Coltheart in Snowling & Hulme 2005: 8). This theory posits there are two routes in accessing the word: the *lexical* or *non-lexical*. The *lexical* route involves the reader recognising the visual appearance of the word, and then finding its representation stored in the lexical memory, with an immediate access to its meaning and pronunciation. The *non-lexical* route means that readers build up the word through relating each grapheme to its phoneme (or cluster of letters) and thus finally, through the sounds of the word, arriving at its pronunciation and meaning.

Alternatively, another influential theory is the *Connectionist model* (Plaut in Snowling & Hulme 2005:24-26). This theory attempts to depict the co-ordination of processes and representations involved in reading aloud, lexical tasks and learning. The basic components are the three units of orthography, (written form), phonology (spoken form) and semantics (meaning), making a triangle, with other hidden, and unnamed units surrounding them. These units

are connected through an architectural neural network, continually connecting and firing together, encoding internal representations and outputs. This model is also involved in learning. During the procedure, there can be a slow build-up of connections, increasing in accuracy and strength, leading to skilled performance.

A description of the practical act of reading is summarised in the following passage. According to Crowder & Wagner (1992:10) when reading, our eyes sweep across the page in movements called saccades. In between each saccade, our eye fixes on the print and can take in approximately two words per fixation and about ten letters to the right beyond the immediate eye span. As we see each word, we recognise and decode the phonemes, access meaning and comprehend the context (Mayer 2003:33). To make constructions of meaning as we go, we have to remember the beginning of the sentence and hold that within our short term memory until we have collected all the information within the whole sentence (Underwood and Batt 1996:3). Sometimes the eyes move backwards briefly, (*regressions*) if we have not comprehended, although this is not entirely understood (Raynor, Juhasz & Pollatsek in Snowling & Hulme 2005: 80). As we read, we use the *phonological loop* to convert the words into an immediate internal sub vocal representation so the information is not forgotten and can be transferred from short term memory into working memory before being put, if required, into long term memory (Baddeley 2007:16). A specialist in education and memory, Milton Dehn (2008:15), relates that over the past thirty years psychologist Alan Baddeley's model of the *phonological loop* has been heavily studied, culminating in evidence that support his theories. Baddeley's hypothesis on working memory and the *phonological loop* is commonly alluded to in the literature on dyslexia (Mortimore, 2008, Reid, 2009, McDougall, & Donohoe 2002, Everatt, & Steffert 1999, Palmer 2000, Rack 1985, for example).

The proficient reader-actor manages this process with ease (although using a vocalised version of the *phonological loop*) adding additional intricate layers, through prosody and autonomy of expression. A technical knowledge of vocal

dynamics (Crannell 1999:235) with choices of the manner of pause, tempo, intonation, pitch, volume and emphasis, underpins the dialogic voice.

1.6 The Problem

It has become evident to me that in actor training environments, in both university and drama school settings, there are some individuals who have difficulty in reading without effort, and physically articulating and processing language and speech sounds. This can be in conjunction with other characteristics, such as distractibility, disorganisation, anxiety, and physical awkwardness, despite their possession of literacy, intrinsic motivation, athletic movement skills, acting talent and intelligence.

My initial introduction to these perplexing features, (displayed by some individuals), was when I was teaching in the drama schools in London. Although my training as a voice teacher on the Voice Studies postgraduate course at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama had specialised in methods of textual communication, specific guidance on how to assist those with reading challenges such as dyslexia was not included in the course syllabus. Although I gained the pedagogical knowledge to build technical prowess in spoken communication of the words on the page, I had no tools, nor knowledge of underlying theory to facilitate dyslexic barriers.

The obstacles blocking some individuals with dyslexia from being able to contribute freely to planned sessions on text, raises pedagogical problems for the teacher; especially located within the larger student cohort. When conducting Shakespeare workshops, Stredder (2004:128) relates: ‘...I was taken by surprise, having failed to anticipate what differences there might be in a class and how they might impact on the work and the needs of individuals ...you may find...that a lively student chosen to read something aloud is dyslexic and cannot sight read’.

This pedagogical conundrum emphasises issues about student and teacher anxiety, placing the individual in a vulnerable position as they are unable to fulfil tasks amongst their peer group. The teacher lacks the expertise to support

the individual, enhancing a depression of ability in the student, while promoting feelings of inadequacy in the teacher.

My subsequent research investigations have revealed a paucity of literature, theory or knowledge in pedagogical understanding, inclusive support or training initiatives for actors with dyslexic difficulties. (I am talking here about practical actor training, not the Disability Learning Support offered to students in higher education institutions). Moreover, since I began this PhD study, Leveroy has also recognised this gap in information, and has embarked on a PhD study on how to support individuals with dyslexia in actor training and in the acting profession (Leveroy 2012:89). I have considered her publications on the subject in the literature review in the following chapter of this study.

When peer-reviewing an article I have written on this subject (Whitfield 2009) wherein I describe some of my students' reading difficulties, Professor Hague, director of the BFA Performance course at Auburn University Alabama remarked (2009):

The author rightfully states that it is becoming increasingly common to find dyslexic students in our classes. Instructors are not, in general, prepared to deal with the special needs of these students and there is a limited body of research on which to draw in order to facilitate and empower these actors when they come to us for training.

The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, (CEDAR - based at the Institute of Education at Warwick University) in their Dance and Drama Awards Strategic Review (Neelands et al 2009:61) mentions that dyslexia (and dyspraxia) was the most 'common concern' in disability amongst the 'exceptionally talented' students (ibid. 4) who had won a scholarship for conservatoire performing arts training.

Montgomery (2003) has drawn attention to the need for specialist provision for those with 'double exceptionality', who are highly gifted but with a disability, (such as dyslexia), and argues that dyslexia is one of the most common forms of double exceptionality. Their abilities not being perceived and adequately

catered for, risks grave educational outcomes for the talented dyslexic (ibid. 43).

1.6.1 Reading Shakespeare in the contemporary environment

The readability of Shakespeare for the modern young person can present uncharted terrain. At the beginning of the Shakespeare unit, my acting students commonly relate that their school experience of studying Shakespeare was restricted in scope, and that many of them found Shakespeare's writing incomprehensible.

The CEDAR report from Warwick University, undertaken for the Royal Shakespeare Company (Strand 2008) tells us that 46% of Year nine and ten students thought that studying Shakespeare was boring and that 49% found Shakespeare's plays difficult to understand – the answers gathered in questionnaires collected from ten secondary schools.

Amongst my acting students, there are some that can read effortlessly, but still find Shakespeare's meaning hard to grasp. Hall (2003: 10) deliberates that in another two hundred years it is likely that Shakespeare will 'be only faintly visible' and will have to be translated, as our human circumstances, cultures and language transform through the passage of time.

English scholar Simon Palfrey ruminates on how Shakespeare's '... language remains strange and difficult no matter how familiar we become with it' (Palfrey 24 – 25). He advises that the reader should:

... take the words as they are, in the order they are given and with the referents they evoke, and make of it what we can...there is not a word in Shakespeare that is not doing just what he wanted.

In their research disseminations psychologist James L. Keidal, literature scholar Philip Davis *et al* (2013) have labelled Shakespeare's language as a 'neurological tempest' because of his surprising idiosyncrasies in idiom, syntax, ellipsis, word omissions, contractions and word order. In their

investigations into the activation of differing areas of the brain when reading Shakespeare, Keidal *et al* found that Shakespeare's shift in the linguistic domain triggers an alteration in the neuroanatomical domain, such that brain networks involved in processing non-literal aspects of language are turned on (Keidal *et al* 2013). Davis emphasises how Shakespeare's frequent shifts of grammatical function can excite the imagination, but also deviate from expectation and conventions; for example where the adjective is energised into a verb, such as: 'him have you *madded*' (Quarto 4.2. 40 - 44) or there is a change of a noun into a verb: 'Nay *godded* me indeed' (*Coriolanus* 5.3, 10-11) (Davis 2008:267 – 268). Davis suggests that such functional shifts produce 'a sudden electrical charge in the brain by not simply going along with an explanatory language ... but getting closer to the very roots of sudden mental-verbal formation...more primal in meaning-making' (ibid. 267). Although such language adaptation is 'electrical' for some, for others who are less used to reading in the Shakespearean style, it can become nonsensical.

As chronicled in Winston (2010: 102) Shakespeare's 'intense and beautiful' dramatic language can be the very thing that alienates the young reader. Issues of class, exclusion, and power are historically entangled with the reading and ownership of Shakespeare and Stredder (2004:18) cautions that 'mastery of Shakespeare's language is associated with cultural exclusivity'. These aspects all increase the barriers for the reader with difficulties in accessing the words.

1.6.2 The current situation

For some individuals, additional hurdles remain in place, when endeavouring to find their way into the text. The difficulties I describe below are exhibited by the individuals who have been assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist either at the Arts University or at school before coming to university. This is despite undergoing reading practice in various forms, in acting and voice classes over a two year period. These difficulties reveal themselves across much of my syllabus of voice teaching when dealing with forms of language, (sight-reading, phonetics, accent study, public speaking,

articulation), but become particularly noticeable when working on Shakespeare, with the additional pressure of unusual language and heightened performance.

I am referring to the act of reading classical text aloud, in a variety of situations such as within the larger cohort of the class, in voice exercises, scene rehearsal or alone in a tutorial situation. Moreover, these word difficulties can permeate *beyond reading*, into the acting and *speaking* of the text in performance, such as: the ability to process sounds received aurally, adapt an accent or one's speech from a habitual model, break out of embedded intonation patterns in the speaking of the text, dual task through speaking the words while physically doing something else, and the precise formation of the syllables within the words. It is apparent that some individuals have an inability to read aloud, with a smooth unbroken flow without regular hesitant stumbling and insecurity. The individuals explain that sometimes this is because they have forgotten how to pronounce a word, do not recognise the word, do not understand the meaning of the word or the context, have to process the word letter by letter, the small words seem to swim about, or the print appears as meaningless marks on the page. In some cases, they cannot explain or understand why they cannot read the words within the given situation.

1.7 What Is Meant By The Term Dyslexia?

I do not mean to merge 'reading difficulty' or 'dyslexia' into a single phenomenon. I understand that there are multiple dimensions to these terms, (as examined by Stanovich 1994). My study is rooted in the desire to gain more insight into these terms and those identified as having 'reading difficulty', or labelled as 'the poor reader with high or low IQ', or 'dyslexic' (Stanovitch 1988, 1994, Ellis, McDougal & Monk 1996, Elliot & Gibbs in Cigman & Davis 2009).

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek. 'Dys' means difficulty and 'lexia' refers to words or language. Labelling an individual as 'dyslexic' is a contentious area. There is an unbounded discourse of descriptions, theories

and explanations for and against the concept and label. In spite of extensive research, the suggested causes, identification and approaches of support for those identified as dyslexic remain diverse and sometimes conflicting (Nicolson & Fawcett: 2010:1). The very existence of dyslexia as an identifiable construct is questioned by some professionals.

Professor of education Julian G. Elliott and educational psychologist Simon Gibbs go so far as to describe the assessment of dyslexia as akin to reading one's horoscope as 'there will be some elements that seem to fit' (Elliott & Gibbs 2012). They suggest that dyslexia could be a social construction – (the individual becomes disabled through the social construction of dyslexia as a disability), and speculate that the idea of dyslexia persists, based not on scientific concepts but on power struggles and the need for 'another'; the literate versus the illiterate. By estranging the 'other', the educators deny accountability for their own poor teaching (Elliott & Gibbs in Cigman & Davis 2009: 124). Psychologist Keith. E Stanovitch (1988: 602) suggests that the dyslexic has a more severe phonological deficit than the 'garden-variety poor reader' but underlines that the poor reader is likely to also have some kind of phonological deficit. The psychologists Ellis, McDougal and Monk (1996) failed to find striking differences between dyslexics and other reading-aged matched groups of poor readers in a battery of tests assessing a range of reading, visual and phonological processing. They concluded their study by questioning whether poor readers with high IQ measures (thereby identified as dyslexic) should be investigated apart or taught differently from the ordinary poor reader, whose difficulties might arise from lower intelligence or poor education (ibid. 53).

Within my own teaching domain, I have sometimes been puzzled by the shadowy line drawn between the (dis) - abilities of students who have been assessed by an educational psychologist as 'definitely dyslexic' or tell me that they have been told that they are 'border-line dyslexics' or 'not dyslexic enough'. Keith Stanovitch, Julian Elliott and Professor of Development Disabilities Elena Grigorenko recommend dropping the term altogether as

there is no scientifically proven bounded understanding of what dyslexia actually is (Stanovitch 1994, Elliott & Grigorenko 2014: 181).

The report on dyslexia written to the Secretary of State by the educationalist Jim Rose attempts to address this argument, in his definition points:

...dyslexic difficulties are best thought of as existing on a continuum from mild to severe, rather than forming a discrete category. Until recently, a child was deemed to either have or not have dyslexia. It is now recognised that there is no sharp dividing line between having a learning difficulty such as dyslexia and not having it.

(Rose 2009: 34)

While there are over forty definitions of dyslexia (Mortimore 2008:51) Nicolson describes the complexity of defining the condition accurately, remarking that many definitions concentrate on a reading difficulty which is a 'learned skill' affected by the literacy learning background, but could also be the symptom of other causes (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010:33). Rod Nicolson and Angela Fawcett (psychologists with a research specialism in dyslexia) have recently outlined their own definition based on a description of cause (2010: 221-222). It is as follows:

Developmental dyslexia is one of the developmental disorders characterised by impaired functioning of the procedural learning system. The key diagnostic indicator is impaired procedural learning in language areas, leading to specific difficulties in reading, writing and spelling. Early problems will emerge in terms of implicit awareness of phonological rules, but problems will also arise in learning other non-explicit linguistic regularities, including orthography and morphology. Phonological difficulties, motor difficulties, automatization difficulties, and early speech difficulties frequently occur in dyslexia, but these are not the defining characteristics of the disorder. Children with dyslexia will normally show dissociation between aspects of their procedural learning and those of declarative learning.

1.7.1 Disputed terminology

The education and dyslexia specialists Gavin Reid (2009), David Pollak, (2005) and Tilly Mortimore (2008) have expressed their frustration that some still believe dyslexia to be a reading difficulty only (correspondence January 2011). They recommend using the term, 'student with dyslexia', as an ethically acceptable title to describe the individuals that I am concerned with. McLoughlin & Leather (2013) reject the term 'people with' or 'people who have' dyslexia, as having medical connotations, and prefer to use the terms 'dyslexic people' or 'dyslexic' (2013:6). Therefore, to avoid a cumbersome, lengthy phrase such as 'student with difficulties with words in reading, speaking or listening', I shall interchangeably use the titles of 'student with dyslexia', or 'dyslexic student', or 'student assessed as dyslexic', depending on the context or fluency of sentence construction.

1.8 The Initiator of This Study

It was the experience of working with Dave, a student assessed as dyslexic, in 2007/8 at the Arts University, which impelled me into embarking on this PhD research investigation. The task of attempting to facilitate Dave's capabilities (undermined by his dyslexia) and my witnessing of his metamorphosis into an authoritative performer, had a tremendous impact on me.

In voice and acting class during the Shakespeare unit, in reading exercises, the group work would slow to a halt as Dave would stumble through his reading of each line. Endeavouring to build his confidence, I would side coach, prompting him with the pronunciation or meaning of the words, as he wrestled with reading them. Any acting ability Dave might have possessed was masked by his reading issues. Despite my guidance, he could not seem to hear or retain my explanations.

I noticed a significant improvement in his reading when we worked on the text using the Cicely Berry inspired deconstruction methods (Berry 1993: 149,

Berry 2001:99). Berry's system, which entails the whole group working in a circle, reading the text round in sequence, word by word, then punctuation mark to punctuation mark, then sentence to sentence, helped to break the text down for Dave, so he could grasp an overall comprehension of the piece (although a discomfort and lack of fluency prevailed). Further progress developed when the group physicalised the piece, line by line. As they spoke the text, each student used physical actions to express the core of meaning, or feeling of the line, as they perceived it. Getting the words into his body/mind through the physical actions meant that Dave could advance his reading competency for about a paragraph without stumbling. However, once he tripped on a word, his fluency crumbled and the former tortuous pattern returned. His body and self-expression became wracked with effort.

I was therefore amazed by a performance Dave gave of a Shakespeare sonnet (*Number 17*) in a voice class presentation assignment. The students had been asked to perform a Shakespeare sonnet in their chosen style. Dave's interpretation was magnificent in contrast to his previous efforts in class. He had concocted his own mode of performance, which appeared to be a kind of mind - map - in- action.

Dave placed large cards all over the stage in set locations. These cards had key words from the sonnet written on them, customised in design, according to their meaning. As Dave spoke the sonnet, he ran to each appropriate card and held it up to the audience, as he uttered each separate chunk of text. He used the cards in a choreographed physical sequence, to further inhabit Shakespeare's meaning.



Figure 1.1 '*stretched*
metre of an antique song'

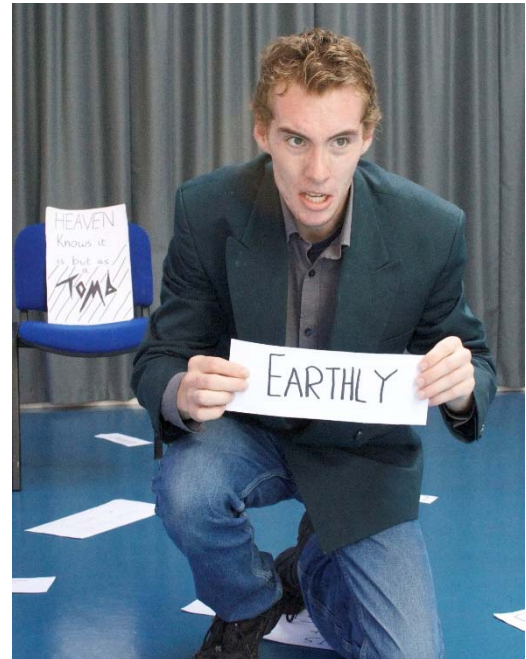


Figure 1.2 '*ne'er touched*
earthly faces'

For example, when Shakespeare had used the word *stretched*, Dave had a folded-up card, with the word *stretched*, penned in elongated print, which he gradually revealed, extending in concertina fashioned pleats. The word *heavenly* was written on a sign placed upstage and then, when spoken, was held high above Dave's head, whilst *earthly* was located and enacted downstage, on the floor. Antithesis was made distinct by variation used in graphic style; *heaven* was etched with a light pressure pen, and in contrast, *tomb* was embellished in heavy, bold graphics. The phrase *not half your parts* was written on a half shaded piece of paper, thereby signifying the *half*. For the phrase *hides your life*, Dave had folded a piece of paper in two, with the word *life* hidden within it. When speaking the phrase, Dave opened and closed the paper, briefly revealing and then hiding the word *life*, using swift hand movements. The words *beauty* and *graces* were words that Dave felt were written from Shakespeare's heart, and therefore (he later explained to me), he decided to tuck them into his inner jacket pocket and produce them, as he spoke the words, as though 'from his heart'. During the words *live twice*, Dave presented a card with *live* written on it twice, on the front and back of the paper,

which he flicked twice as he spoke the words. The word *scorned* was presented on a yellowed, aged piece of paper, as Shakespeare had stated that his words would be *yellowed with age*.

The whole sonnet was performed in a semiotic dance of body, spoken word and signifying cards. The written word signs appeared to be thoroughly grafted with Dave's visceral response, physically and symbolically in utterance. I was astonished by the strength of Dave's performance. He delivered the sonnet with a freedom, hitherto unseen in his work. As his teacher, I found myself riveted and emotionally moved. His seemingly naive, but thickly-layered communication revealed his comprehension of the words, in tandem with a fluency and original performance style.

In analysing its efficacy, I realised that Dave's method ran in parallel with Berry's method of the psycho-physical – *finding the action in the words* (Berry 2001:73). Employing a highly visual focus, Dave was using his written words as a kind of physicalisation, embodying Shakespeare's meaning through his signs which were skilfully manoeuvred into expressing the content very exactly, living through his mapped visuospatial brain images. He was giving his imagery to the audience in a multi-sensory manner. It was led by the visual, but also worked kinaesthetically and aurally. Reflecting on what I had witnessed, I tried to analyse what cognitive processes Dave had utilised, how he had unblocked his speaking of the text, and the function of his style of performance. I recognised that his methods were linked to his dyslexia, but the underlying reasons were beyond my learning.

Reid and Came caution that those with dyslexia can develop a damaging low self-esteem by being continually positioned in a failing role (2009: 201). They emphasise that if the environment is not conducive for the individual's learning style, it can curtail potential. In classes, when following the traditional reading text agenda, Dave's ability was hidden. However, when working in his chosen modalities, Dave released his aptitude. In addition, it appeared that that the

(dis) – ability of dyslexia contributed to an engendering of an innovative performance style.

1.9 The Overall Aims of the Study

- To remove the barriers entrenched within my teaching practice for those with dyslexia, when engaging with classical text, (Shakespeare).
- To acquire a deep knowledge about the theories of dyslexia, in order to inform my pedagogical support for my students with dyslexia.
- To familiarise myself with the range of weaknesses and strengths of some individuals with dyslexia, and how these might be utilised or by- passed.
- To promote an autonomy in engaging with Shakespeare’s text for those with dyslexia.
- To encourage those individuals with dyslexia to construct meta-cognitive learning skills and personal strategies to enable their reading, acting and, accessing of information from the text, (in this case Shakespeare).
- To provide my students with dyslexia with tools to become professional actors.
- To support the development of an artistic language of performance; in particular, creative expression originating from processes used through having dyslexia.

1.10 My Hypothesis

In this study I intend to examine the proposition that for some acting students identified as dyslexic, a visual construct approach may greatly assist them in accessing the content of the text and pronouncing the words within the text. Using Silverman’s (2005: 87-8) analogy of looking through a zoom lens, I have narrowed my enquiry down into examining the efficacy of drawing,

constructing and the utilisation of visual structures to activate a multi modal channel into the reading, acting and embodiment of Shakespeare.

1.11 My Key Research Question

1. Does the use of visual constructs facilitate acting students with dyslexia in the reading and acting of Shakespeare?

1.11.1 My sub-questions

2. How might I change my pedagogical practice in the teaching of Shakespeare and voice, to support the visual learning strengths of some acting students with dyslexia?

3. Can the imprecise articulation of some acting students with dyslexia, be assisted by the drawing or physicalisation of concept symbols to represent the sounds in speech?

4. Does the viewing of images made by others, have as much impact on the acting student with dyslexia, as images made by themselves

1.12 The Pilot Study – ‘Sensing Shakespeare

In 2009, at the start of this study, I won a Teaching and Learning Development Award of £3,500 from the Arts University. This was to enable a project I had planned to support my students with dyslexia, through the building of a computer tool. Using a Shakespeare sonnet as a holding form, I wrote a forty minute programme of exercises, exploring the facility of the computer to work through Shakespeare’s text, with the aim of enabling the reading and exploration of the text for those with dyslexia.

The rationale for this tool was:

- The individual can work in private, thereby removing the potential stress of peer judgement.
- It can be taken in small steps, without overloading of the learner’s short and long term memory potential.

- There is no time limit barrier to the use of this tool.
- The student can move from a learned helplessness formed through a history of negative experience into taking control over their own learning.

1.12.1 Building the computer programme

I entitled the programme *Sensing Shakespeare*, playing on the homophonic implications around the word 'sense'. The building of it involved a cross - disciplinary team of students and practitioners in the fields of photography, animation, digital media, illustration and acting. Every image was uniquely created for the programme, except for the portrait of Shakespeare. Before the commencement of this study, when writing the content of the programme, I had consulted the opinions of acting students with dyslexia, and studied the literature on dyslexia. I drew from acting practitioner methodologies, such as Linklater (1992), and Carey & Clark Carey (2008), and endeavoured to address some of the theories of dyslexia through the exercise activity. In addition, Vygotsky's theory of the *Zone of Proximal Development* provided an underlying explanation of process and model of staggered stages of support. By the term, Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky meant:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation.

(Vygotsky 1978:86, cited in Tharp et al 1988:30)

A complementary exercise was developed from the computer source in the form of a card activity. There are eighty-two cards, (postcard size), of words and images taken from the programme, which make up Shakespeare *Sonnet Number 65*, and can be arranged as a storyboard representing each line of the

sonnet. As an addition to the card and computer programme, the images and words forming the storyboard were printed onto several wall posters.



Figure 1.3 '*summer's honey breath*': example of the representation of the text through a visual metaphor created for the storyboard. (Image: Nick Franklin, photograph: Dave Powell)

1.12.2 Limitations of the computer tool as a research aid

Sensing Shakespeare is a small-scale instructional model, with a pre-conceived structure. During its construction, the creative capacity of the exercises for the user became restricted due to technical limitations, and financial restraints. When the opportunities for participant extemporisation were reduced, I was concerned that the level of the exercises might be too reductive and simplistic to appeal to an adult student.

For the purposes of my research, I realised that the value of the tool as an investigatory method was limited; its content was pre-determined, rather than evolving out of action research created with the participants. Additionally, it was conceived only as a possible support for the live experience of the actor performing within the group.

1.12.3 Participant response

Every participant was given a copy of the CD of *Sensing Shakespeare* to work through and to give feedback on. Despite my own doubts about its efficacy and intellectual level, their responses to the programme, given in writing, were enthusiastic,

The tool, created at the beginning of my research, played a minor role in my investigation. However, it provided a launching platform into the research, for myself and my participants. It set into motion my realisation of the importance for the individual with dyslexia to discover their own ways into the work, to have an autonomy over their learning process, rather than being a recipient of a pre-constituted method, with an anticipated end product. Furthermore, some of the participants have drawn particularly from the visual aspects used in its content. This is referred to throughout this study.

Reference to the Appendices: In Volume Two, Appendix Two, pages 332 - 351 there are examples of the exercises and underlying theories that make up the programme of *Sensing Shakespeare*, an example of a participant response to the programme and information on a conference presentation relating to the tool. A copyright CD Rom of the programme is placed in a pocket on the back cover of Appendices Volume Two.

1.13 Overview of The Structure of The Thesis, (brief summary)

Chapter one: presents the background, problems, aims, questions, and the rationale underlying my enquiry. It describes the reading process and specific demands on the actor in reading Shakespeare. The subject of dyslexia is introduced, and the challenges it presents, especially in actor training. It reports on the individual with dyslexia who inspired this study. Finally, there is a description of the pilot study.

Chapter two: reviews the literature across the areas covered in my study: actor training and pedagogical scholarship, teaching acting students with dyslexia, acting Shakespeare and the dominant theories of dyslexia.

Highlighting the multi-faceted problems, and identifying the current gaps in knowledge, it provides a theoretical and contextual background to my fieldwork.

Chapter three: this is in two sections. The first section provides an account of the philosophical assumptions and theoretical framework underpinning the enquiry, (interpretive constructivism), and the rationale for using a case study and action research methodology. The second section provides the details of the research design, including matters concerning validation, anonymity and ethics.

Chapter four: introduces the first four participants in the study. It explores the use of art in informing actors' characterisations, and examples of exercises that utilise the act of drawing to connect with the text. I discuss the ideas of actors and artists who have declared themselves dyslexic in the literature, and their proposed visual methods to assuage it. The participants share their methods of interacting with the text. Informed by my case study observations, I embark on my first action research cycle with the participants involving the deconstruction and anchoring of the text through drawn symbols, through an aurally received communication. I then refer to the theory on dyslexia and mental models that underpin and substantiate this method as a viable teaching strategy for those with dyslexia.

Chapter five: explores the use of the physical storyboard. In particular, the efficacy in using Stanislavski's actions with Shakespeare's text, (which are feeling and contextually led), in comparison with Berry's approach, which is guided by a primary emphasis on the text itself; to enable comprehension and fluency. The historical background of Stanislavski's work on Shakespeare and the origins behind Berry's approach are investigated. In action research, Cycle Two, (with a new set of participants, numbers five to eight), Stanislavski's *Units and Actions* sequence is put into practice. Various techniques of a physical approach to the text are explored through practical trial, and specific difficulties in methodology and participant response are revealed.

Chapter six: In this chapter a new set of participants (number nine to twelve) are introduced. Another action research cycle, (Three), is embarked upon entailing the identification of gesture and signification. The reasons for the result are discussed and analysed, involving participant views, critical friend feedback, and a study of the literature. Each participant and their strategies to engage with the text are presented individually. The results of the case studies, in conjunction with the action research, are linked with the theory, initiating another strategy for action.

Chapter seven: In this chapter, the work with the participants overlaps out of the Shakespeare unit and into the next unit of Storytelling. Action research Cycle Four, involves the trial of a newly devised pedagogical strategy comprised of acting methodologies merged with textual comprehension theory from Kintsch and Rawson (2005). This work progresses into a participant-led performance of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, employing the new strategy as a tool to inform textual comprehension, content and genre of performance. Their idiosyncratic modalities of interacting with the text is included in their creation of the performance. Assessment of this work is carried out and data is collected through observation, participant evaluation and critical friend feedback.

Chapter eight: presents the findings from the case studies of the twelve participants, combined with the action research. Each research question is answered individually, underpinned by relevant consideration of the theory in the literature, and participant comment or action. Conclusions are drawn from the findings, while limitations, recommendations, and outstanding issues are discussed. Ways in which the study contributes to new knowledge are presented.

1.14 Conclusion

In the following chapter, the literature review will consider a wide range of areas that impinge on the student actor with dyslexia. The review identifies the current gaps in knowledge in the field.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2. Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to present the key issues surrounding my enquiry, to identify the gaps in knowledge pertaining to dyslexia, actor training and Shakespeare's text, and to locate the problems in order to conceive of progressive strategies.

In this review I have restricted my selections to a succinct overview of the areas involved, as in each chapter of this study, I have included an examination of the literature relevant to the area focussed on. The trajectory ranges from considering the broad view of the context wherein the dyslexia difficulty is situated, and progressively narrows down to the issues directly related to my study.

The review begins with a short critical discussion about the suggested lack of pedagogical theory in actor training, before progressing on to the debate around dyslexia, and interventionist teaching, and the need for making 'reasonable adjustments' for those with dyslexia in higher education. It then focuses on those who teach acting students with dyslexia, and the lack of articulated theory arising from the specialised area of teaching acting. There is a consideration given to the 'dyslexia-unfriendly' methods used to instruct Shakespearean acting, in comparison with a practitioner's exercise on Shakespeare which is notably dyslexia friendly. An analysis is carried out on the efficacy of the exercise through an examination of the prevailing dominant theories of dyslexia, and the underpinning theories which surface throughout my action research work in this study. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the gaps of knowledge I have identified and which I aim to address through my research.

2.1 The Background: Actor Training, Pedagogy And Theory

In 2002, when I initially encountered the challenges of teaching acting students with dyslexic difficulties, I searched unsuccessfully for some literature that might offer pedagogical advice or theoretical insights in how to overcome the impediments presented by dyslexia when reading and acting. At a later stage, (2007), I undertook a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, and was introduced to various philosophies of learning. The ideas of behaviourism, constructivism, humanism, and Maslow's *hierarchy of needs* (Reece & Walker 2000) for example, are not concepts customarily combined with teaching acting or voice. The variety of actor training manuals, whilst concentrating on particular methodologies related to acting process or performance disciplines, do not incorporate references to the philosophies of individuals who have influenced educational theory, such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Elliot Eisner or Lee Shulman. Nor do they consider how the learning and teaching experience might be shaped and enhanced by adopting different educational theoretical approaches to delivery.

Echoing my observations, Ross Prior (principal lecturer in acting and drama) in his study of actor trainers, has foregrounded a lack of theory in pedagogical knowledge and its exposition in actor training, asserting that, '[it] appears that vocational actor training has shunned an examination of its own pedagogy, possibly in the belief that acting methodology (the skills) and practical experiences as an actor are alone sufficient' (Prior 2012: 91). Prior emphasises that actor training concentrates on systems of acting, while areas of *how* to learn to teach and to develop practice, and then to make that practice explicit, is under-researched. In concord with my own findings, Prior has noted that there are numerous books on the subject of acting methods, but an absence of documented research on the effectiveness of the trainers' delivery and learning (ibid. xxii, 52). Prior sees this as problematic, as he believes that a lack of an explicitly articulated approach to learning means, 'that trainer practice remains vulnerable to hit or miss approaches' (ibid. 219). In my experience, these 'hit and miss approaches' are often used to teach those with specific learning differences such as dyslexia, while the lack of published

scholarship in this area means that avenues for dissemination of knowledge are uncommon.

Contrasting acting methodology with pedagogy, Prior draws a distinction between knowing *how to act* and knowing *how to teach*. Prior's study of actor training in England observes that many actor trainers come from a practical background of professional acting, and therefore teach from their experience of doing, drawing on a tacit knowing (Polanyi 1966). This tacit knowledge can mean that 'we know more than we can tell', (ibid. 1966). Prior admits that a practitioner often possesses an expertise gained through their practical experience in acting, and that this proficiency can offer much to generate expertise in performance; however, in actor training, he suggests that there is a reluctance or inability to articulate this expertise into theory. Therefore, through a lack of reflective analysis, Prior is concerned that the unconscious practice remains 'hazy', and mistakes can be missed (Prior op. cit., 94 - 96).

Shulman asserts that a tacit knowledge in teaching is of limited value, and the teacher's professional knowledge base should amalgamate both subject knowledge and pedagogical theory into a pedagogical content knowledge. Crucially, this should also include knowledge about the individual learners, their characteristics and how to answer their needs, along with an underlying knowledge of educational philosophy and history (Shulman 1987: 8). Emphasising a disempowerment for both teacher and student through a reduced facility for obtaining understanding, Prior argues that trainers should ask a series of 'how' and 'why' questions, which demonstrate a concern for their process, such as: how do I know if I am an effective trainer? How do I overcome my weaknesses as a trainer? Why do I teach this way? How do I structure my classes to benefit all students? (ibid. 50).

Prior's proposed questions arrive precisely at my own point of entry to this study, in asking myself *why* I need to improve my pedagogical practice, *why* my participants demonstrate certain behaviours, *what* are the causes, *what* might be altered, and *how* I might remove the blocks inherent in my practice for those with dyslexia in my teaching of Shakespeare.

2.2 Teaching In Higher Education And Dyslexia

According to learning support lecturer David Pollak, the number of students assessed as dyslexic attending universities has increased enormously, (in Brunswick 2012:59). Education researchers Barbara Pavey *et al* report that a study of undergraduate students in higher education, carried out from 2003 to 2006, showed that those with dyslexia did not perform as well as non-dyslexic students, indicating that they may not achieve their potential (Mehaan 2008b in Pavey et al 2010:30).

Pollak stresses that support should be delivered not only by a specialist teacher, but that all staff should be dyslexia aware (Brunswick op. cit.: 70). In accord with Pollak, Pavey *et al* assert that all teaching staff should recognise their duty to eliminate discriminatory practices that undermine the potential of those with disabilities such as dyslexia, in all institutions (Pavey *et al*/op. cit.:1).

There have been several items of legislation put in place as guidance for higher education practice. The Disability Discrimination Act: Code of Practice Post-16, (DRC: 2007:227), which also applies to higher education, states that:

An educator's duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory duty owed to disabled people and students at large.

(DRC 2007:227)

The Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in higher education requires that:

The delivery of programmes should take into account the needs of disabled people or, where appropriate, be adapted to accommodate their individual requirements...

(The Quality Assurance Agency for
Higher Education, 1999, Section 3, Precept 10)

The 'dyslexia - friendly' approach, (which originated from the British Dyslexia Association's 1999 initiative in schools), stresses the need for creating a learning environment which supports all learners with special educational needs, which can permeate throughout the educational situation (ibid. 7). Pavey *et al* argue that a dyslexic- friendly approach in higher education which aims to remove barriers, will boost positive outcomes for all learners, not only for those with dyslexia (ibid. 26).

The debate around the existence of dyslexia questions the morality and wisdom in singling out those assessed as dyslexic for specialised teaching. The education professor Julian Elliott, educational psychologist Simon Gibbs and professor of developmental disabilities Elena Grigorenko contend that dyslexia is unbounded and unscientifically proven, with much disagreement about who has or does not have dyslexia, and what the criteria is for inclusion or exclusion (Elliott & Gibbs 2009:116, Elliott & Grigorenko 2014). This lack of clarity, they believe, makes it problematic to address. In their estimation, there is no evidence that shows teaching methods which should favour one thing over another, and therefore, focussed instruction should apply to all who struggle with reading, assessed as dyslexic or not (Elliott & Gibbs 2009:122, Elliott & Grigorenko 2014:177).

Regardless of the controversy about the umbrella term of dyslexia, and the contested sub-types, Pavey *et al* insist that there are definitely some individuals for whom the skills of literacy are difficult and resistant to standard teaching, despite their possession of other abilities (2010:6). Dyslexia consultant and psychologist David McLoughlin and researcher Carol Leather (2013:2), underline that dyslexia is far more than simply a reading problem. They argue that the appropriate questions should be asked to evaluate definitions, such as: why do some people learn to read but continue to find spelling difficult? Why do some people achieve good accuracy but find it hard to retain what they read? Why do some people who master skills they found difficult to acquire, such as reading and spelling, report problems with organisation and time management? Dyslexia researchers Rod Nicolson & Angela Fawcett include: how can an otherwise high-achieving person be so impaired in learning to read? (2010:17).

These questions draw attention to some of the puzzling issues facing those who teach individuals with dyslexia. Much of the intervention measures described in the literature centre on children in elementary school settings (such as Broomfield & Combley 2003, Reid 2003, Snowling & Hulme 2005, Thomson 2009, Nicolson & Fawcett 2010, Elliott & Grigorenko 2014). This increases the difficulty in finding applicable assistance to support young adult students of acting. Additionally, much of the advice given to facilitate those with dyslexia in higher education is generic across disciplines, and therefore does not attend to the distinct demands of actor training and Shakespeare (as in Grant 2005, Brunswick 2012, Pavey *et al* 2010).

Furthermore, McLoughlin and Leather maintain that those with dyslexia are not a homogeneous group, but if specific needs are to be met, the teacher must use an 'ideographic', evidence-based approach. This, they stress, must involve research to attain an expertise about dyslexia, so as to fully understand the disadvantages suffered, and develop an awareness of the individual preferences (2013:9). In concurrence with Prior's disquiet regarding un-theorised teaching, education and dyslexia specialist Geraldine Price, in considering the learning process of university students with dyslexia, underlines that a, 'let's try this to see if it works' attitude is not adequate for teaching higher education students (Price in Brunswick 2012:52). Price maintains that the teacher should adapt a 'dyslexic way of working' to the demands of the academic situation by developing strategies that will become an integral part of the student approach. She advocates that students with dyslexia should be supported into achieving a deep understanding of their own learning strengths, using meta-cognitive strategies, through the building of learning skills and learner autonomy (*ibid.* 52). Price avers that the teacher should become the 'change agent' in the contextualised environment using 'multidimensional teaching made up of many layers and strands' (in Brunswick 2012: 52).

2.3 Teaching Acting Students With Dyslexia

Since the commencement of this study, there have been some signs in the literature of a growing awareness of dyslexia in actor training. My own article

(Whitfield 2009: 254-264) drew attention to the problems of dyslexia in reading Shakespeare. I centred my attention on the observed difficulties and strengths of three of my students with dyslexia, offering tentative teaching suggestions for improving provision. I also included opinions from experts in the area of dyslexia, about the possible causes of my students' behaviour.

To my knowledge, at this time, there are only three voice and acting teachers' book publications in Britain, which refer specifically to dyslexia within the domain of teaching, reading and acting.

The Royal Shakespeare Company voice director Cicely Berry alludes to her disquiet about dyslexia and its effect in two of her books (2001: 2, 2008:14-15, 37). Declaring a concern for the humiliation which can be experienced by slow readers, and the likelihood of them being appraised negatively, she states, 'No matter that you have a different area of intelligence – a different mind's eye - you are profoundly affected and demoralised by the status quo judgment' (2001:2). In her guide to theatre directors, she again raises the subject of dyslexia. She advises:

It is extremely important right at the beginning to ascertain if there are any dyslexics in the group: because of their different spatial awareness they may need a little more time to get round the words on the page, but if you give them a little space they will be fine.

(Berry 2008:37)

Berry is correct to point out the need to be mindful of those with dyslexia, but she does not offer an explanation about what she might mean by a 'different spatial awareness', or how this might affect their reading and need for more time. Notably, she does not propose any solutions of her own, formulated from her experience. The complex area of dyslexia is dealt with in a short statement, ending with an affirmation that if given 'a little space they will be fine'. McLoughlin & Leather stress, when working with adults with dyslexia, 'It is important that the coach understands the impact of dyslexia in the context ...to develop knowledge of each individual and how they process information' (2013: 45).

In their collection of exercises for working on text, voice practitioners David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey (2010) consciously support a range of learning styles and abilities. They make an important contribution to the field by giving the subject of dyslexia attention and recognition as a potential learning barrier. Carey and Clarke Carey declare that they have encountered dyslexia amongst acting students many times (*ibid.* xviii). Contributing one and a half pages of their introduction to the subject, they describe the condition, reassure those individuals with dyslexia, and offer generic advice on how to manage it. Facilitative strategies are provided, such as: receiving the text in advance of the next class, printing on coloured paper, using transparent coloured overlays and larger font sizes. They also suggest the idea of reading aloud with a partner, such as described in the *paired reading exercise* in Reid (2007:183), and in Whitfield (2009:261).

Voice tutor Sarah Case (2013: 347) when giving advice in a voice training programme, somewhat over-optimistically states that, 'most teachers these days are aware to some extent about the ways in which dyslexia can affect someone, and also how to help them'. The help that she suggests is similar to the advice that Carey & Clark Carey give. This is the general advice commonly provided for students in higher education with dyslexia (Case 2013:347, Carey & Clark Carey 2010: xviii, Pavey *et al* 2010: 10, Pollak in Brunswick 2012:61).

Although these tips are sometimes helpful, they are external measures of adjustment, which may or may not assist the differing aspects of dyslexia amongst individuals, which occasionally co-exist with other learning characteristics such as autistic spectrum conditions, attentional difficulties, dyspraxia (Pavey *et al* 2010 :89, Thomson 2009:17, McLoughlin & Leather 2013: 31). These provisions do not include a teacher's reflection on their own contribution to the individual's experience, such as consideration of material, instructional approach, adaptation of content, analysis of difficulties, forms of feedback or explanations of behaviour at a fundamental level. Such activity would demonstrate a deeper engagement with the special needs of the individual, as McLoughlin & Leather recommend (2013:9).

2.4 Literature That Focuses On Dyslexia And Performance Training

At the time of writing this review, I have been able to find only three pieces of published literature that focus entirely on the subjects of the teaching of performance and dyslexia, other than my own, (Whitfield 2009). In this review I have included their publication titles as they are so distinct.

Drama lecturer Deborah Leveroy's publication, *Enabling performance: dyslexia, (dis) ability and 'reasonable adjustment'* (2013), takes a robust stance in questioning the pedagogical attitude towards dyslexia in current actor training institutions, and, in many cases, their failure to provide reasonable adjustment to enable those students who have dyslexia. Leveroy alludes to Mortimore's description of the 'glass wall' which separates dyslexia support from the core teaching in HE, (Mortimore 2008 in Leveroy 2013: 91). She describes the lack of interaction between departments as 'peculiar', emphasising how much effort, time and money goes into the DSA student support, and yet this support is not carried over into the content of actor training classes. Leveroy is highly critical of teacher contributions, stating, '[t]he teaching staff appear either unable or unwilling to connect [student] Amy's dyslexia with her sight reading problems or offer solutions', (ibid.: 91).

It is significant that Leveroy's motivation for researching the areas of dyslexia and actor training originates from her own training as an actress and teacher with dyslexia (personal communication 29.9.2011). Leveroy's arguments reinforce my own assertions, in highlighting that the current teaching practices in actor training can often disable those with dyslexia, and very little effort or thought is made to change teaching practice to break down the barriers facing those with dyslexia.

Leveroy singles out that dyslexia support appears to attempt to enable those with dyslexia to 'fit in' to the current practices, rather than the whole educational team incorporating changes in their teaching methods to include differing learning preferences. Describing dyslexia as a 'hidden disability' Leveroy recognises that some lecturers might not realise that their student is dyslexic, if they have not disclosed the fact, possibly because the individual is afraid to reveal their disability. The article then proceeds to describe observations of

good practice to support dyslexia used by some, such as the use of chunking, embodied practice, importance of the context being given about the text, with top down and bottom up approaches, and multi-sensory teaching.

Leveroy's recommendations fit absolutely with my own work explored throughout this study. Like me, Leveroy, through her current PhD investigation, continues to develop ideas of practice to support actors with dyslexia.

Leveroy's second article is valuable in placing a focus on the difficulties for reading for actors with dyslexia. However, in my view, it offers less original thought. *Dyslexia and sight reading for actors*, is included in the book *Music, other Performing Arts and Dyslexia* (Daunt 2012).

Although offering solid sight-reading techniques and textual management ideas for reading aloud for the actor, Leveroy advances little information that is not already utilised in training techniques for those who teach reading skills. In a short article, Leveroy appears to rely disproportionately on initiatives taken directly from acting teacher Nina Finburgh's book *Sight reading for actors at audition* (Finburgh 1992), quoting and referencing Finburgh's techniques thirteen times (Leveroy in Daunt 2012: 93, 99, 101, 102, 103). As Finburgh is an established teacher of sight-reading, and her book on the subject is widely available, those hoping to find additional specialised assistance for dyslexia and reading, based on new reasoning, will be disappointed. Alongside tips for reading, Leveroy also includes methods of searching for clues to get an idea of what the text is about; the process of looking at titles, headings, pictures, textual structure, and punctuation and so on. This is a recommended reading comprehension approach and is common ground for those who study and teach reading. Education lecturer Janice Almasi (2003:106) names this as 'text anticipation strategies', while psychologists Jane Oakhill and Alan Garnham identify the process as 'comprehension aids in the text' (1988:151) and dyslexia researcher Tilly Mortimore (2008:136), designates as 'reading for information'.

I have taught sight - reading to acting students for some years, and routinely draw from Finburgh's exercises. Finburgh offers techniques for those who aspire to a professional standard of expertise. She gives guidance for

overcoming negative effects of nerves, and methods in how to 'see-connect-relate' to the words, thus animating the interpretation of the text (Finburgh 1992: 53). However, in my experience of teaching those with dyslexic difficulties, Finburgh's techniques (although helpful to a certain degree), cannot adequately overcome the problems of dyslexia, when individuals are not able to read fluently, 'take-in', or 'see' the words.

There is one item, in Leveroy's article, that connects immediately with my work explored in this study. When including one of Finburgh's tips wherein she states that the reader should connect to the words in both thought and image before speaking them aloud, Leveroy has included a small diagram showing associative pictures connected with the words; e.g. 'it was a sunny day' – and Leveroy has put a picture of the sun, next to the words (ibid. 101). Unlike my work, she does not offer this placing of pictures with the words as a potential exercise to support dyslexia and reading.

Helen Eadon's *Dyslexia and Drama* (2005), appears to be aimed at teachers in secondary school. Although the title implies that this is a book that might offer theoretical links between the areas of drama and dyslexia, and give advice on how to teach drama to those with dyslexia, it treats the two areas quite separately, with little connections made.

The book is broken up into distinct chapters: the first provides an overview of dyslexia, its characteristics, and effects, the second gives a description of the GCSE drama exam, its content and assessment, including brief details of the provision set by the Special Educational Needs and Disability in Education Act (SENDA 2001) and the third chapter offers ideas for drama exercises. Curiously, Eadon provides a long list of drama exercises and some of their procedures, but provides no explanation of whether or how any of these exercises might play a role in supporting those with dyslexia. In the fourth chapter Eadon presents some transcripts from interviews with children relating their feelings about having dyslexia, which include some brief phrases which mention that they find drama 'has brought me out of my shell' (ibid. 39) or 'drama gives me more confidence and helps with my social skills' (ibid. 41).

This book might offer some contextual knowledge about dyslexia and resource material for school teachers, and through some interviews with children, expand teachers' understanding of the experience of those with dyslexia. It is, however, notably lacking in providing any assistance on the subject because Eadon does not identify areas of difficulty in teaching drama for those with dyslexia, or offer remedial pedagogical practice of any kind.

2.5 Instruction On Acting Shakespeare And The Possible Effect On Those With Dyslexia

There are several prominent books that concentrate on an actor's approach to speaking Shakespeare. The majority of them centre on a meticulous observation of the language, and its influence on acting choices, such as Block, (2013), Rokison, (2010), Ford Davis, (2007), Barton, (1984), Noble, (2010), Hall, (2003), Berry, (2008, 2001, 2000, 1993), Houseman, (2008), Rodenburg, (2002), Carey & Clark Carey, (2010), Linklater, (1992). These books are indispensable resources of technical knowledge for actors who work with Shakespeare. The authors all possess an expertise in acting and Shakespeare in performance.

For the purpose of this review, I am commenting only on selected examples taken from particular books, wherein an intricacy of the rules of linguistic devices infer that there is a 'correct' outcome to accomplish in the reading and speaking of Shakespeare. I am reviewing the content from the perspective of those with dyslexia.

I recognise that some people with dyslexia can achieve 'typical and even superior levels of reading performance', but they are often compensated dyslexics, who have all kinds of other problems related to dyslexia (Cooke 2001 in McLoughlin & Leather 2013:7). McLoughlin states that he prefers to use the term, 'literate dyslexics', so as to highlight that although they may have developed a skilled reading ability, they retain dyslexic characteristics. Moreover, not only does Shakespeare's text contain an abundance of baffling words which are occasionally placed in unusual grammatical sequences, but the books and their multifactorial techniques imparted about acting

Shakespeare can trigger a cognitive overload and anxiety in those that struggle with reading and the attendant difficulties that dyslexia contributes.

An example of this emphasis on achieving accurate outcomes is given by theatre director Adrian Noble (2010:5). Noble specifies that in order to learn how to act the text, the 'rules' must be learnt; the 'do's and don'ts of the craft', which include the essential seven basic elements. These are:

- Apposition (the juxtaposition of words, phrases and ideas)
- Metaphor (similes, comparisons)
- Metre and pulse
- Line endings (rhyme, alliteration and assonance)
- Word play
- Vocabulary
- Shape and structure

All of these are examples of an intellectual study of the form of the written word, with which the reader must become familiar in order to read a passage with effect, Noble advises. This advice is advantageous for those actors who possess erudite literacy abilities.

Noble sometimes includes a purely practical approach, as when instructing the reader to:

...follow the trail of the imagery. At first it is probably best to stress, or even over stress the words...try to become more playful with the language. Imagine it's a ball thrown between the two of you, or it's a tennis match only with words.

(ibid. 42)

This is a developmental exercise for those who can abandon their thought processes to playful exploration, but for those who are struggling to catch the words, and therefore the metaphorical 'ball', whilst also attempting to remember the language 'rules', such tennis matches are ambitious, and the ball is likely to be dropped.

Amongst much discussion of the rules of language structure, Noble's direction to use imaginary colour to shape the vocal expression of the images arising from the words, as, 'colour can be emphasis, volume, vocal texture and emotional weight', is a more accessible technique for those who enter the words through less analytical modes. Allowing an intuitive response, Noble states, 'don't worry about those techniques for the moment. Human beings are naturally communicative and if you are clear about *what* you are trying to communicate, then the *how* usually falls into place, (ibid: 33). This is reminiscent of Linklater's dyslexia-friendly method, which I examine further on in this review.

Giles Block's (2013) scholarly guide to acting Shakespeare also lends a weighty import to Shakespeare's literary devices, stating that, 'in the detail lies the life of the plays' (ibid. 33). As text advisor at the Globe Theatre, Block's focus is aimed at actors and like Noble, he instructs the reader to read the text aloud (ibid. 147). Block promotes the study of technicalities such as, to note where to breathe, stress, the patterns of speech in the verse form, to count the syllables, the collection of commas, the epic caesura's, feminine line endings, and so on. Although intellectually rigorous, Block's instructions might be difficult to absorb for those with dyslexia. An example is given in this paragraph below, where technical detail is dense:

Remember too that the breaks between all these new thought-units are *not pauses*. Maybe they are the opposite of pauses: maybe you'll find some of them work as acceleration points. Notice the varied rhythms I've suggested by the italics: five feminine endings; four trochaic beginnings. One line-'I *have* engag'd my *self* to a dear *friend*', seems to me to have two stresses coming together- a *trochee* at the beginning of the fourth foot, which is very common in Shakespeare's writing.

(Block 2013:61)

McLoughlin & Leather reiterate that having dyslexia means that there is a high risk of failure in academic life resulting in a negative impact on emotional state (2013: 38). Voice teacher Patsy Rodenburg plants the fear of failure for those

actors who might struggle to keep up in speaking Shakespeare, warning: ‘You don’t want to be one of those actors who drag a scene down and stop the emotional flow of the others because they can’t speak or think accurately or quickly enough’ (ibid. 8). Rodenburg’s emphasis on the fluent articulation of the word, although critical for the actor’s communication, continues to raise challenges for dyslexics. In her description of what is imperative in speaking Shakespeare, she specifies exactly what some with dyslexia find hard to achieve:

...the whole of every word is important. You must speak the beginning, middle and end of each one, effortlessly – not swallowing word ends or skidding over multi-syllabic words. The physical nature of the word is the fabric of the play.

(Rodenburg 2002: 72)

Berry’s exercises on Shakespeare’s text can be beneficial in several ways for those with dyslexia, in that they involve staggered chunking of the text, repetition, and kinaesthetic movement. Conversely, there is often an assumption of the individual’s ability to fluently read, speak and process the text while multi-tasking, reacting with ‘spontaneity’ in a collective environment. This presumption can be stressful for those with dyslexia. In my teaching experience, some examples of Berry’s exercises that can promote anxiety, and cognitive overload for those with dyslexia include: physicalisation of the text in the centre of the group circle, (2001: 110), jostling, (ibid. 120), trying to get attention, (ibid. 213), climbing through a barricade or being physically held back, (ibid. 210), speaking only the vowels, (ibid. 167), building a structure, (2008: 152), and breaking out of the circle, (2008:110).

2.6 Dyslexia-Friendly Instruction In Shakespeare

There is, however, one book on acting Shakespeare’s text whose initial sixty - seven pages of exercises stand out as being dyslexia- friendly when put into practice. In *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice* (1992) voice and acting practitioner Kristin Linklater takes a radically different approach to the text, stating, ‘my

guide to speaking Shakespeare is experiential rather than prescriptive' (ibid. 1).

When I have taught Linklater's exercise sequence based on Shakespeare's *Sonnet 65*, in my experience, my students with dyslexia become animated and more confident when speaking the text.

Linklater's approach does not escape criticism. Theatre scholar Richard Knowles critically appraises her techniques as based on 'American psychotherapeutic principles...embodied in "new age" mysticism' (Knowles in Bulman 1996:100-101). Voice coach Bonnie Raphael reports that:

Advocates of Linklater's work cite the actors' connection with their selves, their emotions, and their text, and cite the wonderful simplicity, honesty, and lack of self-consciousness in their delivery. Critics of Linklater's work describe it as a long and detailed warm-up process that short-changes both attention to clear articulation and the development of the actor's ability to characterize vocally; they say that those trained solely in Linklater work do very fine and compelling acting, but only in their own personae.

(Raphael in Hampton & Acker 1997:208)

I am confident that the 'long and detailed warm-up process' criticised here as a negative factor, is advantageous for those with dyslexia, for the reasons I shall make clear.

Linklater does not introduce the text through literary rules which must be received, understood, learned and demonstrated. She guides the participant through the text in a sequence of progressive stages, encouraging an idiosyncratic response to the language. Gradually, through a sequential procedure, layers of personal interpretation and imagery linked directly to the words are consciously accumulated. There is no danger that the participant might not be able to succeed with the task of absorbing or delivering Shakespeare's words, as each individual response, if coming from what Linklater has termed, the 'vertical plane' – (the heart to the head) – is deemed relevant (ibid. 30).

As preparation before engaging with the text, Linklater directs the participant to explore a kinaesthetic experience of individual vowels and consonants, (the 'building blocks' of words). She asks the participant to express the phonemes through the voice and body, letting illusory images of colours, shape and movement inform their tone, rhythm, pitch and character. She advises, '[b]y indulging sensory, sensual, emotional and physical responses to vowels and consonants – the component parts of words – we begin to resurrect the life of language' (ibid. 13). Thus, in this groundwork, the phonological sounds of words are given an existence, manifested into auditory images, and so become embedded in the mind.

It is beneficial for those with dyslexia to explore the sounds that make up words, and to work in an environment where there is no 'right' or 'wrong'; '... many poor readers – adults as well as children – experience problems in articulating phonemically complex or multi-syllabic words (Brady et al., 1983, Cats, 1986, Elbro et al., 1994; Miles, 1993a; cited in Beaton, A; 2004:101).

Linklater places an emphasis on the power of the visual sense and the accuracy of the images connected with the words. She frequently suggests a realisation of the text in terms of pictures or painting, underlining the effect on the actor when speaking Shakespeare (1992: 33). She remarks:

Images are intrinsic to words....Introduce the sense of sight to the meaning of a word and images will emerge and multiply. Images lead more directly, albeit more explicably, to emotion than logical reasoning does and the speaker of poetry can trust that such a deep instinctive connection is the well spring for a true understanding of the text.

To begin her exercise based on *Sonnet 65*, key words are introduced to the reader with questions posed about the words that activate all the senses. She asks the participant to imagine the colour, texture, weight, smell, taste and sound of the word's object, and then directs the participant to speak the word slowly *aloud*; feeling all the consonants and vowels in the mouth, experimenting with the articulators' ability to shape the sounds.

After working on several words in this manner, she breaks the sequence. Crucially, she emphasises that the participants' experiences must be written down or spoken aloud, observing that: '[n]ew experiences happen and they need to be reinforced in words that describe them or they will dissolve in a flash. In right/ left brain hemisphere terminology, a new experience is recorded in the right (imaging) hemisphere and will only survive if supported by verbal record in the left (verbalizing) hemisphere' (ibid. 39).

Linklater next instructs the participant to write out another selection of words from the sonnet, and to cut them out and jumble them up, thereby utilising the motor action of the body. She asks the participant to inspect each word individually and ask questions about the word that involves the senses, the emotions, memory, personal associations, and imagination. She specifies again that it is critical to speak the words *aloud* to experience the vowels and consonants, and to release any deep emotions connected to that word. Her focus is on the stimulation of the senses related to the language of the sonnet. 'When words are *seen, tasted, touched, felt*', she writes, 'they penetrate and break up patterns of thought. They ... spark the imagination (ibid. 31).

Every word in the sonnet is singularly experienced, until gradually the sonnet is re-assembled into phrases, then into blocks of unpunctuated text, and then stanzas. Finally, the sonnet is presented in its complete form, now accompanied by the accrued mental images and associations. These all contribute to a deep familiarity with the language, when finally spoken aloud.

In advocating learning skills for those with dyslexia, psychologist David McLoughlin & researcher Carol Leather propose that tasks should be made manageable, (to reduce the load on working memory and dual tasking), multi-sensory, (increase the possibilities of learning), and memorable, (to support recall) (2013:127). Reid includes the practice of repetition and over learning, (2003: 206). McLoughlin & Leather also propose the utilisation of visual images as an effective learning tool for those with dyslexia (McLoughlin & Leather op. cit. 118).

Although Linklater has not aimed to especially support those with dyslexia, her breaking down of the sonnet into chunks, requiring both subvocalized and vocalised expression, the repetition of words, the provision of time, the utilisation of motor movements, with an emphasis on the senses (especially the visual) encapsulate all of the recommended factors.

2.7 The Dominant Theories Of Dyslexia

There are at least fifteen theories that attempt to explain the underlying causes of dyslexia, as presented in *A Framework for Understanding Dyslexia* (DFES 2004:76-114) some of which I have alluded to throughout the work in this study. Pavey *et al* point out that the current debate around the theories of dyslexia is in flux, as research now encompasses foreign languages, genetics and brain imaging. However, there remain two theories that still dominate the field (Pavey *et al* 2010:88).

2.7.1 The phonological deficit theory

There is strong support for *the phonological deficit* as a core explanation for dyslexia (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010:21, Pavey *et al* 2010:88, Thomson 2009:187, Hatcher & Snowling 2002:67, Everatt & Reid in Reid 2009:12). Dyslexia researcher Maggie Snowling tells us that one of the most commonly reported difficulties that dyslexics struggle with is ‘... phonological awareness and limitations of verbal short-term memory’ (1998:6). She states that dyslexic children are slow to transfer from an orthographic visual stage into the alphabetic stage of reading. They have difficulty in processing, retaining, and decoding phonemes to graphemes both in spelling and reading. This core-deficit is retained into adulthood, especially with newly encountered words, phonological awareness and verbal short-term memory. In addition, there can be difficulties with rhyme, sound blending and naming speed. This poor recognition of sounds can impact upon the reading, speech pronunciation, syllabification skills, and comprehension of the text (Thomson 2009: 183).

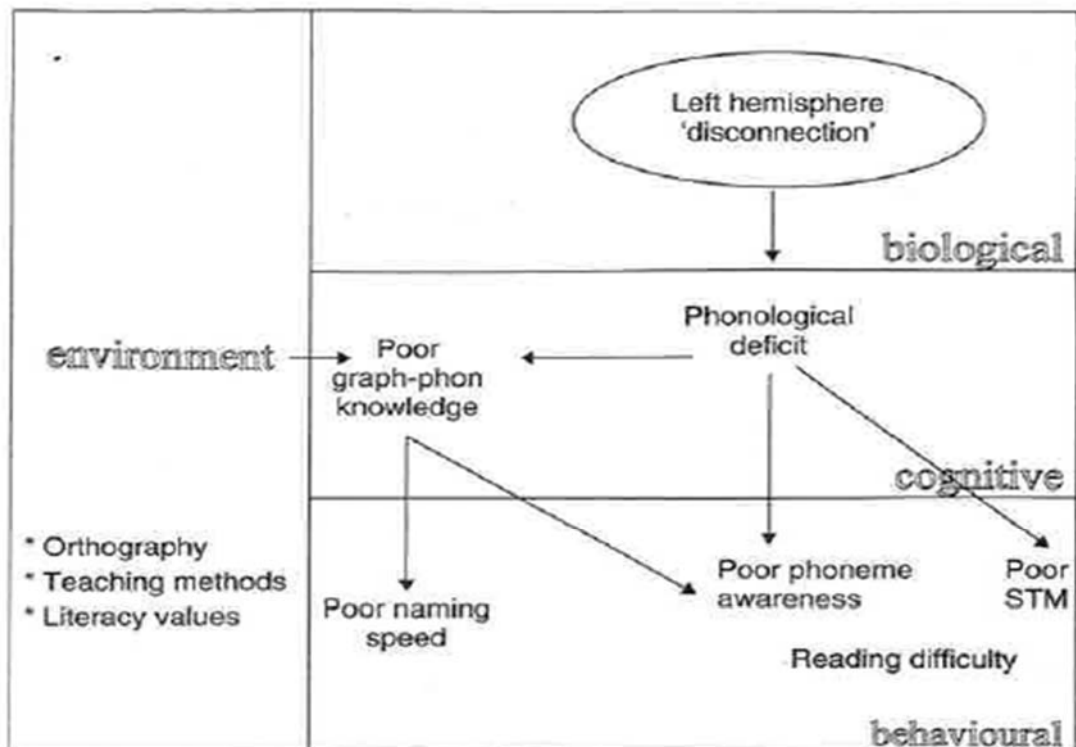


Figure 2.1. A model of dyslexia caused by the phonological deficit (Thomson 2009:180) - graph- phon, grapheme - phoneme; STM, short- term (working) memory.

2.7.2 The cerebellar theory

There is an argument that the phonological deficit theory does not satisfactorily explain all of the problems presented by dyslexia, such as poor organisation, concentration, distractibility (McLoughlin & Leather 2013:22), learning and automatization difficulties (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010:137), physical co-ordination, eye movement control in reading and speech muscle control in speaking (Eide & Eide 2011:25).

The cerebellar theory (sometimes called the *automaticity deficit*) originates from Nicolson and Fawcett (2010) wherein they contend that an impairment of the cerebellum gives rise to difficulties in automatization of skills, phonological and motor skills, articulation of speech and information processing speeds. It has been suggested by some that cerebellar deficits might be associative rather than causal (McLoughlin & Leather 2013:19).

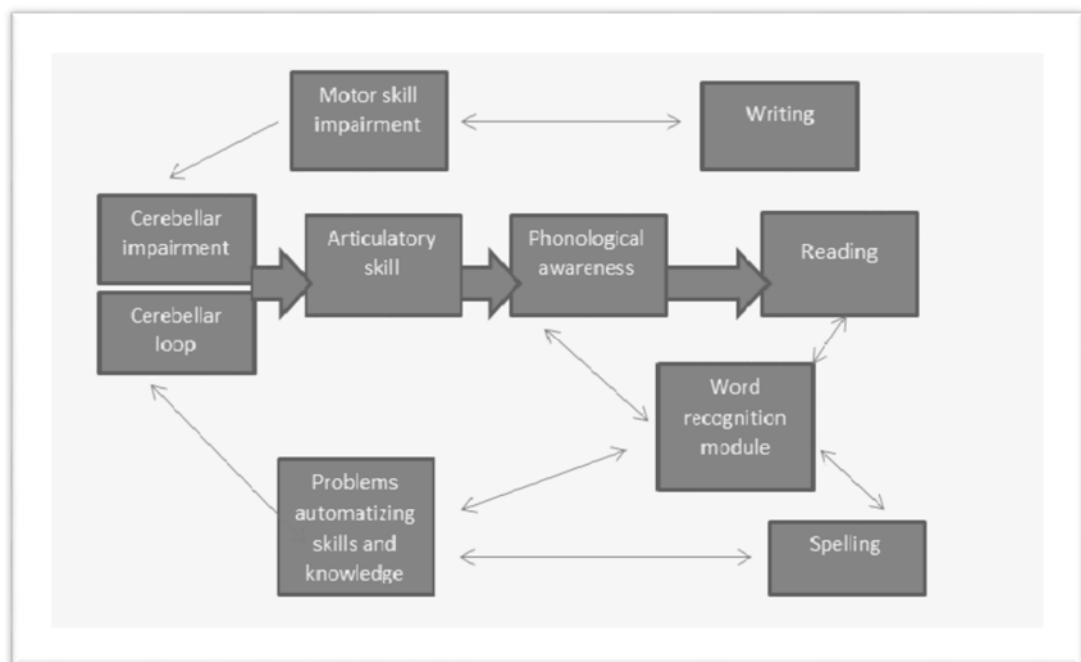


Figure 2.2. Proposed causal chain for the cerebellum and reading, from Nicolson and Fawcett, (1999), adapted from Thomson (2009:127)

2.7.3 The role of working memory and the phonological and articulatory loop

Thomson states that the phonological loop is interesting to those studying dyslexia because of its relationship with language, reading, and speech (2009:172). Baddeley's model of working memory (Baddeley 2007) is relevant to this study because of the demands of reading the words, making meaning, holding the information in the memory, processing it, responding, as in the acting of Shakespeare. In this review, I have thought it is necessary to include an account of the components' mechanisms, so as to elucidate aspects of the model which emerge throughout my action research and the participants' work during this study.

There is a widely-held opinion amongst researchers that many of those with dyslexia have poor working and short term memory, (especially verbal rather than visual), which might be a contributory factor in their inability to read

fluently (Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008:29, Mortimore 2008: 102, McLoughlin & Leather 2013:19). Working memory is said to be responsible for the temporary acquisition, storage and manipulation of information, and also acts as a ‘...translator between sensory input and long-term memory’, (Fletcher-Janzen, cited in Dehn 2008: xiii, Baddeley 2008:1).

Baddeley’s model has four components. These are: the central executive, the phonological loop, the visuospatial sketchpad and the episodic buffer.

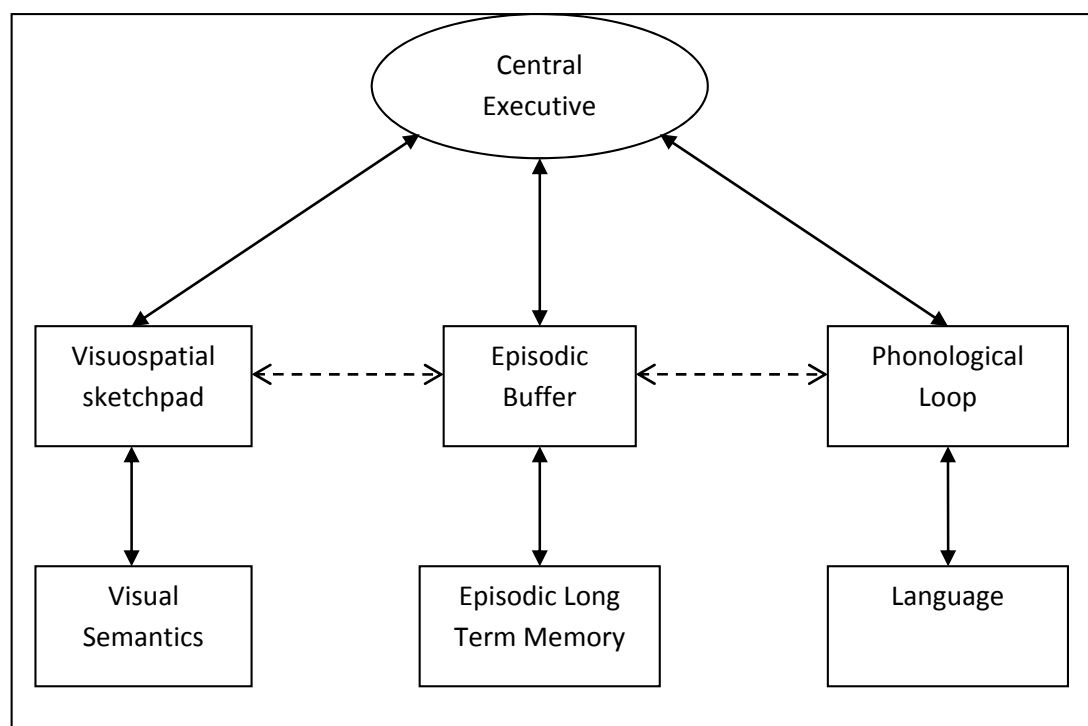


Figure 2.3 Working memory and the phonological loop, (Baddeley, A. 2007:147)

i. The central executive

This is the focal point of working memory. It can focus on important information whilst blocking out disruptions, dual task by processing information and acting as a store, and has access to and from long term memory (Dehn 2008:22).

McLoughlin & Leather assert that, in their experience, those with dyslexia show problems with the function of the executive in aspects of planning,

sequences, attention and finding it hard to change a habitual manner of doing things, such as a 'set' reading style (2013:21).

The central executive supervises two 'slave systems': the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad, which are interconnected by the episodic buffer.

ii. The phonological loop

The phonological loop is supported by the left part of the brain and '...plays a crucial role in language processing, literacy and learning' (Baddeley 2008:17, McLoughlin & Leather 2013:20). It has two departments. One is a short term store for words, numbers or sentences. However, its capacity is limited. It can hold the information there for only a few seconds before it decays. This is known as short term memory. To 'catch' the information before it disappears; it has to be transferred into working memory, before it can be placed into long term memory. This 'catching' happens when the information seen is sub-vocalised, or vocalised: 'either works equally well' (Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008:87) in an articulatory rehearsal and transferred into a phonological code of phonemes or words. The phonological loop rehearsal can only hold a small amount of information at once, before it is forgotten. Monosyllabic words can be remembered more easily than polysyllabic words which take more time and effort in rehearsal articulation (Baddeley 2007:9). Ideas, reasoning and sense are then put together in the central executive area, which can then store them in long term memory.

It is common that those with dyslexia have problems with working memory overload and phonological processing which leads to inaccurate and slower language based learning (Eide & Eide 2011:24-25).

iii. The episodic buffer

As there is no direct pathway between the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad, the episodic buffer acts a boundary between the two. It can act as a temporary storage space for the multi modal information from the two systems and long term memory and combine them into

representations to be stored in long term memory (Mortimore 2008: 107, Dehn 2008:25).

iv. The visuospatial sketchpad

The visuospatial sketchpad stores short-term visual images of things, places, and manipulation of space and plays a key role in creating images (Dehn 2008:19-22, Baddeley 2008:63-101). The visuospatial sketchpad is activated in the right side of the brain (McLoughlin & Leather 2013:22) and as yet there has been limited research into its full role and capacity. It is thought that visual information can be stored independently in long term memory, but that visual information is usually recoded into verbal information to put into the phonological store. As we have gained language, we inevitably link words to our images, which then activate the phonological loop (Dehn 2008: 21).

When we are babies we think in images as we have no language to name things, so the visuospatial sketchpad will be the main memory system (Mortimore 2008:107, 2001). Gradually, lexical and semantic knowledge is built through listening to others, speaking and eventually learning to read. The words are then mapped onto the image. The process of learning to read begins in picture form. The earliest record of written language is in picture form, but as communication became more precise it was impossible to decipher an exact meaning from one picture, so gradually symbolic logograms were developed which evolved into the alphabet (Adams 1998:15 – 20).

McLoughlin and Leather include artistic ability and visuospatial skills as a positive characteristic of dyslexia, but underline that this is speculation and anecdote, rather than being evidenced (2013:14). Psychologist and dyslexia researcher John Everatt, (1997) cites that Aaron and Guillemord (1993), Edwards (1994) and Vail (1990) have argued that dyslexics do have superior visual skills. Everatt, in a controlled study, did not find proof of this, but did find that dyslexics had higher creativity scores compared with his controls (1997: 20). Fellow psychologist and dyslexia researcher Beverly Steffert and Everatt found that there was: ‘...evidence of greater creativity in tasks requiring novelty or insight and more innovative styles of thinking’ (1999: 28). In their final

discussion they pose the question that those with dyslexia have had to develop innovative creative skills to overcome their disabilities.

2.8 Drawing It Together: The Continuing Problem

The vocal practitioners David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey (2008) have included two exercises in their vocal arts manual which, when working on Shakespeare's text, might vigorously activate both the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad.

The *Puck* exercise (ibid. 153) focuses on a monologue by the named character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Henry V* exercise (ibid. 178) is based around the Chorus in the introduction to Act IV of the play *Henry V*. Both monologues are rich in language device, conjuring up powerful images which capture and verbally 'paint' the content. At the beginning of the exercise, the participants concentrate on voicing only the vowel or consonant sounds in the words, building a soundscape inspired by the images depicted in the monologue (aural, visual and physical) rather than expressing the actual word meaning. They then move from individual phonemes to using the full words of the text, but in an exaggerated expression, still attempting to create the images and action through the sounds, rather than communicate the semantic information. Finally, they remove the 'painting of the sounds' and speak only the words of the text for meaning.

Carey's rationale for these methods is that they are not only technical exercises for articulation, expanding the vocal colours of expression, breaking habitual expectations of speech, but that they work as decoys away from an emphasis of the reading of the words on the page. Carey explains that his teaching experience has revealed that: '...dyslexic students are often more able to engage with this imaginative approach to sound and expressivity than the more language-confident students who can be less connected to their physical, emotional and sensual impulses' (personal communication 2009).

In consideration of this exercise and dyslexia, in my experience, there will be some individuals for whom this exercise might be complicated. As the physicians Brock and Fernet Eide emphasise 'most individuals with dyslexia struggle with sound segmentation, (splitting words up into their sounds), and sound discrimination, (distinguishing sounds from one another) (Eide & Eide 2011: 23). However, they later describe that, although all of those with dyslexia are individual, most will remember things they have experienced, or imagined as mental scene-based, big pictures (ibid.174). Herein is a paradox of dyslexia and facilitation; the work might be enormously freeing for some, but especially difficult for others.

Carey's point of taking the focus off the reading of the words is relevant to the dyslexic problem, but leads me back to the entry point of this study. If those with dyslexia do not read exactly what Shakespeare has written, sometimes skimming or supplanting their own improvised words in their 'reading', they not only deny Shakespeare's voice, but can fail to comprehend the meaning and possible intentions of the text, impacting on themselves, their colleagues, and their audience. The unresolved arguments around the nature of dyslexia, despite years of extensive research in many areas, reveal what a convoluted area it presents in practice. It is significant that the literature about dyslexia contains a frequent re-iteration of the words, 'difficult', 'problem' and 'complex', both in describing the experience of the individual with dyslexia, and that of the researcher attempting to comprehend, or find trust-worthy answers.

Indeed, Nicolson and Fawcett remark that:

If it were not the case that dyslexia is both prevalent and debilitating, a researcher might be excused for choosing a more convenient research area, one not confounded by so many uncontrollable factors.

(2010: 13)

2.9 Conclusion

In this review I have identified that the gap in knowledge regarding the areas of my enquiry is multi-faceted; each of the factors contributing towards the problematic issues. Covering several interdisciplinary subject areas, it is evident that there is:

- a) A gap in the use of educational theory to underpin the delivery of actor training and methods.
- b) A gap in amassed articulation of experience, explicit theory about teaching approaches, and the dissemination of that knowledge in actor training.
- c) A gap in the research about dyslexia within the environment of actor training, with the purpose of understanding some of the possible causes and manifestations of dyslexia.
- d) A gap in the informed practice of the teaching of those individuals with dyslexic characteristics and challenges, and the linking of the explanatory theories (underlying the spectrum of dyslexia and co-morbidities) with the practice of acting.
- e) A gap in the teaching methods regarding Shakespeare (beyond those of Linklater's sonnet exercise) that are consciously tailored to enable acting students with dyslexia, in the reading and acting of Shakespeare.
- f) A gap in the voiced, recorded experience of acting students with dyslexia, in the literature. Currently (apart from Leveroy's evolving research) there is a void in this area.

This review has identified the urgent need and opportunity for me to endeavour to address these gaps, through my employment of action research and case study, with my acting students assessed as dyslexic. In my next chapter I explain my methodology, what I did and how I did it.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I focus on the principles and philosophy that underpin the methodology utilised in this study. This is followed by a discussion as to why I chose the combined methodologies of action research and case study, and arising issues around validation, ethics and confidentiality. In section two I describe the research design and the methods that I have used.

Throughout this chapter at the relevant points, there are references made to draw the reader's attention to the linking evidential material contained in the Appendices, Volume Two.

3.1 Section One

3.1.1 My ontological and epistemological assumptions

I will now define the ontological and epistemological perspectives that have shaped my research intentions, influenced the choice of methodology, and the research methods that I have selected. In examining my ontological and epistemological assumptions, I have become aware of how powerfully my life experiences and the spheres of my career paths have shaped my world views.

My ontological perspective is one of relativism, maintaining the belief that the mind, body and world are inextricably combined, that it is not possible to observe the world and reality objectively, as external things that exist independently outside of the conscious self. Reality is not fixed in universal laws, but is subjective, according to interpretation. As Husserl stated:

The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making: it is the natural setting of and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions.

(Husserl 1964:11)

Reflecting on how my life experience has shaped my views, I realise that my encounter with the entrenched beliefs of apartheid has impacted on my understanding of the shifting perspectives of reality. Working in South Africa in the early 1970's, I observed at close hand how an absolute belief in an ideology of truth, (viewed as external and fixed, although internally created), can blind human perception and freedom of thought, resulting in a lack of compassion for others, and that such realities can crush the development of human beings. Because of this 'truth', (which was habituated from birth through the laws of the land, infrastructure and education), it was deemed appropriate that those of an 'inferior race' should be segregated, denied certain human rights, education, and opportunity enjoyed by the majority of those from the approved race. (Of course there were some who believed different 'truths', and strove to undermine such 'realities'). Today, the laws of apartheid have crumbled and a different reality has begun to succeed. Having experienced the certainty and harsh truths of apartheid, I have been amazed at the transformation of these perceived realities. This has taught me to keep my mind open as to what might be considered truth.

Since I was a small child I have lived in an environment of the nurturing of the imagination, with a relishing of the arts (especially in those of performance and acting). When training his actors, Stanislavski emphasised the kind of reality created from the imagination, which an actor utilises when performing a role. He stated:

Of significance to us is: the reality of the inner life of the human spirit in a part and a belief in that reality. We are not concerned with the actual existence of ... the reality of the material world! ...try always to begin by working from the inside...put life into the imagined circumstances and actions until you have completely

satisfied your sense of truth...truth on the stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity...truth cannot be separated from belief nor belief from truth.

(Stanislavski 1980; 129)

As a teacher in the subject of acting, I assist others in the building of multiple worlds, from both a relativist and transactional perspective, (where experience refers to an interaction with the environment) (Biesta 2003:28). It therefore follows that my epistemology is one of interpretive constructivism.

The concept of constructivism has come to inhabit a broad range of subject areas (Richardson 2003: 1624). Beginning originally as a theory of learning, its premise has expanded to include a theory of teaching, education, knowledge, cognition, ideology, and ethics (Mathews 2000:161). As various forms of constructivist knowing play a key role throughout my study, for lucidity, I will now outline the principal categories of constructivism that are relevant within this enquiry.

Phillips identifies two generally accepted types of constructivism. Although he describes them as separate things, which must be distinguished from each other (Phillips 2000:6) Richardson questions that division when placed within the social aspects of the classroom (2003: 1624). In the areas of my research investigation, they appear occasionally to be intertwined.

The first view of constructivism is of a social constructivism.

This is where meaning and bodies of knowledge are built up during social interaction. These human constructs have been determined through history, politics, ideologies, application of power, religious beliefs, ideas and preservation of status.

Bredo argues that some educational institutions display a kind of social constructivism that can make some students appear (or come to feel) intelligent or stupid, by exercising limited definitions of what counts as knowledge (2000: 133). As Leveroy and I have noted (Leveroy 2013:92) despite the Equalities Act (2010) which states that in Higher Education

establishments the educator must ‘...avoid as far as possible by reasonable means the disadvantage which a disabled student experiences because of their disability’, in the areas of performance training and dyslexia, there remain teaching practices in method and assessment that support the dominant cultures of social constructions of ability.

The second view of constructivism is of a psychological constructivism.

This is when the individual actively constructs their own subjective understanding and meanings, through their life experience and interactions with the outside world. As each individual has their distinctive history and situated being in the world, it follows that their knowledge structure will be unique to them. Any new knowledge is not a replica of what is in the external world, nor received through a passive transmission from another, as the knowledge is built by the knower. Richards opines that this subjective psychological constructivism can take place within a social group. If the individuals share their meanings with each other, and the group come to an agreement about a phenomenon, it can be viewed as warranted knowledge (Richards 2003: 1625).

This subjective, psychological form of constructivism is explored in this investigation through: my construction of understanding, development of teaching, awareness of the various accounts of dyslexia, my participants’ understanding about themselves, and our shared construction of methods of work.

Furthermore, in their acting of Shakespeare, my participants engage in the reconstruction of texts conceived approximately four hundred years ago. Although Shakespeare’s characters have been enacted repeatedly by a myriad of actors before them, the participants’ interpretations are idiosyncratic to them, compiled from their individual subjectivity, melded with their knowledge drawn from their historical life-worlds, education, and further shaped by their experience/compensation of their learning (dis)-abilities. Their psychological constructions are also informed by social constructivist concepts of the genre of classical acting and Shakespearean literature.

One of the central enquiries of my study includes explorations of the participants' diverse methods of transacting with the author and the text. In a constructivist theory of reading, receptionist theorist Jauss (cited in Straw 1990:76) states that reading depends on the perception of the text (*aesthesis*) the interaction of the text with the reader (*catharsis*) and the active construction of the text by the reader within the boundaries set by the author (*poiesis*).

A constructivism theory of learning has its roots in the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Bredo 2000:133). Piaget claimed that when the learner encounters an experience that contradicts their existing way of thinking, a state of *disequilibrium* is generated. The learner then changes their thinking to re-establish equilibrium. By associating new information with ideas already known, they *assimilate* the new into their existing knowledge. Thus, in constructivist learning, knowledge is not absorbed as an objective thing that can be passed directly from teacher to student, or from student to teacher, but is scaffolded onto existing knowledge, skills and expectations (Twomey Fosnot 1996:14, Gallagher 1992: 38). At the centre of Vygotsky's theory is the belief that the outside influence of culture and society forms and shapes the individual, rather than natural biological phenomena. The importance of the human interactive element as a primary activator in learning is apparent in Vygotsky's statement that: 'every function in the development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people, and then inside the child' (1987:57).

A constructivist theory of teaching encompasses both Piaget and Vygotsky viewpoints, with the expectation that teaching should facilitate a group dialogue to foster the creation of shared understandings, give attention to the individual and their prior knowledge, provide task based opportunities so that students can construct their own understandings, and to offer opportunities for the development of student meta-awareness of their own learning processes. Much of this study, through dissection, scrutiny, experiential investigation and evaluation, progresses to encompass these constructivist pedagogical concerns.

My theoretical perspective is situated within an interpretivist paradigm. My approach is one of *verstehen* - (to understand), and that of *sich miteinander verstehen* - which Gadamer explains as 'to come to an understanding with each other' (Gadamer 1997: 180). Patton describes *verstehen* as a 'placing of emphasis on the human capacity to know and understand others through empathetic introspection and reflection based on direct observation of and interaction with people' (Patton 2002: 52). *Verstehen*, as Patton describes it, is familiar territory for me, being comparable to the form of knowledge gained through art forms such as drama and story-telling, where coming to understand is through watching, experiencing, listening, depiction and the playing out of the human situation. It is akin to the process that actors engage in when studying others, in order to inhabit a character in their acting, and their exchanging of ideas with the ensemble involved in the performance. Furthermore, my shared background with my participants, as a former actress, acting student, and my own assessed learning disability, (dyscalculia), evokes a *verstehen*, which assists in providing insights about , and with, my participants.

In order to achieve an understanding of a person, Heidegger says we need to step into the hermeneutic circle (1967:363). According to Gadamer, the act of understanding is continually moving from the parts to the whole, and the whole to the parts (1997:190). Hermeneutics argues that the interpreter can only interpret from a certain perspective of past experience, so there is always a pre-understanding state. As Heidegger explains, when stepping into the hermeneutic circle one enters with 'fore meanings of provisional knowledge', and when projecting these 'fore meanings' onto 'the things themselves', there has to be a constant re- interpretation of meaning, when the fore-meanings come to be replaced with new perceptions, leading to a more developed understanding. Heidegger specifies that the questioner must always guard against bias, such as 'arbitrary fancies' and 'limitations imposed by ...habits of thought' (ibid. 1997: 266).

In an interpretivist, constructivist paradigm it is acknowledged that the researcher cannot be neutral, and value free. Indeed, Carr and Kemmis (1986:192) point out that the active practitioner sets out to appraise whether

their assumptions are habits or ideology, aware that their knowledge-constitutive interests will influence their conceptions and actions in their research. I recognise that I bring to the enquiry my pre-conceptions about what good acting might be, interpretation of Shakespeare's writing, the role of a teacher, the concept of dyslexia, and certain expectations about my participants. I am alerted to removing unsubstantiated prejudice in my thinking.

3.1.2 My methodology

My methodology is educational action research underpinned by case study; that of two separate methodologies which are sometimes enveloped into one (Stenhouse in Winston 2006 :42 , Cohen et al 2007: 255, Thomas 2011: 36). Both of these methodologies fit comfortably within the working conditions of teaching and acting.

It is important to me that my research study is of a qualitative nature. As there is little documented knowledge about the experiences of acting students with dyslexia, nor teachers' testimonies about facilitating this predicament, I think it imperative that I really *listen* to what my participants say and *notice* how they are behaving, and *record* their words and actions in a detailed thick description (Geertz 1973). Clifford Geertz's label of a 'thick description' does not imply a simple recording of events, but is about situating them in their context, so that constructions of meaning are gained through 'seeing the full picture' – an understanding depending on the situation they are happening in (ibid.9).

In order to find out some answers to my research questions about the role of visual constructs in supporting dyslexia, the imprecise articulation of speech in some of those with dyslexia, how dyslexia is manifested in the participants' approach and work, and the removal of barriers within my teaching practice for those with dyslexia, I have to ask some additional questions, such as: what is happening here? How are the participants affected by the experience? Why are they affected? What happens when? What is related to what? (Thomas 2011:35). What might be done to improve the situation? (McNiff 2013). Moreover, in order to answer the above questions, I need to transfer my attention away from the participants and onto myself, and to further enquire:

what do I know? How do I know what I know? With what voice do I share my perspective? (Patton 2002: 66.). As part of delivering the evidence to lead to my findings in answering the questions, it is essential to provide descriptions of my journey, and the rationale behind my interventions, based on what I see and respond to.

Each participant involved in this study is distinct. The creative work of an actor is transient, phenomenological, and therefore unlikely to be reproduced with identical outcomes. Such intricacies of human behaviour within this particular context, (the study of those with dyslexic barriers reading and acting Shakespeare), cannot be captured satisfactorily for the aims of this study by evaluating the observations through quantitative measurements of numbers and averages.

This places my choice of methods within the 'lived experience' of a case study environment, based within 'bounded' and 'naturally occurring circumstances' (Simons 2009: 4). Although case study can be a study of 'the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake 1995: xi), my study involves observing twelve individuals as separate units, as an integral part of a larger unit. This is what Thomas calls a 'nested case study' (2011: 152) where each case can be contrasted with another, but is viewed within the context of the larger case. Simons refers to similar circumstances in the 'collective case study' where several different cases might be compared or linked together. Simons claims that case –study is especially appropriate for exploring educational practice, due to the contribution of participants' self-knowledge, the gaining of knowledge about working in and between groups, and the opportunity for audiences to learn from it and inform practice, policy and decisions (2009:5). Before I can decide on any remedial action to attempt to assist my participants, I need to gain some substantial knowledge about them, and their dyslexia, through such collective case - studies.

In consideration of the methodology of action research, the premise of thinking through action is at the core of an actor's psycho-physical discipline of embodied practice. When working with their students, the teacher of acting and

voice is rarely a passive observer. Teaching methods often require a participatory style, interacting with the students and the material. Both actors and teachers have a tacit knowing in their practice (Polanyi 1958) but can also reflect on their actions- in - practice, asking themselves: what am I doing? Why am I doing it? What do I hope to achieve? What is the effect of my actions? What did I learn through my actions? What happened when I acted? What action could I take to lead to a different outcome? As Neelands notes: 'the reflective practitioner does not bracket off episodes of practice for scrutiny, rather s/he continuously and persistently practise on a daily basis across a professional lifetime' (2006:19). This type of knowing - in - action, reflection-on –action and reflection- in – action (Schon 1987) is characteristic of acting and teaching practice, and is close to the methods inherent in action research. However, the methodology of action research works as a bridge between such practice and research (Somekh in Cohen et al 2007:298) producing theory and knowledge to illuminate the practice. That is why I consider action research as one of the most appropriate methodologies to provide answers to my questions.

There are a variety of action research interpretations (Costello 2003, Kerr & Anderson 2005). Alongside case study, it has proved an effective methodology for the professional development of teachers and the advancement of educational research (Altrichter *et al* 1993). Amongst the action research community, my research type might be labelled as participatory, education action research. According to Weiskopf & Laske cited in Cohen et al (2007:301), participatory action research identifies the researcher as a '...facilitator, guide, formulator and summarizer of knowledge, raiser of issues'. Noffke (Noffke & Somekh 2009: 21) has devised three headings under which to place the concerns of the educational action researcher, all of which encompass my own goals in this study. She names them as: the *professional*, (which is when teachers produce knowledge to add to a changing knowledge base), the *personal*, (which is when teachers focus primarily on their own development, skill and self-understanding), and the *political*, (which is when the researcher aims to inform social actions and democratic processes). McNiff underlines that there is no such 'thing' as action research, but that it is

a process of learning in relation to yourself and other people, and is therefore always educational (2013: 24), while Kemmis and Carr accentuate that action research is a form of social action; a process for emancipating practitioners from constraints of habit and ideology, so they might change social institutions (1986: 204).

The fundamental features of the approach are outlined below:

- i) Action research is an active process, carried out by practitioners into improving their own practice, or solving a problem, with the aim of enabling others. It is carried out *by* or *with* participants, but not *on* them (Kerr & Anderson, Reason & Bradbury 2006: xxv). The research activity is usually situated within the workplace, or the location of the identified problem.
- ii) Action research is value – laden because the practitioner is trying to ‘live in the direction of their own values’ (McNiff & Whitehead 2006:73).
- iii) Action research is cyclical in nature, with a focus on change (Costello 2003, McNiff 2013). The cycle usually follows this formulaic pattern:
 - a problem is identified
 - a possible solution is imagined
 - action is taken to understand, evaluate and change it
 - the action and outcomes are observed and reflected on and an evaluation is made, with possible modification
 - as this procedure progresses, data is gathered and evidence is generated about what is happening, and how things are changing

The marriage of case study and action research forms a complementary methodology, with an alternation from one to the other, as the need arises. Although a case study about the participants could yield useful insights, the

carrying out of action research, (in participation with my students), offers an experimental space for possibilities of practical change. In expressing the challenges of action research, Altrichter *et al* say, [‘t] he rigour of action research is that practitioner-researchers must live with their mistakes of their theorising, feeling them in a very existential way as the situation ‘talks back’ (1993: 208). However, the acceptance of my possible failures as being a valuable part of the learning cycle, lends me a confidence to put forth my ideas.

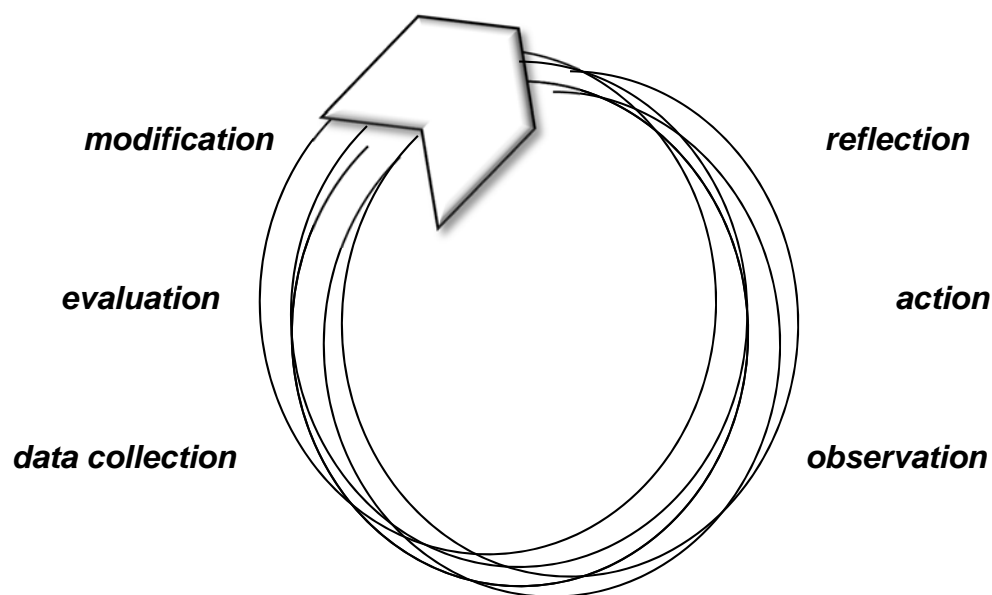


Figure 3.1 The repeated action research circle (adapted from McNiff 2006:9)

3.1.3. Matters of validation

To assess the knowledge claims resulting from action research, McNiff advocates the involvement of a validation group (2013:137). At the commencement of my study, I drew up an external body of practitioners in the area of actor training or dyslexia to serve as such. However, as my research evolved, responding to the various participants, there seemed no fixed point where samples of the work might be abstracted, and from which those who were unfamiliar with the subject area and the participants, might make an informed judgement about the validity of knowledge claims. It therefore became problematic for me to attempt to involve the group with the details of

the study as it unfolded. My research with the participants was long –term, and fragile in its emergent nature; requiring a holistic understanding of each individual, an acquaintance with their subtle or erratic expositions, and their development within the situation. Additionally, the involvement of a large amount of background theory across a range of disciplines, meant that explanations about the work would have been necessarily demanding in focus and time, for those who were unfamiliar with the area. Furthermore, the dyslexia specialists had little knowledge of acting methods, nor the actor trainers about dyslexia.

To engender a trustworthiness and credibility about knowledge claims, Lincoln & Guba underline the need for a prolonged engagement in the field to understand the phenomenon within the context in which it is embedded, so that it might be ‘thoroughly appreciated and understood’ (1985: 310). They include the necessity for a ‘persistent observation’, so that one might identify those elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem being pursued (ibid. 304). I believe that those who might be assessing the trustworthiness of my claims would also need to engage in such depth so as to be able to make an informed judgement. Greenwood & Levin affirm that communicating context-situated knowledge is a complex business, as the action research process is completely interlinked with the action, and deeply built into the context (Greenwood & Levin in Denzin & Lincoln 2008:73).

To evaluate my attempts at improvements and understanding, I drew from closer sources. McNiff includes the role of the critical friend as valuable for peer-validation (2013:137). To counter the lack of an external validation group, Ken Robertson, senior lecturer in acting, based in the acting department at the Arts University, has taken on this pivotal role. Throughout this study, Robertson has observed almost all of the work of the participants, providing critical feedback. Robertson fulfils the requirement for a ‘prolonged engagement’ and ‘persistent observation’ as he has obtained a knowledge of the participants and their work throughout their time at the university. A former actor who has been a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company for several years, Robertson has an expertise of teaching in both Shakespeare and Stanislavski’s method, and is a qualified teacher of drama and art.

Although including peer debriefing as a requisite, Lincoln and Guba warn there is a danger of the de-briefer criticising from a conventional framework of standards, thereby not acknowledging the 'other' of the naturalistic researcher (1985:309). In practice, this is what occurred when I exposed the work of my participants to three of my peers.

3.1.4 Peer validation

(Reference to the Appendices: there are two examples of the peer evaluations placed in Appendix Six, Volume Two, pages 386 - 387).

I invited three colleagues from the acting team at the Arts University to watch the participants' performance of their research project of *Venus and Adonis*. To my surprise, although complimentary about the performance and my teaching approach, in feedback they assumed a conventional 'outside - in perspective' of traditional assessment of student work, rather than trying to comprehend the 'inside – out experience' of the participants, and my aims and rationale for the style of performance, within the environment of the research project. In retrospect I realised that they had little understanding about dyslexia and its effects, nor of the theories of reading comprehension, and therefore lacked the specialised knowledge with which to recognise the significant details resulting from the dyslexia, the processes of the participants, and the rationale behind my strategies to assist them. This has meant that their comments were not specific enough to provide insightful feedback about the specific aims and claims of this study. Gallagher's guidance has relevance here when she states, that, ' [p]edagogic validity is not simply a measure of a drama teacher's skill ... but should be a marker of the quality and depth of inclusion and discovery-based, open –ended or self-directed learning in which participants can engage' (Gallagher 2006: 73).

However, a trustworthy source of validation was gathered from the participants, as the voices of those concerned and affected in the research (Altrichter et al 1993:173).

3.1.5 Participant validation

(Reference to the Appendices: examples of the participants' evaluative comments about the work are placed in Appendix Six, Volume Two pages 383 - 385).

Carr and Kemmis and Simons allude to the participants in the research as providing a judicious perspective about the work, 'ensuring accurate and adequate multiple validation of events and experiences' (Simons 2009: 131) and 'the stringent test of participant confirmation' (Carr & Kemmis 1986:91). As the participants are at the very centre of my research from which I have drawn my suppositions, organised my activities, and assembled my findings, I have continually returned to them for their evaluation, and the formation of my actions and conclusions, through interview and discussion.

3.1.6. Matters of ethics

The British Educational Research Association has a set of ethical guide lines (2011) to which researchers should adhere. The principal areas are:

- I. Participants must be treated fairly, sensitively, with freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, disability, cultural identity...or any other significant difference.
- II. Voluntary informed consent must be given. Participants should agree to their participation, without duress. They must understand the process, how it will be used and to whom reported. They have the right to withdraw at any time.
- III. Researchers should avoid deception.
- IV. All actions must be in the interests of the participants.
- V. No distress or harm must be caused to the participants.
- VI. Researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their reflective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher, and the impact on students and colleagues.
- VII. Privacy. Researchers must recognise the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to

confidentiality and anonymity, unless they specifically and willingly waive that right. In such circumstances it is in the researchers interests to have such a waiver in writing.

I have been granted permission and agreement for my research by my employer, the Arts University Bournemouth.

3.1.7 Matters of anonymity

(Reference to the Appendices: an example of the Consent Form, parts one, two and three is placed in Appendix One, Volume Two, pages 323 - 331).

Every participant involved in this study has given their consent to be involved in my research study. Each individual has been given a consent form to sign, where information about my research questions, research rationale, data collection methods, and methodology has been included. As the work has developed, a second part of the consent form has been given to all the participants to sign, with agreement to photographs of themselves being included in the dissertation, or in publications, as examples of their work. Finally, another addition has been added, where they have signed an agreement to the use of their first names throughout the study. They have all signed these forms willingly, without any coercion.

A question over participant anonymity has arisen due to the inclusion of photographs depicting their work. There are some pictures included which show examples of their image making as external objects outside of themselves, and therefore participant identification is not necessary. However, much of the research centres on their development of performative methods of image making, using their bodies to experience and communicate the text. Live physical performance is difficult to represent adequately in written words alone; the work centres on a presentation of themselves, through the medium of embodied image, often directed to an audience.

To demonstrate their physical language, (as a feature of this research), I think it is necessary to include the images of this work, so that the reader might understand clearly. As the psychologist Bill Gillham (2000: 91) underlines, in case study, illustrations can be a significant part of the narrative, forming

important chains of evidence, while Norton stipulates that in action research, some participants, as co-researchers, might deserve acknowledgement for their efforts, rather than being concealed (2009: 187). Lecturer in health research, Anne Grinyer (2004) has argued that some participants have a desire to claim an ownership of their information, rather than be represented by a pseudonym.

In this case, I have asked all of the participants shown in the photographs if they agree to their images being included, to which they have assented. As I am incorporating their images, it seems inappropriate to then change their names to a pseudonym. Therefore, for consistency of method, and for parity amongst all of the participants, whether their photographs are included or not, I am using their first names only. All participants involved have signed consent forms to agree to the use of their first names and their images.

3.1.8 My role as teacher and action researcher

I am aware of the delicate balance between the role of teacher and researcher in relation to my participants, and as the assessor of their degree work. As teacher of the participants, I have in place a 'self-conscious and situated moral practice', (Mason 2002:101). The attention that I give to my participants throughout my teaching of them in classes, research workshops, feedback and discussion is always in their best interests, removing barriers to their work, assisting their opportunities, supporting their potential, and developing my ability to help them. My action research functions in tandem with my teaching role, rather than against it, wherein I am able to incorporate my responsibilities as the teacher of the second year student cohort, with the research involving my participants. If it became clear that what I was doing was upsetting one of my research subjects, (or the rest of the student cohort), I would stop immediately.

3.1.9 Matters of bias

In recognition of the danger of bias emanating from an external source, a 'researcher blinding' approach was adopted, to guard against the possibility of forming a distorted perspective. A decision was made not to access the

educational psychologist's reports about each participant so that the findings of the study would not be influenced by assessments made by others outside of this research investigation.

3.2. Section Two. The Research Process And Methods

3.2.1 The participants

(Reference to the Appendices: examples of transcribed interviews with each of the participants are placed in Appendix Three, Volume Two, pages 352 - 366)

There are twelve participants involved in this study, who are second year acting students on the Acting degree course at the Arts University. They have all been assessed by an educational psychologist as dyslexic, either at the Arts University, or before they came to the university. At the beginning of my research, I was familiar with each participant, having been their voice teacher throughout their first year on the course.

I began my research for this study with the first participants in 2009.

3.2.2 The setting and material

My study of each participant began during my teaching of the nine week Shakespeare unit, at the beginning of their second year on the course. The studies were conducted in the teaching studios provided at the Arts University.

The Shakespeare unit explores methods of acting Shakespeare's text through class exercises, monologues, scene study and a final assessed performance of a scene to an audience. Alongside the acting classes, there is an accompanying voice unit which I also teach. This voice unit aims to develop knowledge of Shakespeare's written form, the technical and expressive requirements of the speaking of classical text, and has an assessed performance of a Shakespeare sonnet. For both units, a wide variety of Shakespeare texts are used as working material.

In January 2009 I embarked on a pilot study, involving the creation of a computer tool, using a Shakespeare sonnet as a foundation, and the development of picture cards, and posters for teaching purposes.

In 2013, I extended the research with the participants beyond the Shakespeare unit, into the voice unit connected with the Actor and Audience acting unit. The accompanying voice unit concentrates on storytelling genre, reading technique, and a final performance of narrative text is assessed.

3.2.3 The teaching structure with the participant groups

- I. In 2009, there were forty eight second year acting students, with three students assessed as dyslexic.

For voice classes the cohort was broken down into two groups of sixteen and one of seventeen. These voice classes were taught back to back and were an hour and a half long, over the three hour long morning. They were taught twice weekly.

The Shakespeare acting group were broken into half, with twenty four students in each group, with another tutor teaching the other half. The three students assessed as dyslexic were with my group.

The timetable was sometimes taught in large groups in three hour classes, but, when working on individual scenes, the cohort was broken up into smaller groups.

- II. In 2010, there were twenty three acting students, with one student assessed as dyslexic. In both voice and Shakespeare classes I taught the whole cohort.
- III. In 2011, there were forty-nine acting students, with four students assessed as dyslexic. In voice I taught the entire cohort. For Shakespeare classes, the cohort had been divided into half. I taught twenty five students, including the four students assessed as dyslexic.
- IV. In 2012 there were thirty-five acting students, with four assessed as dyslexic. In voice classes, I taught the whole cohort. In Shakespeare classes, I taught seventeen students, including the four participants assessed as dyslexic.

- V. In 2013, the cohort for the story- telling voice unit was the same as for Shakespeare 2012, with four participants assessed as dyslexic.

My action research workshops with all the participants carried on beyond the cohort classes and completion of the Shakespeare unit. It was often the case that issues which had arisen during the unit required further exploration in workshops or interviews, separated from the general classes, or after the unit had concluded.

3.2.4. *My relationship with the participants*

During the research, I have shifted between three roles. Sometimes I assume the insider position, when studying myself and my teaching practice, or that of the insider in collaboration with the other insiders, as I share the role of investigator into dyslexia and its effects, with the participants. Frequently I assume an ethnographic position, observing from outside in, trying to look into the participants' world and understand how they understand. I recognise that my understanding will always be subjective, as no producers of knowledge can be politically and historically neutral (Kincheloe & McLaren 2008: 412). Throughout, I have attempted to build a 'Being –With' (taking a stand in support of the other person) and a 'Being – For' (being present in relation to another person, listening and hearing others' feelings, thoughts and objectives), (Moustakes in Patton 2002:8).

3.2.5 *Collection of data*

My data collection began in October 2009 and finished in August 2013. The differing types of data are frequently referred to in the description of process, as part of the analysis, and offered as examples of evidence, within the chapters of this study.

a) Records collected through field notes

When teaching the participants, or in action research workshops, I sometimes recorded the actions of the participants by writing notes, as advised by McNiff

& Whitehead (2006:138) and Thomas (2011:164). These notes were frequently referred back to as memory joggers, instigators for action, or analysis.

b) Interviews

(Reference to the Appendices: examples of the participant interviews are in the Appendix Three, Volume Two, pages 352 - 366).

At the commencement of my research with each participant, I conducted an audio-recorded, semi-structured interview. Although these initial interviews were structured around the same questions for each participant, the participants were free to break out of the question structure. This was to gain in-depth information about their feelings and compensatory tactics. These interviews lasted for approximately one and a half hours.

Open-ended and interactive interviews were conducted throughout the research period. As Simons relates, unstructured interviews are helpful for several key purposes: to discover the perspectives of the interviewee, develop dialogue, identify and analyse issues, allow emerging issues to advance, and uncover unobserved feelings (Simons 2009: 43). These interviews were usually audio – recorded, or filmed if the session had been timetabled. If interviews arose out of teaching situations, notes would be taken at the time to capture the data.

All the recorded interviews were transcribed and then checked for accuracy by the participants.

c) Observations

Direct observations were carried out during my teaching of the participants in voice and acting classes, in action research workshops, and performances.

I have utilised two types of observations (Gillham 2000: 21). Sometimes I acted as a detached observer within the setting, without making intervention. Close notes were taken and reflected on, in order to understand and to inform the action research directions. At other times I was a participatory observer, 'in' the setting, in an active sense (ibid. 21). The action research workshops

and performances were observed and filmed. Notes were taken on what happened.

Each participant demonstrated a variety of behaviours at various stages, which sometimes prompted smaller action research cycles of investigation, within the larger action cycles. As McNiff points out, '[t]he process is not sequential, but it is possible to begin at one place and end up somewhere else' (2013:67).

Participants observed their own behaviour, and each other, in classes and group workshops, and contributed responses in dialogue, or written records. The critical friend observed many of the action research workshops and participant performances, sharing his reflections and evaluative comments with me in interviews and reports. Discussions about the development and methods of the work were shared with my critical friend throughout the research processes.

d) Documents and physical artefacts

(Reference to the Appendices: there are examples of a range of these documents in the Appendices, Volume Two, including DVDs of the filmed examples of the work).

The documents relate to the transcribed interviews, films of the work, and email correspondence with the participants. In addition, as Gillham states is often the case (ibid.21), the physical artefacts I have collected, such as the drawings, images, and photographs of the participants' work, make up some of the most significant evidence in this study. All of this documentary evidence was helpful for making comparisons, and searching for clues to identify methods and themes.

e) Triangulation

In order to gain a richer picture of the situation, information was gathered from many sources, which had been cross checked from differing angles. Patton outlines four areas of triangulation, as originally presented by Denzin (1978 in Patton 2004: 247). These are: the collection of data through the use of multiple

methods, investigation of multiple theories in interpretation, investigator perspective, such as the critical friend, and a variety of data sources.

3.2.6 Data analysis

(Reference to the Appendices: examples of the colour coded analysis of interviews are placed in Appendix Five, Volume Two, pages 371 - 381).

a) Identifying particularities, challenges and themes

To begin to analyse the data, I watched the films of the practical workshops and performances, identifying significant behaviours and complexities. I transcribed some of the emerging methods and re-occurring themes revealed in the films by writing descriptive documents about the work, to be further analysed with other connecting data threads.

I re-read through all the interview content, looking for patterns of subjects, and then colour coded the emerging themes for cross analysis. The use of contrasting bright colours marked on the pages, underscoring each area of attention in the interviews, meant that the prominent themes and their frequency of reference used by all the participants became visible and decipherable. I then matched these themes with the evidence produced through the collected data of practical work in films, drawings, notes, observation, performance, shared reflection with the critical friend, and dialogue with the participants.

b) Searching for meanings

Throughout the research time, I was continually searching the literature in a wide range of subject areas, for associative theories from which I might draw, to enable making sense of the emerging data. Having analysed the data, recognising the prominent themes, I drew the connecting threads together.

c) Checking for feedback on my understandings and strategies with the participants.

Feedback from the participants was continually sought at several levels; such as during the field work, in interviews, and following my interventions. This

shared interactive dialogue was an ongoing component of the research process. (Reference to the Appendices: examples of the participant feedback are referred to in Appendix Two, Five and Six, and in the dissertation).

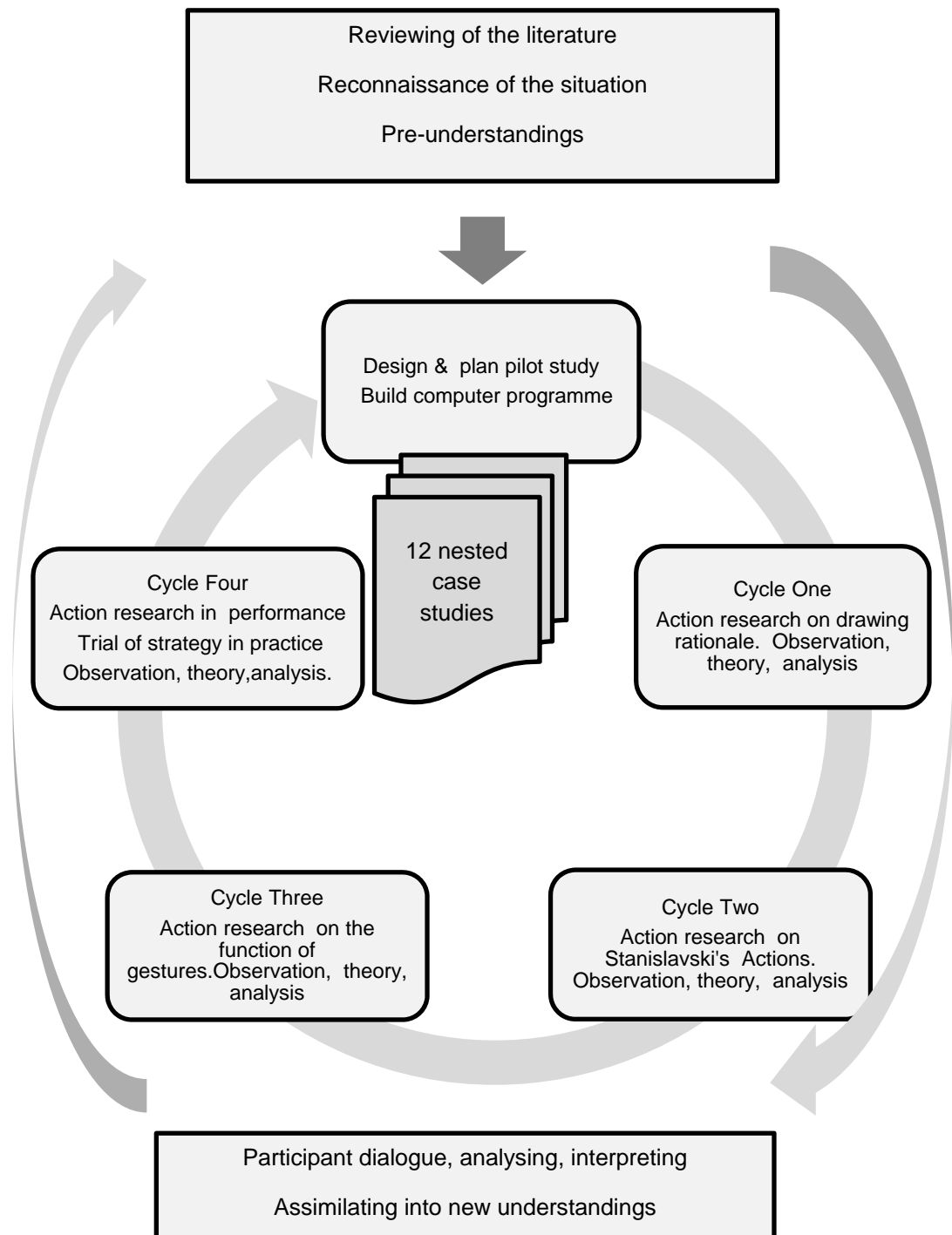


Figure 3.2 The hermeneutical cycle of understanding; the overall process of my research action in this study

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described my philosophical perspectives, focussed on the methodology, some ethical considerations and the research design.

In the next chapter I present my first group of participants, provide a case study examination of their difficulties arising from their dyslexia, and methods of image use as a reading and acting prompt. I embark on an action research trial of intervention, through further development of their image making as an access conduit into the text.

CHAPTER FOUR

Finding the way in; words as images and poetry as painting that speaks (Simonides, cited in Paivio 1983:3)

4. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the principles which have influenced my methodological approach, my choice of an interpretive, constructivist epistemology incorporating qualitative data collection methods. The decision to use a method of case study, intermeshed with action research, was motivated by the need to observe closely, so that my actions might be driven by understanding.

Introduction of the participants featured in this chapter

This chapter focuses on four participants; they are Participant One (Jimmy), Two (Richard), Three (Ashley) and Four (Rose). An historical and socio-psychological overview about each individual in this chapter is placed in Volume Two, Appendix Three, pages 353 – 356.

On DVD Two, Appendix Eight, there are filmed examples of interviews with Ashley, Jimmy and Rose where they describe their difficulties with dyslexia and with reading Shakespeare. Throughout this chapter at the relevant points, there are references made to draw the reader's attention to the linking evidential material contained in the Appendices.

4.1 Overview Of Chapter

In this chapter I employ a case study design when recording the participants' methods of translating the text into an illustrative, semiotic form. Having noted in their interviews a tendency to prioritise image over the written word, I examine the application and function of this visually dominated trans-mediation in practice. Secondly, in an action research trial, (Cycle One), I endeavour to harness their visual methods into a possible teaching strategy. Finally, I arrive at my conclusions through analysis and interpretation of the theory.

4.1.1 Key to the overall structure of the chapter

4.2 Background and rationale

This section looks at the argument for the use of drawing as a visual approach into Shakespeare's text, and why some individuals with dyslexia might show a propensity towards visual cognition. Exercises using drawing recommended by voice practitioners, and the art work of a Shakespearean actor are also considered as ways into the text. The focus is particularly on acknowledging the experience of some individuals with dyslexia, through statements and literature from actors, artists, and the participants.

4.3 My introduction of the visual storyboard

This section describes the preparatory work of the storyboarding research, introduced in the voice classes.

4.4 The workshops

This section is in two parts. In the first part I use a case study method in examining and recording the visual strategies used to dissect the text by each participant. In the second section I describe my action research, (Cycle One), with the participants and consider the outcome.

4.5 The analysis

In order to corroborate my findings, an investigation of theoretical findings from trials in areas of science, psychology and arts education is explored.

4.6 The conclusion

Here I present the rationale for the participants' methods developed into a teaching strategy, underpinned from my merging of theory with practice.

4.7 Future work

In this section I set out the areas I will be investigating in the next chapter.

4.2 Background And Rationale

In his book, the *Year of the King* (1985) actor Anthony Sher gives an account of his building of the character of Richard III, a role he played at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1984. A fundamental element of Sher's process, in coming to create his characters, involves the use of his skills in drawing and painting. Through a visually dominant medium, Sher sets about capturing aspects of his imaginative conception of the character (Sher 1989). Sher's research for creating Richard III included his sketching of geographical land structures, the muscular anatomy of the bull, the contortions of the physically disabled, and individual facial characteristics that might encompass elements of Richard III's personality.

Sher's working drawings are realised in the moment of seeing, or built up at a later point (during rehearsals or after performance), through association and imagination. These drawings are Sher's research data, to be transmuted through the channels of his body.

Possessing accomplished artist's skills, Sher's painting and drawings are as finely executed as his acted characters. His pictures distributed through his diary records in the *Year of the King*, reveal his fantasies on the page. However, the image - making process does more than that. There is a kind of interplay between the drawer and the drawn; as the personification comes into being through the marks on the page, it speaks back to its creator, influencing its formation.

Sher's visual concept of the role is apparent in his metaphorical painting of Richard III, featured on the front cover of the book. The depicted creature, with a black spider- like body, sporting a bull's muscular shoulders, topped with the crowned head of a king, scuttling across the floor on thin spider legs, exhibits Sher's visually led 'melting pot' (1989: 38). Shakespeare's word paintings, wherein he compares Richard to a variety of 'hell bound' animals, are the inspiration for Sher's depictions (Sher 1985: 118).

Aside from describing his own faculty for art, Sher does not elaborate on the potential benefits of expanding theatrical communication, nor entering the text through another medium, such as drawing.

4.2.1 The inner landscape

Berry, Carey and Clark Carey are three vocal practitioners who include the act of drawing as an exercise for working on text (Berry 2008:120, Berry 2001:227, Berry 1993:190, 197, Carey & Clark Carey 2010: 35, 37, 46). The exercises are not meant to nurture a virtuosity in drawing technique, but to provide a conduit to connect with, and clarify the content of the text for those reading and speaking it.

Berry has labelled her drawing exercise as a 'displacement strategy'; a means to distract the actor from their preconceived assumptions (2008: 105). In this exercise, Berry asks the actor to speak a monologue and cognitively dual task by simultaneously drawing something which is unrelated to what they are saying, such as a view from the window, or the pattern on a carpet (2008:120 -122. 2001:227). Suggesting that the exercise encourages the actor to visualise and discover their thoughts as they speak, Berry instructs the actor not to illustrate the content of the text in their drawing. She stresses that the drawing must be an antithesis to the images in the speech (2008:121). Berry acknowledges that she does not understand 'why it works', but suggests that the act of drawing works as a distraction because the speaker has to search further into their mind to focus more specifically on what they are saying (2001:27).

This example demonstrates the dual tasking requirements demanded by some of Berry's exercises that can impede those with dyslexia. Many of those with dyslexia find it hard to multi- task; especially when an assignment involves reading written text, speaking words, doing a physical task, and the use of short term and working memory. It is common for those with dyslexia to have attention difficulties, 'springing from an inability to integrate ...information from different sensory channels' (Broomfield & Combley 2003:6) due to a possible lack of automaticity (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010: 68) and many have problems in any situation that involve a number of sub-skills (Mortimore 2008:111).

In their collection of exercises, Carey & Clark Carey have included some drawing exercises to engage with the text, which might be beneficial to those with dyslexia (2010: 35). The exercises utilise a balance of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities. They are often paired or solitary pursuits, experiential in nature, thereby removing the pressure of a 'correct' performance of a finished product.

Carey and Clark Carey devote a whole chapter of their book to 'image' , underlining that, ' language creates pictures in the mind's eye that we respond to as if real' (ibid. 33) emphasising that the actor needs to activate a vivid inner landscape of images related to the text, in order to transfer them to the listener (ibid. xi).

4.2.2 The view of those with dyslexia: picture thinking

It is frequently postulated that many dyslexics utilise a dominantly visual modality (West, T. 1997, Davis 1997, Morgan and Klein 2000, Bacon & Handley 2010, Essely 2008, West, O. 2007, Mortimore 2008, Aaron & Guillemard 1993, McLoughlin & Leather 2013).

To ascertain an accurate perception, the evidence I am engaging with here is drawn directly from those who state they have dyslexia. Every one of them accentuates a visual dominance in cognitive style.

The actress Susan Hampshire has documented her 'life-long battle with words', focussing on her struggle with dyslexia, in her autobiography (1990). When reading a script she emphasises that she needs 'hours and hours of preparation' and the use of a devised 'visual code' (1990: 118). In written correspondence (2011) she emphasises that she '...always uses pictures and colours when working on a script (including Shakespeare)...to jog my memory' [her underlining]. Hampshire explains that she has to process each word individually and therefore cannot interpret the whole piece as she reads. Through the use of drawing pictures and colours, Hampshire states she can immediately 'read' the meaning of the words. Hampshire avers that if she sees a blue colour, she knows that bit of the text has a 'spiritual tone', or if red, it would be 'joyous'. She accentuates that the symbols and colours must be

personally developed, because, if imposed by another, they would 'seem like mere words'. Hampshire underlines that often, '[m]y symbols are more extensive than those shown in my book' (2011). In the example from her book shown below, the symbols are subtle, but none the less play an important role to underpin her ability to 'read' the text.

(Reference to Appendices: Hampshire's correspondence is placed in Appendix Seven, Volume Two, pages 388 - 391).

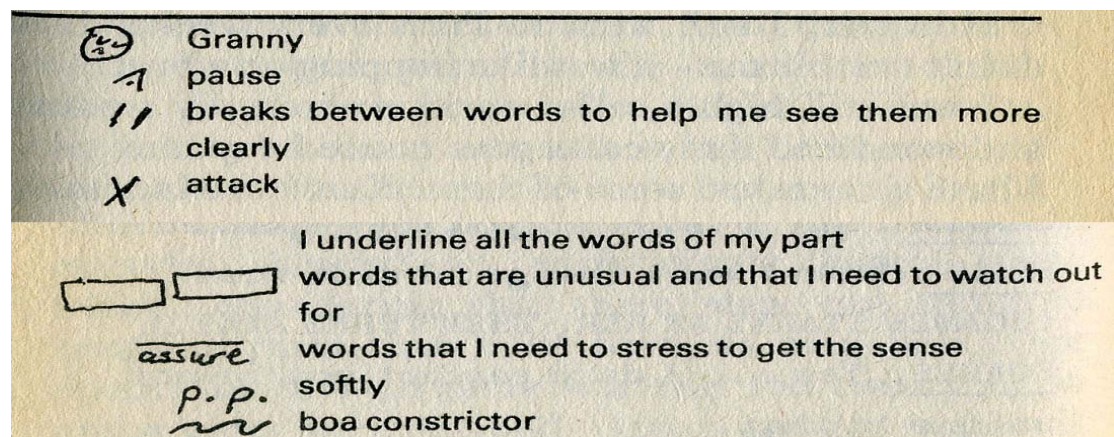


Figure 4.1 Example of actress Susan Hampshire's 'visual code' used on the script (1990:121). 'At first sight the average play baffles me' (ibid. 118).

Oliver West and Roger Essley are both authors and artists who state that they are dyslexic, and who share adverse school learning experiences. They both argue for change in teaching approaches. Although hailing from different continents (Essley is from America and West from England), they have individually devised and advocate analogous visual strategies to supersede the written text.

In West's book *In Search of Words* (2007) he recounts his distressing experiences at school, and criticises the teaching methods that exclude the 'non-linear thinkers' such as himself. West describes pictures as his first language, and English as his second, saying 'the jump for a dyslexic from thoughts to words is enormous but from thoughts to pictures is natural' (ibid. 28). In common with dyslexic teacher Ronald Davis (1997:13) West says that if a word does not have a picture attached to it, he cannot understand it.

Essley describes himself as 'an expert on school failure'. His book *Visual Tools* recounts that at school he 'read slowly, wrote painfully, and spent a lot of time drawing' (2008:14). When describing the limitations of following a mono - textual path, he employs the physically jarring metaphor, 'banging into text' (ibid.21).

Both authors' books are borne from a conviction that their methodologies of drawing and storyboarding can assuage the text block. Essley asserts that struggling students 'need these tools urgently' (ibid. 6). West maintains that those with dyslexia in education are made to feel disabled and that, '...to accommodate visual learners [and those with dyslexia], in our educational systems we must first properly understand how they think and how they can be encouraged to release their true potential' (ibid.3). He considers that storyboarding allows those with dyslexia to use '...pictures to say what you want to say, and then translate them later into a linear form' (ibid. 29).

Furthermore, teacher Ronald Davis (who states that he is dyslexic) agrees that traditional reading methods are ineffective for those with dyslexia. He explains, in *The Gift of Dyslexia* (1997) that in order for those with dyslexia to process a word, it must have a visual and auditory association attached to it. Davis made a personal discovery about his own learning modality when he was a child. At school he found that his perception of alphabetical letters was unreliable. Playing in the garden with mud, he made some clay models of the letters and discovered that the kinaesthetic, tactile and visual process enabled him to identify and memorise them (ibid. 70). Consequently, this moulding activity now plays a major role in his teaching methods for those with dyslexia. Davis recommends that a three dimensional sculptured representation of the meaning of a word can be built from clay, along with another sculpted model of the letters. As the builder constructs the word, Davis states that it must be spoken aloud, so that an auditory and visual image is simultaneously generated.

My method of visually storyboarding Shakespeare's text (as an exercise to support those with dyslexia) had been independently devised before my discovery of West and Essley's comparable initiatives. My own ideas have

been conceived directly from observations of my dyslexic students' working practices. In interview, my participants have strongly indicated a visual preference (underpinned by a kinaesthetic learning style) as their chosen way into grasping the text.

4.2.3 Participant references to image led strategies

The definition of the word imagery can be ambiguous. For the actor engaging with Shakespeare's text, Berry refers to two types of images: an image that 'paints an external picture', and those images that emanate from the 'inner landscape' (Berry: 1993:111). To be clear about the use of the word *image* in this study, I am guided by Shepherd's terminology, who distinguishes between types (1978: 160 - 161) which support Berry's classifications.

- i) A *Perceptual image* is an internal image created by the view of an external object. Shepherd maintains that these types of images, although reflecting the external, remain subjective as they are 'internally generated'. For example, we might 'see' a table, but it is in the brain that we actually perceive it. Thus everyone's conception of that table will be individually represented. (This correlates with Berry's 'external picture').
- ii) An *Entencephalic Image* originates spontaneously within the brain. Phenomenally experienced, complex and diverse in nature, such images arise from memory, imagination and dreams. These types of images play a significant role in creative thinking. (This is Berry's 'inner landscape').

In my interviews with my participants, both types of visual image as a primary component of process for them became apparent.

Jimmy explained that when he is acting (14.12.2009):

... it's purely images I have – always images, it's never words... it's just thoughts, feelings and images ... the image acts for an anchor for the word, the more ... detailed and specific to myself the image created, the more I am able to discover things about that word and then use my voice to put in what I have discovered about that word... just seeing something apart from

the dreaded format of what I have been afraid of for years – just simply letters – it helps... I would rather do an image than a word.

Ashley coined an unusual term to describe what he experiences. In interview (14.12.2009) he stated, 'I know I'm looking at lines of text, but, as I say words, I'm kind of *non-vacant* on what I'm reading'. When I queried what he meant by the term '*non-vacant*' he elucidated:

... to understand what I am reading I explain it to myself through whatever image I'm going to imagine, so in Shakespeare – I think that's why Shakespeare can be grasped by some dyslexic people because of this – it gives you so much imagery that you can imagine it ...I can pick out the images that matter...

Rose described her method of scribbling her responses to the text as '...my subconscious coming out of my finger tips'. She explains that colour 'kick starts my brain juices' and that '....everything in my mind is a colour and everything I say is a colour' (15.6.2011). For Rose, 'the picture comes first and then the movement' (14.12.2009).

Richard continues with this visual reliance saying, 'I think that nearly every word I know I remember as a picture, not as a word'. He describes having no phonological record of a word, 'I just have a picture of the word with no sound', and '...until I've got a picture of what the word looks like in my head...ways of spelling just don't make sense to me' (6.12.2010).

4.3 My Introduction Of The Visual Storyboard

4.3.1 Preparation for the action research

The voice classes run alongside the Shakespeare acting classes, as a component of the Shakespeare unit. In voice class, Shakespeare sonnets are worked on, through the study of the poetic form influenced by Hall (2003) Barton (1984) and Berry, while the physical work on the text draws from numerous sources including Berry (1993, 2001, 2008) Linklater (1992) Rodenburg (1997, 2001, 2002) Houseman (2008), and Carey & Clark Carey (2008, 2010).

Working the sonnet storyboard in voice class

Reference to the Appendices: the storyboard created for *Sonnet 65* can be viewed as a moving slideshow with an audio track of the sonnet in the *Sensing Shakespeare* computer programme on the CD Rom placed in Appendix Two, Volume Two. An illustration of it can be found in Appendix Two, pages 333-344.

The storyboard images of *Sonnet 65* created for the computer programme *Sensing Shakespeare* have been printed onto eighty-two postcard sized cards. Using these picture cards, I divide the whole class up into three groups and give each group a section of the shuffled pack of cards, which signify four or six lines of the sonnet. Each group also has a copy of the written sonnet from which to refer. I ask each group to 'write' the sonnet in the pictures and to 'read' the lines aloud, by looking at the pictures and 'telling' the story. When the individual groups have completed the task, we 'write' the whole sonnet together in picture form, either on the floor or stuck on the wall, and all the class 'read' it aloud, discussing the picture meanings, and sometimes suggesting ideas for visual re-writes.

4.4 The Workshops

Present: myself, critical friend Ken Robertson, the participant, and additional student to film the sequence. Date of the workshops 16th May, 13th 15th June 2011. The participant comments are all taken from the transcribed filmed workshops.

4.4.1 Method

Each participant worked with me for sixty to ninety minutes. The content of the workshops was as follows:

- I. Case Study: The participant presented their personal methods of working on a Shakespeare text, which had evolved from their own techniques and through the work during the Shakespeare unit
- II. Action research Cycle One: The participant worked with me through a sequence on a Shakespeare sonnet.

4.4.2 Case studies: participants' individual approaches of trans-mediation

Reference to the Appendices: there are filmed examples of Jimmy and Rose explaining their methods and rationale for their illustrative trans-mediation of the text on DVD Two, Appendix Eight.

The participants' use of drawing is not about achieving an aesthetic standard within the process itself, nor is it the performance. The visual journey acts as a cognitive cipher towards their acting performance.

Jimmy. His approach used on Aaron's monologue (Titus Andronicus, Act V Scene i)

Firstly, Jimmy stated he divided the text up into thoughts, to which he allotted different colours. Like Hampshire, (2011), associating colours with feelings, he elaborates, 'anger filled chunks of text would be red' or 'I'll get a sort of blue in my head... it's a change of thought for the character, so from yellow to blue'.

Jimmy explains:

When I think of text it is really hard for me to remember words and ... visualise letters ... I need to grab hold of the text and transform it into something I can understand by breaking it down into colours ... I remember almost like a film in my head of what's happening and the colour, and that film's awash with the colour I have learnt it in.

Secondly, Jimmy drew small pictures he associated with the text, 'a strong symbolist picture ...to help me remember that picture, I will always base it around something red ...a lot of the time it is the eyes...so I just build the picture around the red part. The use of red throughout helps me to pinpoint the main points'. He reflects that, 'the benefit from ... spending time with the pictures is you spend longer thinking about the lines you are going to associate with that picture... I couldn't imagine any other way of working – only through pictures' (15.6.2011).

The passage of text in the excerpt of Jimmy's story board:

Aaron:

Ay that I had not done a thousand more.

Even now I curse the day, and yet, I think,

Few come within the compass of my curse,

Wherein I did not some notorious ill:

As kill a man, or else devise his death;

Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it;

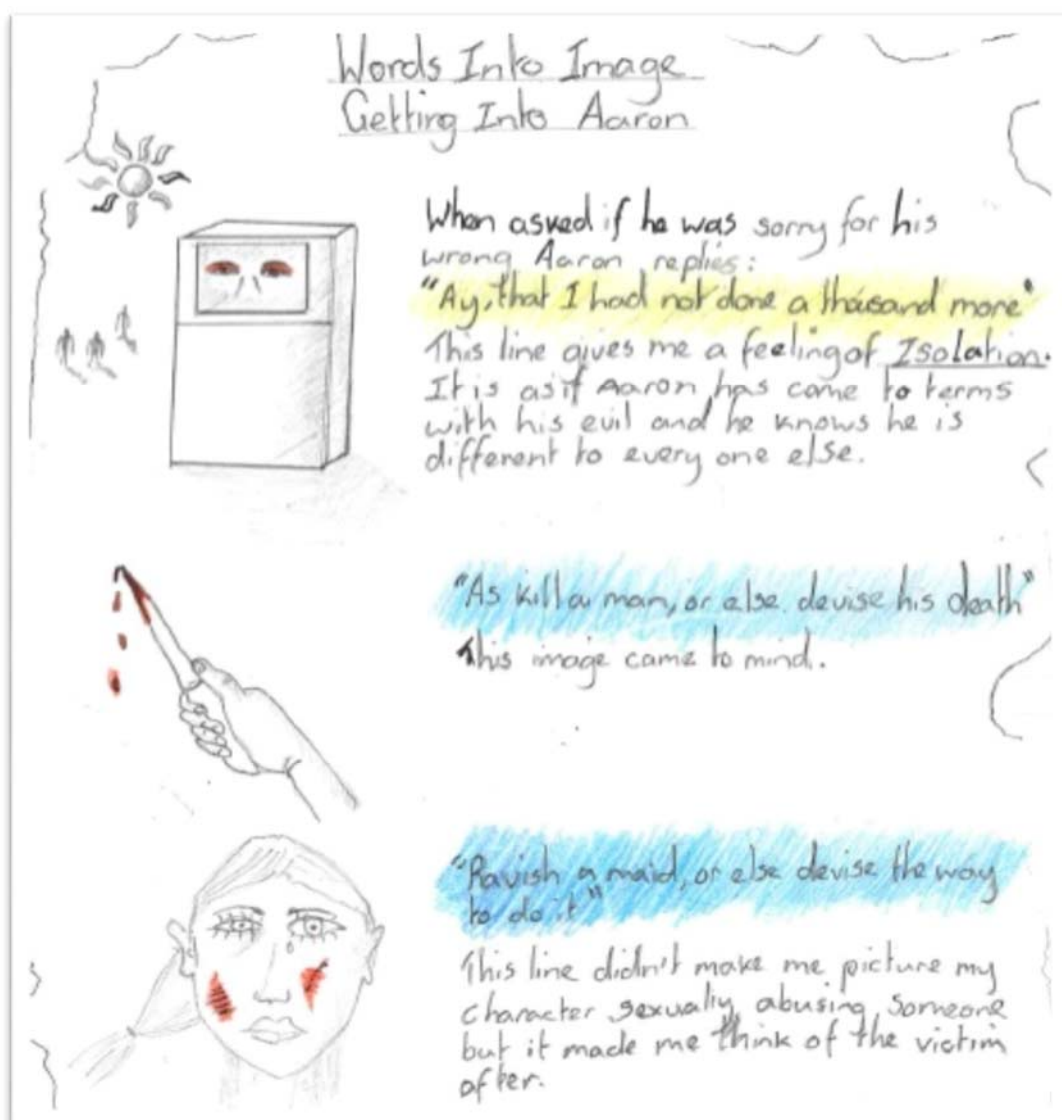


Figure 4.2 Clip from Jimmy's storyboard for Aaron's speech

Comment on the function of the symbols:

Jimmy's drawings remain deliberately naïve. He emphasises, 'the rougher and ...simpler you can make it the better'. I drew Jimmy's attention to the fact that he used a mix of types of images in his interpretation of Aaron's speech. The symbols seem to work concurrently as inner enactments and third person external narratives. Jimmy replied that he does not think about the kinds of image he uses, saying, 'it just comes, so that is the image I will use....and then I start to add the text ...it just runs like a film in my head'.

- i) For the line, '*Ay that I had not done a thousand more*' Jimmy's drawing is of a man trapped within a box, with only his eyes revealed. This is a metaphorical drawing, which could be an external description of the character, although it might stimulate internal feelings, if arising from Aaron's experience of isolation.
- ii) His second drawing for the line, '*As kill a man, or else devise his death*' is depicted through metonymy; signifying a knife dripping with blood, as a murder weapon. This could be Aaron's perception of his own knife, or an external descriptive representation.
- iii) The third picture of the injured female is external, descriptive and literal.

Richard. His approach used on Sonnet 147.

Firstly, Richard said he colour-coded the different themes within the sonnet. All the words that are to do with love, he highlighted in a red colour, blue for medical and green for diseases. He explains that the colour is important to him because:

the words are pictures in my head and if I give them this colour that means the picture in my head will be in that colour and ...helps me to realise what that word and meaning is, through the colour. I will remember the whole sonnet as a picture ... I'll know exactly where each word is on the page and what each word looks like and what font it is written in. This colour coding process infuses it a lot more.

Richard then moved on, 'to try to excite my imagination a bit more' with the use of pictures. As he spoke, Richard drew his examples on the board, breaking down the sonnet into symbolic images, saying, 'the first thing that comes into

my head is usually the best - if I think about it too much it becomes over complicated'. He drew a heart for the word *love*, and *fever* was represented by a thermometer in someone's mouth, saying, 'my drawing's atrocious but it doesn't really matter how it looks as long as I know what it means and for *longing*... – I have drawn a clock that is melting...I thought of time melting' (16.5.2011)

Next, when speaking Shakespeare's word '*nurseth*', Richard muddles the sequence of the syllables. Instead of '*nurseth*', he said, '*Nurthes* is really simple, just a woman with a stereotype nurse's bonnet on'. Richard sketched the figure of a man on the board explaining:

it is someone who is quite strong with broad shoulders, ... but he is getting smaller and smaller to almost nothing, as the love is draining him and because he is so ill and is on his knees because his love – this fever has bought him to his knees and this woman has taken everything from him – he is becoming nothing and he is going down and down ...

On the board he drew two kneeling figures. One has a chain around his ankles and wrists and kneels on a melting clock, (the clock representing the word *longing*).



Figure 4.3a

Clip from Richard's storyboard for *Sonnet 147*.

*'My love is as a fever
longing still for that
which longer nurseth the
disease*



Figure 4.3b continued.

These figures show examples of Richard's use of the *Psychological Gesture* (Chekhov 1985).

Comment on the function of the symbols:

- i) Richard's symbols are literal, acting as direct prompts for the words. '*longing still*' is an ideograph – represented by the metaphor of a melting clock, as time is passing, with the chained man upon it, being controlled by the commanding huge pointed finger of the subject of the sonnet.
- ii) When writing the word '*still*', Richard has written *sitl*, muddling the letter sequence, as he did when speaking the words *nurseth*, ('nurthes') and *remedial*, ('ermental').
- iii) Richard said that his drawings of the kneeling man became his physical actions when he performed the sonnet. Having observed his physical performance of the sonnet, I recognised the drawn figure. I realised that Richard, through his drawing, was employing a version of Michael Chekov's *Psychological Gesture*.

In explaining his *Psychological Gesture*, Michael Chekov used the example of the phrase, 'to draw a conclusion', illustrating how the human action is revealed within the words in language (1985:107). He said, '...the hidden

gesture slipped into the word, is the true driving force of the spoken word' (1991:74). Chekov explored how the doing of a physical gesture which is embedded within the language of the text, can activate the psychology and emotion, experienced internally. Directly related to Richard's process, Chekov used a drawing analogy to explain his rationale, saying, '[t]he *Psychological Gesture* becomes ...a kind of first, rough charcoal draft for the future picture, after which all the details will gradually emerge and cover the initial sketch' (1991:62).

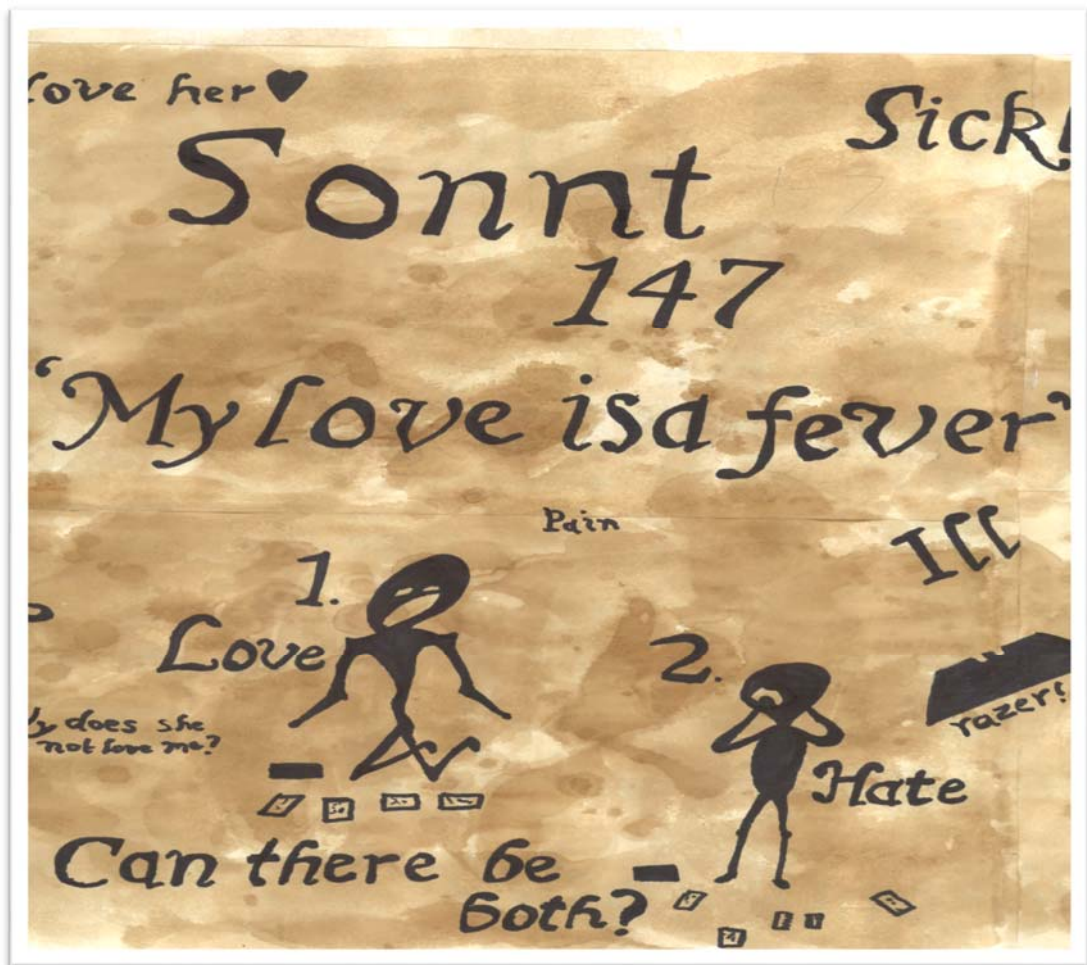


Figure 4.4. A clip from Richard's storyboard for his sonnet presentation, showing the *Psychological Gesture* positions that he assumed in his performance. Despite his care in the drawing, note the assimilation of the words 'is', 'as' and 'a' in the line 'my love is as a fever'; the word 'as' is possibly represented backwards, thereby dual - tasking the letter 'a', the omission of the letter 'e' in the word Sonnet (Sonnt) and the incorrect spelling of the word 'razor'.

Ashley. His approach used on Sonnet 80

Ashley had brought a box of images with him to demonstrate his method, collected from magazines and the internet. He has built up a library of images which he 'delves into' as a bank from which to work.

After speaking the sonnet aloud, he explained that he then illustrates it, saying:

A lot of my images are quite childish and cartoon like ... it's not a piece of art; it's just about an image that quickly associates with a word in your mind. I create in my mind images from past experiences that I have come to define in a sort of photographic sense... You can use one image for a whole line or half a line or a word. I lay these out as I go, (as Shakespeare has written it) and I get to the end of the sonnet.

In his demonstration, as Ashley spoke the words of the sonnet aloud, he rummaged through his picture bank and progressively built up the sonnet in pictures, sticking them onto the board. The combination of the placing of the pictures, with the speaking of the words materialised into a synergised denotation. Ashley underlined the value of the images over the word, (16.5.2011):

The words don't happen again, because the amount of time I have spent on each word, thinking about how it might be represented with so many images in front of me, I find I don't really need to go back to the written text because I have learnt it visually, which I much prefer.

The passage of text in the excerpt of Ashley's storyboard from *Sonnet 80*:

*Oh how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,...*

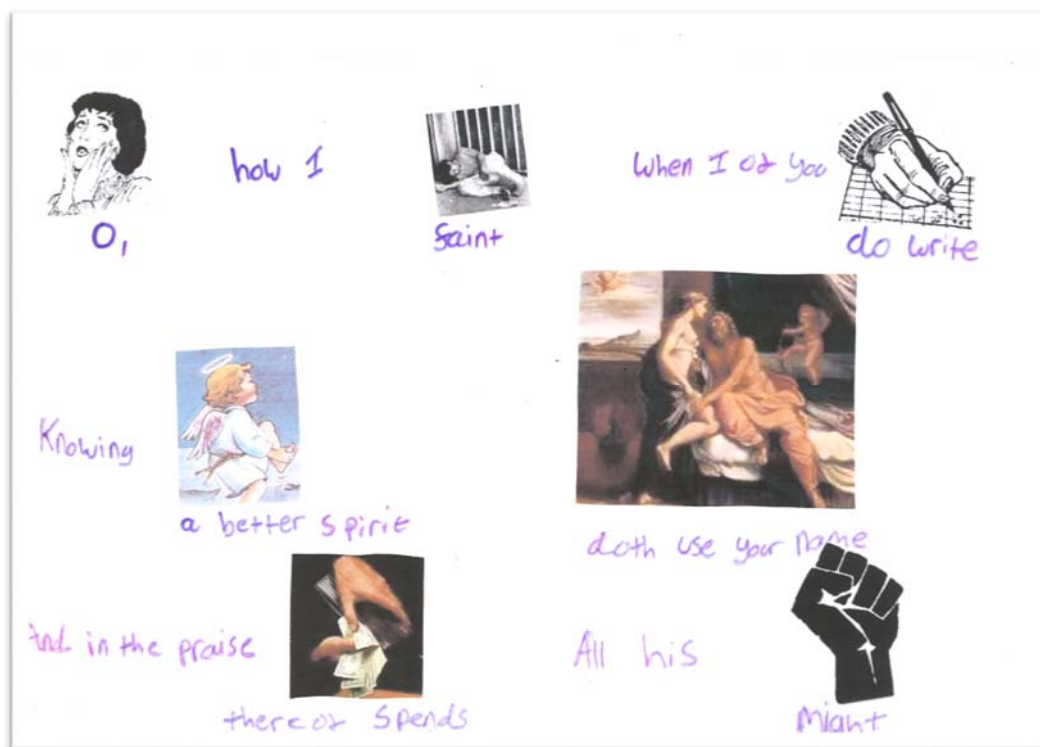


Figure 4.5 Clip from Ashley's storyboard for *Sonnet 80*

Comment on the function of the symbols:

I questioned Ashley about the fact that sometimes the picture chosen depicts a single meaning for the word, but does not capture the polysomic meanings within the whole sentence.

- i) For example, for the verb 'spend' Ashley had used a picture representing the act of spending money, rather than Shakespeare's other possible meanings of spending effort, or the sexual meaning of *spend* in Elizabethan terms, meaning an orgasm (Partridge 1968:187). Ashley answered that he '... programmes the pictures to have the images specific to how I want to say the sonnet...I plot in my mind the way I want the sentence to be said...and what tension it should be in...it needs to come from your Stanislavski tool kit, your objectives, emotional memory'.

- ii) In examination, Ashley's pictures graphically and precisely anchor his personal interpretation of the sonnet.

Rose. Her approach used on any Shakespeare text

Rose said that she will re-type the text, and then print it out on coloured paper. She does not change the black print, only the colour of the page it is printed on. For example, '...if it was a Lady Macbeth speech it would ...be red or dark green... The colours send a spark in my brain which help me relate to the text because usually by the next line that I've read, I'll have forgotten the line before... if I've got a colour I can ...remember the theme of the piece I'm reading'. Rose then customises the page of text as she works through it:

I'll take my piece of paper and doodle some dots, or some clouds or whatever it made me feel --- maybe cut a wiggly line here or cut a circle out, next to something that I'd have a hole in and ripped. I'd have a rubbishy piece of paper to most other people but to me that's everything that I felt as I went through it...if it's not directly related to the psychology of the piece, it's related to my connection with it.

She will then draw or stick pictures on to the text, or use gestures to feel her way through it. Making gestures with her arms as she spoke, Rose said: 'I'd do all this, and what I felt with my hands would be the same idea [as drawing], but physically rather than on paper, they might be a sharp line (she made a staccato movement with her arms) or something ... might be more flouncy because that's what I felt when I was reading the line'. Rose emphasised that her physical gestures demonstrate the *feeling* she received from the words rather than the *meaning*, because '...the word is what I find so hard to comprehend...if I just have the word it is empty', (15.6.2011).

The passage of text in the excerpt of Rose's storyboard.

Sonnet 57

Being your slave, what should I do but tend

Upon the hours and times of your desire?

I have no precious time at all to spend,

Nor services to do till you require:

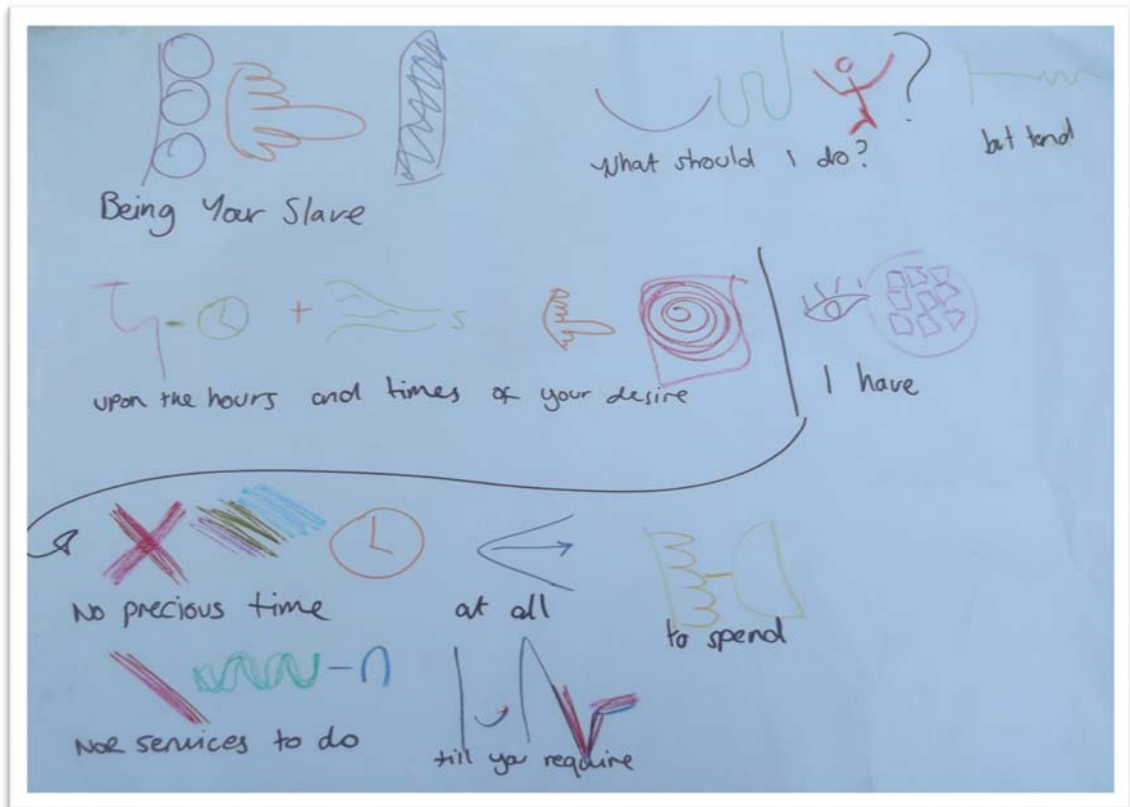


Figure 4.6 Clip from Rose's storyboard for *Sonnet 57*

Comment on the functions of the symbols:

- i) Rose uses a non-literal language of symbols and colour, which represent her inner visuospatial concepts.
- ii) Although abstract in nature, I can interpret her inferences for the word '*desire*', through her choice of the colour red, and the journey of the spiral arriving at a centre point, enclosed in a box.
- iii) I can 'read' her colour line configuration for the phrase *nor services to do as follows*:
 - The '*nor*' is signified by a vertically straight red line as a definitive negative.

- The 'services' is signified as a wandering green line, with three dips within it, suggesting the length of the sound of the three vowels in the word – one long, and two short. The moving undulated action of the line represents the work entailed in giving service.
- The preposition 'to' is a simple adjunct to the verb 'do', which is depicted as a single undulation shape; linking the meaning of 'do' with the action of 'services'.

4.4.3 Action research workshop: Cycle One

Reference to the Appendices: there is a filmed example of Jimmy sight-reading a sonnet before working through the text in this action research cycle, then examples are shown of him working through the process and reading the text with improved fluency in DVD Three, Appendix Eight. There are also examples of Rose working through the process.

Present: Myself, participant and critical friend Ken Robertson. The workshops were filmed by a student and lasted sixty to ninety minutes.

Rationale: I chose *Sonnet 57* as a working tool because the language is not obscure, therefore the meaning is likely to be accessible to those with dyslexia.

Aim: Through this sequence of work my aim is that the participant will achieve a phonological, visual and semantic deep coding of the text. According to Baddeley, an auditory presentation ensures an access to the phonological store (2007:51). My goal is to activate the phonological loop through the hearing and vocalised repetition of the words, to activate the visuospatial sketch pad through the drawing, and embed the phonological/ grapheme relationship in memory through the writing of the words. Baddeley states that integrated information is bound within the episodic buffer (a component of working memory) and then the information is moved into long term memory (Baddeley 2007: 148, Baddeley personal communication 2009).

4.4.4 Method

Materials: a large pad of paper and a mix of oil pastels, felt tips, crayons, board pens.

Stage One. Warm-up. Working on the pad with a pencil, let the breath release outwards as pencil marks are made. Let the whole body flow with the sketching strokes. Then introduce the use of colours, and let the voice come into it, reacting with the body movement, colours and shapes made on the paper.

Stage Two. Working through the sonnet line by line, I speak aloud key words, from the sonnet. The participant repeats the word aloud at the same time as drawing a response to the word. Consideration must be given as to what colour and type of utensil is used in its expressive quality. When the drawing is completed, the word is written underneath the drawing.

Stage Three. Then I introduce key phrases of sonnet. Symbols representing the phrases are rapidly drawn by the participant, while speaking the phrase aloud, and then they write the phrase next to the picture.

Stage Four. I speak short phrases from the sonnet, and the participant physicalizes them whilst repeating them aloud, creating a motor – sensory picture of their concept.

Stage Five. The participant reads aloud four of the lines of the sonnet, paraphrases them into contemporary language, and discusses the meaning.

Stage Six. The participant works through the whole sonnet using the same process, chunk by chunk.

Stage Seven. The participant reads the whole sonnet aloud.

Stage Eight. The participant returns to their drawings, explaining the meaning of their storyboard to the observer. The post - reading act assists in their further re- interpretation, assimilation, and comprehension of the words.

4.4.5 Outcome

Although each individual differed in their acting style, and drawing/image methods, their combined enthusiasm for the approach was evident in observation of their behaviour and in what they said. When the participants finally read the whole sonnet from the printed text, after working through the sequence, they appeared to have an improved fluency, comprehension, and confidence. As the sequence included repetition and deconstruction, this fluency is not surprising, but their expressed pleasure in their immersion of the drawing exercise method revealed a deeper cause for their enjoyment.

The critical friend observation

Robertson commented that he noted the participants' expressed a sense of vindication after finishing the exercise. He noted that when talking about their experiences of participating in the drawing, they all spoke of a feeling of relief and pleasure that their method of learning was being encouraged and recognised.

Robertson remarked that when I spoke the text, my speech, although neutral in expression, was clearly articulated. This was an intentional strategy. Because I did not want to influence their vocal choices, I had tried to model the words as neutrally and as clearly as possible. I was aware that this might possibly close down their own interpretive choices. However, as I needed to impart the text aurally, this seemed to be the less value-laden method.

Having already gained a perspective of the participants' reading prowess from prior observations, Robertson deliberated that he thought that if they had sight - read the text without this process, there was a likelihood that they would have mis-read many of the words. Robertson commented he thought my defined articulation of the spoken word was beneficial to them in gaining a precise auditory image of the text. He proposed that this method engendered an expressive freedom in their speaking of the text hitherto not experienced when they read the words themselves without this process.

4.4.6 Examination of the participant drawings of the text

Example of the piece of text shown, from Sonnet 57.

Being your slave, what should I do but tend

Upon the hours and times of your desire?

I have no precious time at all to spend

Nor services to do till you require;

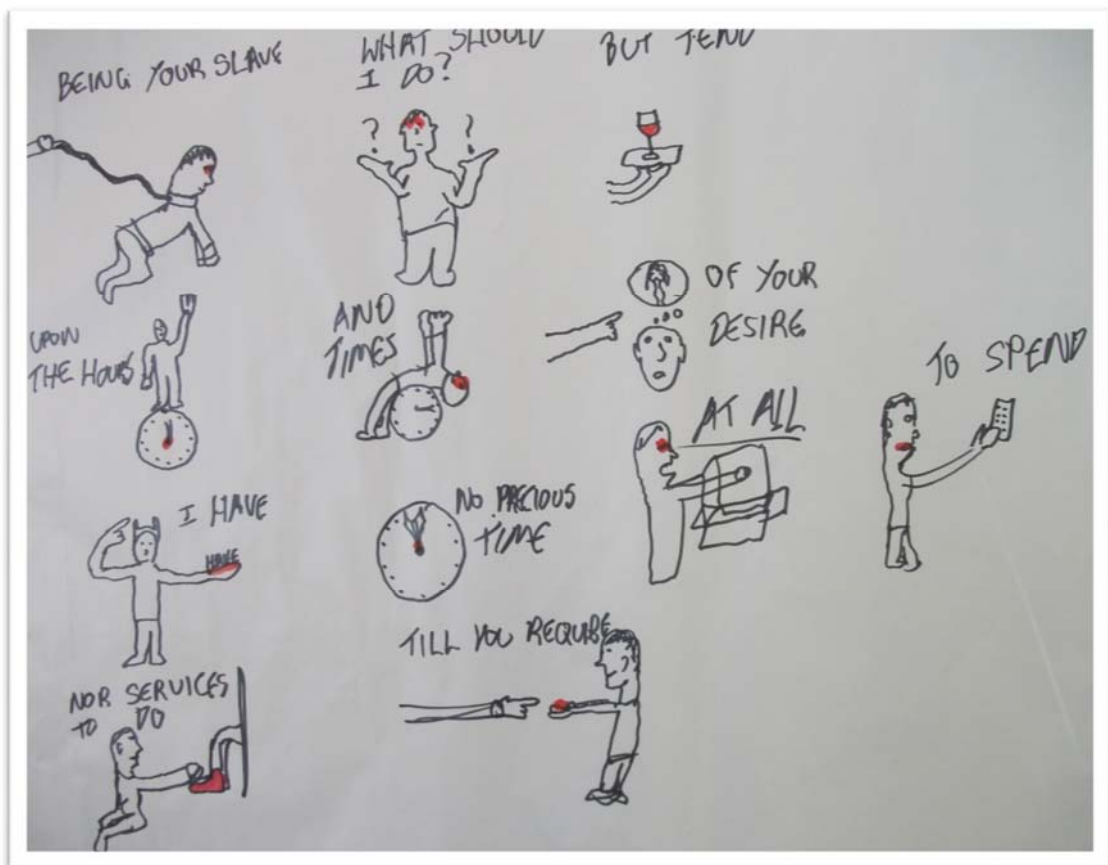


Figure 4.7 Clip from Jimmy's storyboard for Sonnet 57

Comments on the function of the symbols:

Jimmy's ideas for his images came to him immediately that he heard the words, demonstrating a fluency in drawing, linked to thought.

- i) All the images (save the clock which is literally denoted), represent the enactment of the speaker of the sonnet, in first person perspective and their physical actions.
- ii) '*I have*'. Depicting a bodily action, Jimmy has made a concrete embodiment of the abstract idea of '*I have*', by drawing a person holding the word '*have*' as an object on his hand, whilst pointing to himself.
- iii) Similarly, the phrase '*at all*' has been made into a concrete physical action through placing the hand into the spatial capacity within a box – the space being '*all*'.
- iv) '*Time*'. Jimmy has created a physical metaphor for the word '*time*', depicting a man bent backwards over the clock. This uncomfortable effortful physical position reveals the emotional state of the speaker within the sonnet. This could a *Psychological Gesture* for the sonnet.
- v) '*Upon the hours*' is a literal translation of the words; a man standing upon a clock.
- vi) The colour red is mostly centrally placed within the picture, to 'set' the image in Jimmy's memory.

Richard



Figure 4.8 Clip from Richard's storyboard for Sonnet 57

Comment on the function of the symbols:

Richard was quick in the translation, from hearing the word to devising the picture, his idea taking form in the drawing almost instantaneously.

- i) Some images are from an embodied first person perspective, and some represent descriptive ideas from an exterior perspective.
- ii) 'At all' is a metaphorical concept represented by an empty circle, (note Richard's spelling *nothness*, missing a syllable, for the word *nothingness*).
- iii) 'Have' is comparable to Jimmy's idea, being made concrete by being held as an object.

- iv) It is interesting to note that Richard's representation for 'upon the hours' replicates Jimmy's conception of a figure on top of a clock, although independently conceived.
- v) 'no precious time' is made into a concrete graphic representation. It is neatly summed up by a Rolex watch with a cross through it which captures the words *precious/time/no* in one image.
- vi) 'and times' is an interesting spatial configuration of two circular shapes intertwined into a figure of eight, or could be a singular twisted circle, thereby representing the idea of the plurality of the word *times*.

Ashley



Figure 4.9 Clip from Ashley's storyboard for *Sonnet 57*

Comment on the function of the symbols:

Unlike Jimmy and Richard, Ashley worked slowly, with an intense focus given to the choice of his symbols and the meaning of his marks, in conjunction with his speaking of the words.

- i) Ashley does not usually draw pictures when devising his storyboards, preferring to use outside image sources. In this case, Ashley has mostly customised the words, rather than translating them into pictographs. There is a focus on the process of the activity, wherein the spatial linguistic graphics, (in choice of colour, size and shape of the lettering), convey personal meaning.

Rose

Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour

Whilst I (my sovereign) watch the clock for you,

Nor think the bitterness of absence sour

When you have bid your servant once adieu

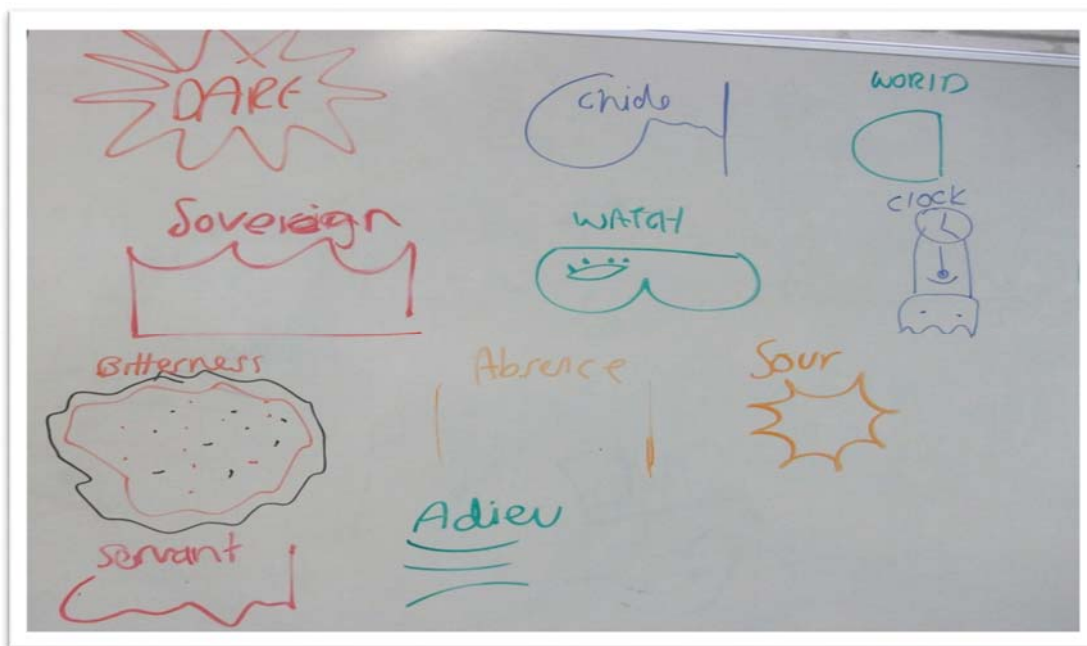


Figure 4.10 Clip from Rose's story board for *Sonnet 57*

Comment on the function of the symbols:

Rose set about drawing with enthusiasm, calling this process her way of 'making friends with the text'.

- i) Using iconic symbols, the image of a mask with one open eye, next to a clock, denotes the phrase, '*watch the clock for you,*' while the picture of the crown denotes the word '*sovereign*'.
- ii) Rose's auditory image of a word, its intonation and pitch movement, is depicted by the shapes and colours of the drawn lines. Her internal conception, along with the auditory memory of the sound shape, can be observed spatially configured in her signs for the words '*chide*' and '*servant*'.
- iii) Her onomatopoeic perceptions are demonstrated by her red explosive star shape for the word *dare*, and the textured dots enclosed within a jagged circle, of orange and black, denoting the physical experience of '*bitterness*' and '*sour*'.

4.5 Analysis

In this work I am exploring ways of 'flowing' into the text, entering through open channels, rather than persisting with a mode of 'banging into', being 'stalled' or 'blocked' by the text (Essley 2008: 21, 29). In order to gather some perspectives for additional insights into the purpose of these visually led methods for those with dyslexia, I have examined some scientific findings.

4.5.1 *The principle areas of the brain used in reading*

Maryanne Wolf, (director of the Centre for Language and Reading Research at Tufts University), accentuates that there is, 'an almost instantaneous fusion of cognitive, linguistic, and affective processes; multiple brain regions; and billions of neurons that are the sum of all that goes into reading' (2008:145). The science writer Rita Carter specifies that the intricate interaction between the two hemispheres of the brain makes it difficult to identify exactly what is happening, that the brain is plastic and influenced by environmental aspects. However, (although advising that there are atypical examples in individuals), Carter asserts that brain imaging studies have confirmed the particular functions of the hemispheres, in 'normal circumstances' (Carter 1998:50). It is of note that that the left hemisphere of the brain is said to specialise in processing language. It holds *Wernicke's Area* which is thought to be involved

in the recognition and comprehension of spoken and written language, and *Broca's Area* which is responsible for the motor organisation of speech, breaking words into segments, and forming a mental image of their sound (Perkins & Kent 1986:424. DFES 2004: 79, Carter 1998:246-7). Baddeley refers to the phonological loop as dependent on the left hemisphere (Baddeley personal correspondence 2009). The right hemisphere recognises visual patterns, spatial orientation, pictures, intuition, rhythm, intonation of poetic structure and emotional expression (Perkins & Kent 1986: 441, McLoughlin & Leather 2013: 117). The visuospatial sketchpad relies mostly on the right side of the brain (Baddeley 2007:8). It is of significance to this study that, according to Carter (1998:228-229) gesture is housed in the right hemisphere. The reading and acting of Shakespeare will necessitate a flow of information from both hemispheres.

4.5.2 Some apparent differences in the hemispheric use in those with dyslexia

Guided by the scientific identification of hemisphere skills, I speculate that, when engaging with the spoken and written word, my participants appear to function most comfortably when working from right hemisphere resources, displaying a predilection for visuospatial processing and physical action, whilst struggling with the left hemisphere specialisations of analysing, decoding and articulating aspects of language. There is research that seems to corroborate this supposition and some of the theories underpinning this are considered below.

Scientist Dr Zvia Breznitz explains that, in order to read, the brain has to synchronize information coming from distinct areas, processed in different ways and time speeds. Reading involves moving information from the back of the brain to the front, and from one side of the brain to the other, transferred through the corpus callosum (Breznitz 2008: 12). By using Electromagnetic Tomography, Breznitz identified that for non-dyslexics, written information arrives in the left side of the brain first and then is transferred into the right side of the brain within a certain time measure. Her *Asynchrony Theory of Dyslexia* (2008) is based on her findings that in dyslexics, when reading text, the

information goes into the right side of the brain first, is then transferred into the left side of the brain before going back into the right hand side, therefore taking longer than the non-dyslexic in the speed of processing. Because the information arrives in the right side of the brain first, (which Breznitz describes as the 'wrong side'), this slows down the inter-hemisphere transfer. According to Breznitz, this impairment travels through the sequence of brain processing and synchronization, leading to reading dysfluency.

Psychologists Paulesu *et al*, and their *Disconnection Syndrome* theory also foregrounds a disadvantage within the left hemisphere (Carter 1998: 253). Using Positron Emission Tomography scans that measured the activity in the brain of dyslexics when reading complex information, Paulesu *et al* have proposed that the insula cortex, (the bridge connecting Wernicke's and Broca's area) is disconnected in dyslexics. This means that dyslexics will have difficulty in reading, comprehending and articulating a word quickly.

An emphasis on increased brain activity in the right hemisphere in those with dyslexia is reported by Professor of Neurology, Alberto Galaburda (1993:239). In his anatomical studies of the brains of some dyslexics, Galaburda discovered an atypical symmetry of the right side of the brain with the left. In non-dyslexics the left side is usually larger than the right (DFES 2004: 81-82). Galaburda proposes that a physiological difference in those with dyslexia affects their cognitive processing. He describes a study that suggests that dyslexic brains treat linguistic material as non- linguistic stimuli (1993: 230). Morgan and Klein have labelled perceived right brain dominance in those with dyslexia as *The Difference Model*. They give examples of several individuals with dyslexia using graphic drawings instead of writing, and a preference for visual representations (2000:10 - 19, 170).

Psychologists Alison Bacon and Simon Handley (2010) have investigated the primary use of visual strategies in dyslexics. In their tests, they presented several syllogisms to a group of dyslexics and non-dyslexics. During the range of reasoning tasks, they found that those without dyslexia could analyse abstractedly in their heads, communicating their reasoning verbally. However,

most of those with dyslexia adopted visuospatial strategies to work out their answers, using:

Vivid pictorial representations of the specific properties described by the problems. Even the less imagable properties, ...presented little problem, being creatively illustrated by depictions such as pound signs, halos/horns, smiley/sad/angry faces or stars and dunce hats...the majority of dyslexic participants, (75%), used this type of visual-spatial strategy. The association between strategy choice and dyslexic status was highly significant.

(Bacon & Handley 2010:33)

Bacon & Handley's description of the use of illustrative symbols as a system and marker of thoughts in those with dyslexia, exactly replicates the work of my participants' delineations of Shakespeare's text.

This generation of picto / ideographs correlates with Paivio and Sadoski's *Conceptual Peg Hypothesis*, wherein the forming of a concrete image acts as a mental peg on which to hook the information into memory. Psychologist Allan Paivio and Mark Sadoski (research scholar in language, education, arts and human development) have written frequently about the *Dual Code theory of reading and writing* (2009), wherein it is proposed that there are two pathways of cognition; that of the verbal and non-verbal (such as mental imagery). This theory correlates with Baddeley's model of memory and the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketch pad (Baddeley 2007:86). Sadoski and Paivio purport that a concrete verbal phrase that can be easily imaged acts as a mnemonic aid, to be remembered more easily than an abstract phrase. The image peg then acts as a trigger to retrieve a large

amount of stored information (2001: 63, 110). Images that are attached to emotional states are also better recalled (Paivio 1983:15).

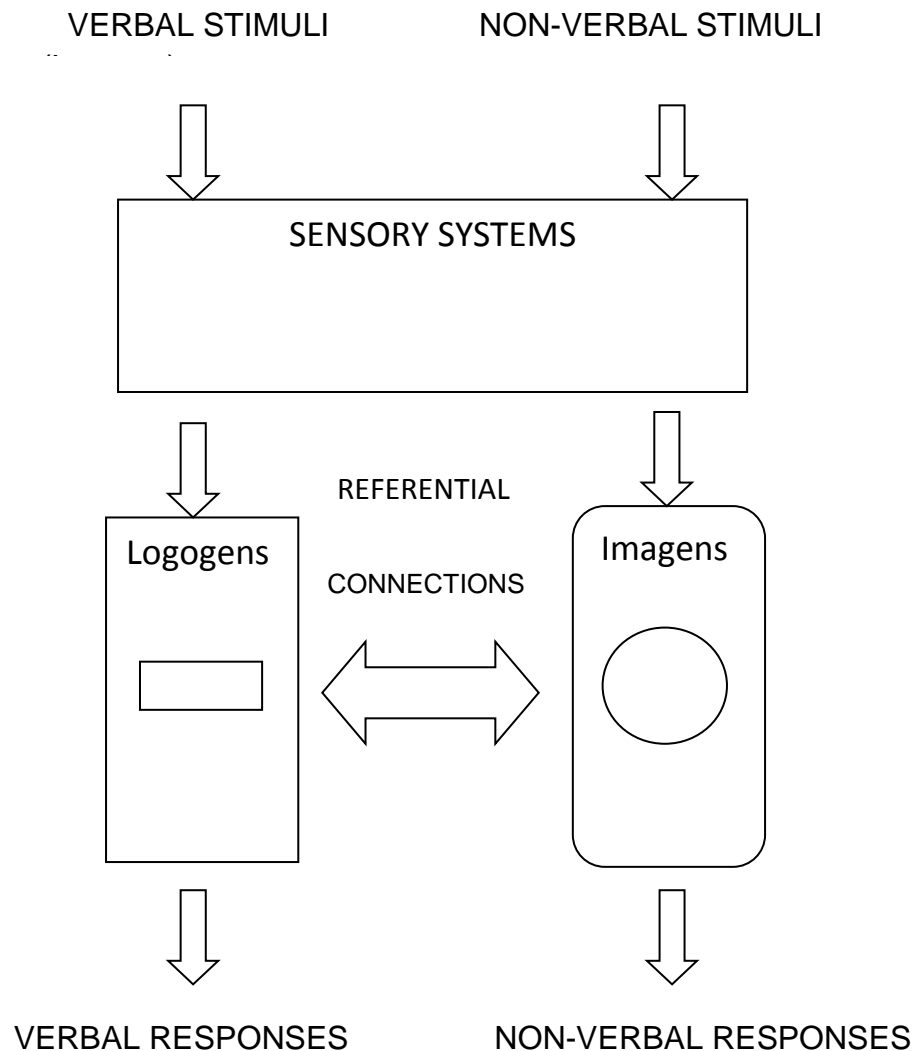


Figure 4. 11 Model of the *Dual Code Theory*, re - drawn from Sadoski & Paivio (2009:53)

4.6 Conclusion

Unlike Sher's art work, which serves to illuminate the physical appearance and psychological 'feel' of his characters (Sher 1989) my participants' drawings function primarily as a purveyor and decoder of the meaning and phonological sounds of the words within the text.

When receiving the words aurally, the verbal system is evoked and then anchored through the creation of overt images. These denotations act as

referential prompts, setting in motion a chain of connotations. Unlike the written word, wherein information is imparted progressively, the pictorial form allows a holistic rendition of several meanings within one illustration.

One of the prevailing aspects of dyslexia (and highlighted by the majority of my participants in interview) is a weakness in verbal working memory (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010, Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008, Elliott & Grigorenko 2014) along with a fear of reading, aggravating their inability to take in the gestalt of the text.

Functioning as cognitive tools, the symbols assist in off-loading working memory by externalising the information onto the page. This concept-mapping facilitates the building of a mental model of the whole text. Psychologist Barbara Tversky (in Holyoak & Morrison 2005: 228) draws attention to the contrast between image and mental models. According to Tversky, the mental model reflects the structure of the image within the mind, but includes a system of moveable, causal components, with a relationship of purpose, organisation, process and animation. Hence, the graphically represented mental model translates into an expressive schema of the text, including a kinaesthetic sense of movement, related to intention and feeling. This enables the participant with dyslexic difficulties to freely interpret the words in expressive action, switching back and forth from pictorial symbols held in their minds, to the written form on the page.

Stanislavski compared the actor's 'inner stream of images' to a painter's, stressing that the 'inner moving picture film' works as a lure to galvanize the feelings attached to the words (Stanislavski 1968:125-126). He promoted the stimulation of image, saying, '...Let what you say convey the images and not just the words' (ibid. 124). He united the use of imaging with his method of *Physical Actions*, calling the visual image 'the secret of the Psycho-technique' (ibid. 126). Michael Chekov was Stanislavski's pupil, and there is an evident relationship between Stanislavski's method of *Physical Actions* and Chekov's *Psychological Gesture*.

In this chapter I have focussed closely on the participants' individual methods, and how I might develop their modalities into a teaching strategy. It appears that there is some efficacy in this visual and aurally- led method as a pedagogical solution, which can assist in removing the blocks to reading the text, whilst promoting artistic accomplishment. I have considered the possible advantages in adopting this system through interviews, observation, theory, and an action research trial Cycle One.

4.7 Future Work

In his creation of images, Shakespeare regularly transforms motionless or abstract ideas into verbal images of physical movement (Spurgeon1935: 51). This 'action language' is illustrated in phrases such as, '*...make him bite the law by th'nose*' (Claudio in *Measure for Measure* Act III, sc i), meaning to flout the law, or, '*if I must die I will encounter darkness like a bride and hug it in my arms*' (ibid.) where Claudio attempts to convince himself that he is psychologically ready to die.

These examples illustrate how Shakespeare, through utilising such figures of speech which instigate physical movement, preceded aspects of Stanislavski's method of *Actions*. These animated word pictures not only stimulate the imagination and emotions, but lend themselves to a vivid interpretation of the text through concrete embodied images.

In the next chapter I introduce four new participants. There is further case study exploration of the analogical link between the visuospatial drawing/gesture on the page extended into the physical gesture in the space, wherein the internal representation of the text is made tangible. I investigate this through action research workshops involving Stanislavski's *Physical Actions* and Berry's physicalisation of the words.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Physical Path – Images In Motion And The Parts Versus The Whole

5. Introduction

In the last chapter I reported on my participants' use of the visual storyboard as an entry point into the text. I investigated the nature of dual coding between word and image, construction of personal worlds, and the connection with physical gesture. This led to an associative linkage with Stanislavski's 'stream of images'. The utilisation of mental imagery, amplified through movement, and sound, extended into a consideration of Michael Chekhov's *Psychological Gesture*.

Introduction of the participants featured in this chapter

The four participants involved in this chapter are Participant Five (Callum), Six (Amelia), Seven (Verity) and Eight (Abigail). An historical and socio-psychological overview about each individual in this chapter is placed in Volume Two, Appendix Three, pages 357 – 360. Throughout this chapter at the relevant points, there are references given to draw the reader's attention to the linking evidential material contained in the Appendices.

5.1 Overview of Chapter

In this chapter I delve into the roots of Stanislavski's approach to Shakespeare. I report on both my case study and my action research (Cycle Two) in the trial and use of Stanislavski's method of *Units and Actions*, in conjunction with Cicely Berry's embodying of the word, as a strategy for by-passing a cold reading of the text, for those with dyslexia.

5.1.1 Key to the overall structure of the chapter

5.2 Artistic practice – Stanislavski, Shakespeare and Berry

This section considers the literature and practitioners' views on the debate about using Stanislavski's *Units and Actions* on Shakespeare's text, in comparison with word centred ideologies. This involves an examination of

Stanislavski's approach to acting and his work on Shakespeare, in contrast with examining the historical roots and rationale of Berry's method.

5.3 Embodied cognition and memory

My research begins with a scrutiny and analysis of two of my participants' use of a physical action storyboard to memorise the text.

5.4 Action research Cycle Two; my introduction, research method, and trial of the use of Stanislavski's and Berry's Physical Actions.

This work begins at the beginning of the Shakespeare unit 2011. I describe my practice and rationale for using Stanislavski's *Units and Actions* with my research participants on a Shakespeare text. I then explore, in action research workshops, what happens with my participants and whether there are advantages to be gained in using Stanislavski's *Active Analysis* for those with dyslexia.

5.5 The analysis of the participant's work and consideration of the efficacy of using Stanislavski's Units and Actions on Shakespeare's text.

5.6 A bridge into the text: adding drawing into Stanislavski's Stages of Active Analysis, (action research Cycle Two continued)

5.7 Discussion and conclusion

5.8 My future research directions

5.2 Shakespeare, Stanislavski and Berry: Emotion Versus Argument

5.2.1 Background

Before the outset of this research investigation I concurred with the acting lecturer Ben Naylor's view that a classical training for actors would benefit from an inclusion of Stanislavski rehearsal techniques, in tandem with a study of the speaking of verse (Naylor 2009:1). My own training as an actress at Arts Educational Schools was heavily influenced by Stanislavski's methods. In particular we studied Stanislavski's Circles of Attention, the need for Justification, defining the Given Circumstances and the unearthing of the

Motivation behind speaking or moving. Throughout my acting career I drew from this Stanislavskian approach and found that his methods provided a fundamental key to believable acting choices.

However, despite practitioner endorsements proclaiming the advantages of utilising Stanislavski's actions on a Shakespeare text (for example Gillett & Gutekunst 2014, Gillet 2007, Alfreds 2007, Merlin 2007) the exploratory practice carried out within this research cycle has revealed an incompatibility with the use of Stanislavski - driven actions in enabling a conflation of presence in mind, body and textual detail. There is an enduring debate on the applicability of using Stanislavski's system of units, objectives and actions when working on Shakespeare. Although much of Stanislavski's methods have been absorbed into western acting culture, in my research workshops with my students, I have found that there can be stumbling blocks when attempting to apply them to acting Shakespeare, especially for those who are dyslexic. A paradox emerges between the support Stanislavski's system offers to those with dyslexia, and the complexity in uniting Shakespeare's language with Stanislavski's methods, and the prominence given to sub-text.

Since encountering this convolution in my action research, I have endeavoured to gain some insight into this dispute, from which I might unravel a way forward in my working practice. I have, therefore, examined the historical and methodological issues underlying the disputes arising from the amalgamation of Stanislavski's system with Shakespeare's text.

In Shakespeare's era there was little time in the actors' preparation for any psychological approach into the building of a character, nor any idea of 'character' as the actor defines it today. The actors were given a script which contained only their lines in the play, and a few cue words from the other character's lines. They would have a very short rehearsal period, mostly involving individual study (Weingust 2006:142-3, Tucker 2002: 37).

Barton (1984:30) while admitting that, '... we would all like to know...how Shakespeare's actors rehearsed a part and how their minds worked...' suggests that the Elizabethan actor, 'must have instinctively gleaned from the text', and that 'you have to look for and follow the clues that he, [Shakespeare],

offers. If an actor does that then he'll find that Shakespeare himself starts to direct him' (ibid. 168).

Theatre director, Patrick Tucker, avers that Shakespeare wrote the character hints for the actor into the monologues. Tucker's 'Original Shakespeare Productions' theatre company has endeavoured to replicate Shakespearean performance methods. He claims that the Elizabethan focus was on the communication of the language and the underlying poetry. For the audience, the seeing and *hearing* of the play culminated in an aesthetic experience, analogous to listening to a piece of music or viewing a painting (Tucker 2002:30).

Stanislavski's views on acting were formed during the early twentieth century in an environment of emerging psychological ideas, focussing on the emotion and the subconscious. In her monograph on the history of Stanislavski's praxis, Whyman reports that Stanislavski's study of 'truthful' acting emerged in the early twentieth century, and was pre- Freudian. In Russia, the ideas of the German philosopher Edouard von Hartmann, published in his book *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* in 1869, had a pervading influence, informing several of Stanislavski's theories on the unconscious, sub-conscious, and super-conscious (Whyman 2008:4-5, 89). Freud's writing was translated into Russian in 1910, expanding the concept of the analysis of the inner motives and the desires of the unconscious (ibid. 66). Preceding Freud, Stanislavski was enlightened by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and emotion, Pavlov and his study of animal behaviour, and the psychologist Theodule Ribot's experiments on memory and associations. These ideas encouraged an exploration of the relationship between mind, physiology, reflex, and interactions with the environment. Merlin relates that Stanislavski had read about the idea of 'affective memory' in Ribot's books *Les Maladies de la Vonte* and *Les Maladies de la Memoire*, published in Russian in 1900. Ribot's investigations involved a stimulation of the five senses to re-awaken seemingly forgotten memories recorded in the nervous system. These ideas led to Stanislavski's fascination for finding 'lures' to unlock emotional memories placed in the subconscious (Merlin 2007: 143, Benedetti 1982:31).

Stanislavski underlined that the actor should search for an emotional memory of feeling, based in a real experience of the senses, ‘...and resurrect within themselves memories of visual and aural images’ (Stanislavski cited in Whyman 2008:54). These will be compiled from personal memories of all the five senses:

... preserved in the affective memory of the artist himself/herself, from knowledge acquired by learning preserved in the intellectual memory, from experience s/he has gained in life...these memories must be absolutely analogous with the feelings of the play and the role.

(Stanislavski cited in Whyman: 2008:55)

In order to find a convincing truth in performance, Stanislavski urged the actor to uncover the goals and objectives of their character, inherent within the passage of the text. In Stanislavski’s teaching, the actor’s empathetic recognition of the emotional needs of their character’s inner subconscious, (within the given circumstances of the play), can be released through physical actions. Through the doing of the physical action, the associative feelings will be ignited. However, the action must have a particular psychological purpose, or there is no foundation behind the action (Stanislavski 1980:43). It was imperative to Stanislavski that the actor work from their own responses to the given circumstances of the role and he underlines that it would be the initial implementation of the defined actions that would release the feelings (Stanislavski 1981:201)

When investigating the text, Stanislavski tells us:

In art it is the feeling that creates, not the mind... the role of the mind is purely auxiliary, subordinate. The analysis made by an artist is quite different from one made by a scholar... If the result of a scholarly analysis is thought, the result of an artistic one is feeling. An actor’s analysis is first of all an analysis of feeling, and it is carried out by feeling.

(Stanislavski, C. 1981:8)

In an apparent conflict with an observance of the clues provided by Shakespeare within his text, Stanislavski instructs the actor to ‘... approach the role in your own person, from life and not from the author’s directions.....you would be staking everything on him, you would parrot his lines, ape his actions that were not akin to yours...’ (Stanislavski 1981: 218). In his process of active discovery, Stanislavski tells the actor not to speak the playwright’s text, but to improvise, using a few words and physical actions, to grasp the general gist of their character’s intentions and resulting feelings (ibid 216). Stanislavski stresses the importance of the physical life of the part, accentuating that the physical actions must have an inner justification: ‘in every physical action unless it is purely mechanical, there is concealed some inner action, some feelings...’ (ibid. 228). He puts an emphasis on emotion first, saying:

Inside each and every word there is an emotion, a thought that produced the word and justifies it being there. Empty words are ...concepts without content...they are harmful...Until the actor is able to fill out each word of the text with live emotions, the text of his role will remain dead.

(Stanislavski 1981:94)

Stanislavski’s attention on initially uncovering a psycho/emotional response, rather than examining in detail the playwright’s choices in their use of language, exposes a polemic, when applying his methods to Shakespeare.

Despite achieving mixed results, Stanislavski acted in several plays of Shakespeare, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Tempest* (Benedetti 1998). Although there are several contemporary acting books which endorse the use of Stanislavski exercises with Shakespeare’s text (Gillet 2007, Alfreds 2007, Merlin 2007), some practitioners, usually those who possess a specialism in acting Shakespeare, are mindful of the potential clash of styles.

According to Gordon, Stanislavski did not have full success with Shakespeare, as his psychologically truthful ‘living out’ of the character did not always fit with Shakespeare’s sometimes abstruse, evocative use of language (2006:56).

Indeed, Stanislavski writes about his struggle with performing Shakespeare in his autobiography, lamenting:

there are roles and plays in Shakespeare that I cannot read without a shudder. Yet why can I express my perceptions of Chekhov but cannot express my perceptions of Shakespeare?... Apparently it is not the inner feeling itself, but the technique of its expression that prevents us from doing that in the plays of Shakespeare which we are able to do to a certain degree in the plays of Chekhov...we have created a technique and method for the artistic interpretation of Chekhov, but we do not possess a technique for the saying of artistic truth in the plays of Shakespeare.

(Stanislavski 1980: 350)

Stanislavski was hampered by poor translations and a lack of awareness of differences in word syntax from English into Russian (ibid. 512). Nonetheless, when working on Shakespeare, he appears to have diverted his attention away from the text and onto the unwritten subtext created in his imagination, the given circumstances, the off stage scenarios, and a creation of naturalistic stage settings.

In his writings, he did make it clear that he placed great value on the author's words, remarking, 'the verbal text of a play, especially one by a genius, is the manifestation of the clarity, the subtlety, the concrete power to express visible thoughts and feelings of the author himself' (Stanislavski 1981:94). However, he does not seem to relate his own assumptions about the characters' psychological and emotional states directly to the intricacies and content of Shakespeare's words, verse and form (for example Stanislavski 1981: 165 – 193, 256- 271. 1980: 277-283). When speaking the text, he also ignores the iambic pentameter and thought phrases, thereby disrupting the flow of meaning, by inserting psychological pauses into the verse line; as in his instructions on distributing pauses in Othello's speech: 'Like to the pontic sea...' (Stanislavski 1988: 129).

Benedetti states that Stanislavski aimed to refrain from a false, declamatory manner of acting Shakespeare, but was not proficient with verse. Stanislavski grappled with his deficiencies, remarking: 'I understood that knowing how to

speak verse simply and elegantly was itself a science, with its own laws. But I did not know them' (Benedetti 1982: 46-47). These observations are accentuated by the theatre teacher and director Michel Saint Denis, whose comments I include further on below (Saint Denis 1964).

In his book (2003: 191-193), Peter Hall, (theatre director and founder of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company), acknowledges that his attitude towards Shakespeare has been influenced by his time at Cambridge University. As a member of the Marlowe Society, the Shakespearean director William Poel taught Hall to value the 'quick and witty' speaking of the verse, while his Cambridge university teachers, George Rylands and F.R Leavis, embedded a scholarly scrutiny of the verse (Rokison 2009:33).

Hall cautions that Stanislavski's methods of asking what the character *wants*, (*or feels*) is *not* what is paramount in acting Shakespeare. He argues that instead, one must ask *what* the character *says* and *how* he says it, through an examination of the structured form and analysis of language that Shakespeare has provided (2003:18). Thus Hall advocates primarily a literary approach in the first instance, advising that the concomitant emotions, enmeshed within the written form, will naturally emerge, at a later stage of the work. In agreement, theatre director Peter Brook adds that '...a psychological approach is inadequate...Our way into the character must be through recognising that the words that he uses show us who he is' (Brooke 1998:45).

Linklater also refers to the problem of fitting Shakespeare into Stanislavski's methods of playing actions and intentions, remarking: '...the trouble with Shakespeare is that you can't put everything under the impetus of playing an objective, because quite often the character is letting off steam, or exploring a philosophical idea' (Saklad 2011: 200).

The potential complication of merging Shakespeare's imagist and metaphoric verse structures with an actor's improvised words and actions derived from a character's psychological and emotional objectives is recognised by Stanislavski. He has alluded to this dilemma in a fictional actor's notes when working on Othello (Stanislavski 1981: 262). The fictional actor remarks:

... it is one thing to use your own words and thoughts and quite another to adopt those of someone else, which are permanently fixed, cast as it were in bronze, in strong clear shapes. They are unalterable....for the first time we were being faced with the process of assimilating the words of another person. And our amateurish babbling of inanimate sounds which is what Paul and I were doing with the magnificent words of Othello did not count...I felt incapable of coping with the problem put to me...

In this account, the actor asks for time to study the text in order to 'enliven the lines which up to now had been so many inert words', but he curiously proceeds to concentrate on a supposed subtext and 'what Shakespeare had left unsaid' (ibid.263), rather than examining what Shakespeare had said.

Barton, along with Hall, began directing Shakespeare as a member of the Marlowe Society at Cambridge University, and both were influenced by William Poel (Gordon 2006: 170, Hall 2003: 195). Poel wanted his audience to *hear* rather than *see* a Shakespeare play, with an emphasis on the speaking of the verse, poetic structure and the meaning of the words (Gordon 2006:144).

Barton acknowledges the influence of Stanislavski's methods, which he recognises inevitably percolate, subconsciously, through contemporary actors' minds. Within the first few pages of his proposed principles in acting Shakespeare, Barton introduces the idea of dual pathways into the text (1984:8). He believes that a fusion of Stanislavski's ideas, interlinked with a literary examination of Shakespeare's language is essential. However, in antithesis to Hall, Barton advocates that the actor commences the work from a Stanislavskian perspective by initially asking: 'what is my intention?' Then, uniting with Hall's foregrounding of the text, he recommends that the actor should pursue their intention through a careful observance of the written form, utilising the heightened, poetic language to produce the words as 'freshly minted' and 'needed' by the actor and character (ibid. 12-18).

RSC theatre director Adrian Noble underscores the wisdom of this union. He describes Stanislavski's focus on experienced feeling as working from 'inside

out', and that an 'outside in' approach is gained by a scrutiny of the 'how' within the text. Noble claims that a coupling of both traditions lead to something '... exciting...original, truthful and ...realistic' (2010:3-4).

Cicely Berry has ruminated on the dichotomy of the two techniques, comparing American Method acting (which fosters an enhanced awareness of the senses and inner subconscious life, derived from Stanislavski's ideas) with the English tradition of using verbal skills focussed on language (Berry 1993: 42). She concludes her quandary by proposing that an interaction between the two approaches of *argument* (English tradition) and *emotion* (Method) is efficacious (2001:61).

Notably, diverging from Stanislavski, Berry cautions that an overly emotional approach can suffocate Shakespeare's language. Berry is convinced that searching for the physical action inside the words themselves, releases the thoughts behind the language (ibid. 63).

Gordon traces Berry's foregrounding of the words directly back to the actor, theatre teacher and director Michel Saint Denis (1897 – 1971) nephew to French theatre practitioner, Jacques Copeau (1879 – 1949), (Gordon 2006:174). In 1922, Saint Denis, saw Stanislavski and his Moscow Art Theatre actors' performances of Chekhov and other Russian plays in Paris. He admired Stanislavski's work, describing Stanislavski as 'a giant' and wrote that his ability to make the characters come to life was an 'amazing experience' to witness (1964: 77-78).

Nevertheless Saint Denis criticised Stanislavski for his naturalistic motivations and obsession with psychologically driven acting in Shakespeare. Saint Denis proposed that we should use Stanislavski's methods as a basic foundation, but underlined that it is the text that should be studied for technical and poetic evidence. He opined that playing the enormity of Shakespeare's roles cannot be reduced to a lived naturalism, as the text itself is not natural. He emphasized that acting Shakespeare demands a flexible ability to merge naturalism with poetic response and frequently, a heightened style; that the text is a 'precious foundation' in which the actor should root their acting, linking technique with imagination. This, Saint Denis is convinced, is the most

efficacious route to fulfil the exigencies of performing Shakespeare (1964: 81-83).

Berry's methods cast a connecting line between herself, Saint Denis and Stanislavski. Saint Denis taught 'l'expression parlée', in which he united voice work with movement and text. Berry asserts that her exercises which involve a physical expression of voiced sounds are originally inspired by *Eurythmy*, a movement art created by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (Berry 2001:167, Berry 1987: 147). Steiner's *Eurythmy* 'begins...with the ...task of interpreting speech in movement', believing 'every sound of speech is an invisible gesture'. Working with poetry and movement, Steiner wanted to see 'the dance living within the words themselves' (Raffe, Harwood & Lundgren 1974: 14 – 15). Stanislavski knew Rudolf Steiner and introduced him to Michael Chekhov, who extended Steiner's work into his *Psychological Gesture* at a later stage (Whyman 2008:86).

Not to be confused with Steiner's *Eurythmy*, the music composer and teacher, Jacque Emile Dalcroze (1865- 1950) originated a system called *Eurhythmics*. Dalcroze's *Eurhythmics* aimed to develop an understanding of music and its rhythms by translating musical sounds into physical movement. Dalcroze said that the '...aim of *Eurhythmics* is to enable pupils ...to say, not that "I know", but "I have experienced" (1921:63). Dalcroze was popular in the early twentieth century in Russia. Whyman reports that Stanislavski's brother, V.S. Alekseev, taught Dalcroze's methods in his studios in the twenties and thirties, wanting to develop expressiveness in the actor's bodies (Whyman 2008:129). Stanislavski's studies of an individual's inner and outer emotional rhythms, examined within his tempo rhythm exercises, also originated from Dalcroze's ideas (ibid. 152).

Specialist Dalcroze teacher, Karin Greenhead, describes as crucial, the 'big movement in space... therefore the picture and message in your brain is much clearer ...it's the application of learning something in big movement and then internalising the sensation. You get a clear motor picture which the brain can use in informing other muscles how to play' (Greenhead in Whitfield 2002:96).

There is a consonance in Dalcroze, Steiner's, Stanislavski's and Berry's teaching within the premise that, 'the activity of the limbs ... wake up and vitalizes the experience of the head' (Raffe, Harwood & Lundgren 1974: 26).

5.2.2 Berry's physical embodiment of the language

With echoes of Dalcroze and Steiner's convictions, Berry (in her writing and practical exercises) regularly imparts the benefit of physicalising the images that Shakespeare has invoked in his writing, while speaking the verbal - images aloud. In accordance with Dalcroze's ideas of the need to experience both visually and spatially to deeply understand, and Steiner's premise of the sounds of speech being latent gestures (1974:15) Berry wants the actor to extend their intellectual engagement with the word, to 'embrace' and activate the conjured images, so they permeate through their body.

Having investigated the word/image and its source, intellectually and somatically, the actor finds something of the centre of the character and their state of being. Berry asks the actor to mime the speech, as though translating the text for those that might be deaf, or who cannot understand the language. Berry explains that she does not want the actor to describe the image always literally, but to encapsulate and experience 'the essence of the images' in the body and voice. She emphasises that her rationale for this is to find a delight in the freedom of the movement, but also to investigate and 'find the cost of the image' in the expression of it. Through this search for the genetic code of the word/image, whilst shaping and sounding the word through the articulatory musculature, Berry aims for accuracy, apprehension of the word's inner life, and discovery of its implicit energy. Seemingly simple in description, Berry cautions that this can be challenging as Shakespeare's textual images can be dense, (Berry 1993: 168).

It is significant that in practice Berry's physical language differs in intention and effect from Stanislavski's actions - as explored in my practice further on.

5.3 Embodied Cognition And Memory. Two Participants Use Of The Physical Storyboard, Providing The Gateway Into Stanislavski's Physical Actions

5.3.1 Background: 'from physical actions to living image' (Stanislavski 1981:213)

Reference to the Appendices: there are filmed examples of Callum and Amelia's physical storyboards, an example of Amelia sight-reading and Callum's explanation for his storyboard in DVD Three, Appendix Eight, Volume Two.

At the start of the autumn term in 2011, Callum came to me to express anxiety about his inability to remember a text. He explained that he had to learn a speech from the Euripides play *Medea*, for the study of Greek tragedy in his movement class.

As he often has difficulty in memorising words, several years ago he had devised his own memory system which he commonly utilises as a survival strategy. This strategy involves his creation of a sequence of physical movements, with each action tallying in some way with the words of the text. His worry had arisen because he found it hard to speak the speech without always applying his devised movements.

In a filmed recorded interview (5th December 2011) Callum explained that he used this physical action device as a strategy to hold the words in his head. He finds learning text incredibly hard. In particular the retention of the order, without jumbling it up, missing large chunks out, or forgetting the words altogether. Following his first reading through of a text, he tries to learn it. He said: 'I always get tripped up by certain words ...so normally that's when I start putting the physical actions to it, trying to give it some sort of position - so I can root back to it'. He likens his physicalisation sequence, or, as he labelled it - 'the visual thing', - to a dance. 'I can remember the way my hands moved or I know where I placed them on my body – like a timeline kind of thing with my hands'.

In an audio recorded interview on the 15th October 2011, Callum states that when doing a monologue, ‘... there are no cues, it’s all yourself’. So, to counter this lack of directions, he will: ‘...physically walk through it... to try to understand at this point I raise my hand and at this point I bend down to pick this up, because it gives me cues... if I’ve got a physical cue I can work out that during this line I walk there,... and on that line, because I pick that thing up, is what cues me to say thisso it’s like giving me a physical map almost...it becomes almost like a scrap book where I’m taking photos of myself’.

It is noteworthy that Callum describes the act of remembering as ‘taking photos of himself’ - *looking at pictures* of himself doing the movements, fixed into a record-keeping model, - the ‘scrap-book’.

By working through the movement sequence, the visuospatial - motor- sensory associations trigger his stored mental images of the words of the text. ‘I try to give everything a movement so I can link the two together – the words help the movement and the movement helps the words, so if I forget one I’ve got the other one to back it up’ (Callum 2011: 1). I asked Callum if his movement process was similar to Berry’s way of physically inhabiting the text: ‘Yes - it is like the Berry stuff – there’s a word ‘fiend’ and I just pretend that I’ve got a big nose and pull a big nose away from my face and I realised I was doing the whole emotion with my face as well, so ... it’s very sort of illustrative and it’s not exactly emotionally true, but through doing the movements a sort of emotion will come through, but it is literally word by word’.

I enquired if he used this physical action method when learning his Shakespeare monologue, which he had performed as part of class practice during the Shakespeare unit. (He played the character of Bottom from *Midsummer Night’s Dream*). Callum replied that for him Bottom’s monologue had a narrative that he could follow, and therefore he could remember the text, but the Jason monologue in *Medea* was more challenging to him as he could not see how each line was connected to the other. He explained:

So I put basic, almost sign language, kind of mimes to it. If the next word was walking, I might literally put the fingers on my palm and literally walk my fingers along so that a muscle memory emerged. Each of the physical movements that I did merged into the next one. If the word was bird I could merge my hands into a bird shape so I could remember the order and the words and the structure of the piece in particular. Rather than it being an emotional thing, it's much more a visual, literal meaning of the word bird, rather than thinking about the bird that soars and is free. I literally think 'what does a bird look like?' and then I do my hands placed together flapping up and down.

I pointed out that, although he mentions muscle memory as an initiator for the words, as he was speaking to me, his demonstrative gestures created the shape, movement, and animated picture of a bird. I note that he couples the word 'visual' with 'literal meaning' in his explanation. I asked him if the visual aspect was important for him, as well as the physical. He replies: 'Oh yes – very much so – I'm looking at my hands as clues – everything is prompting itself.'

However, having learned the *Medea* text in this manner, the problem that Callum faced was that he could not remember the piece, if not attaching his own sequence of physical actions to it. The movement class performance situation demanded a different set of actions from those Callum had created. In trying to find a way around his reliance on his physical actions, Callum tells me that he is now experimenting with imagining a small person in his head, like a mirror image of himself, doing the movements. I ask him if that might be distracting, but he replies that it acts as a safety mechanism in his head so he can think through his sequence of movements to prompt him on the words. He explains: 'I'm not actually seeing a man in front of me, but I'm imagining that someone's doing those movements, so I don't have to – in my mind's eye'.

Callum has often used this physical action technique when learning texts in the past. As the work proceeds, he tells me that he eventually drops some of the movements, 'but sometimes they seep through into the acting and remain – especially if they are emotionally derived'.

Similarly to Callum, Amelia relayed in a recorded interview on 15th October 2011 that she had devised physical movements to enable her memorisation of the *Medea* text. Amelia's approach seemed akin to Callum's, although both denied having any knowledge of each other's process.

In a recorded interview (2011) Amelia expands:

I think my strongest modality is definitely physical, like choreography. If you showed me twenty movements and I went over them with you once, I could remember them straight away, my body has got an amazing memory...like that *Medea* speech we had to learn for movement... I did a movement sequence for it so that I could remember.

To explain what she meant, Amelia demonstrated an illustrative movement of drawing a bow and arrow, depicting a strong image in space as she spoke the phrase, '*bright arrow of the sun...*' (Euripides *Medea*).

In a filmed interview on the 5th December 2011, Amelia stated that she relied on her muscle memory if she had to learn a big speech. She reports that she finds it a struggle to learn lines quickly. Callum had labelled his process as 'a kind of dance', and Amelia also used dance vocabulary, 'because of the nature of the text and it being full of imagery, it was easy to build a choreography which meant the lines would come with the choreography...it sped my learning process up'.

She might use the physical actions on simply a couple of lines or choreograph a whole monologue if she cannot remember the lines. She reports:

The lines come with the choreography which really makes the learning process much quicker...with Shakespeare when the language can be such a barrier when you are initially given a piece and you have to work so hard to get to the truth and real meanings, I need to learn it first, so then I can put my script down and start to act and feel those feelings. I can't do that straight away, I need to break down that language barrier and I take all the beautiful imagery – similes and nice words that he gives you and I remember those...I can't learn it straight away, it just won't go in like a contemporary piece of text because the language is so different.

Although she uses the physicalised actions as a memory aid, Amelia also recognizes that the process of devising the actions assists her in finding underlying meanings in the text. Agreeing with Callum, Amelia likens the work to Berry's exercises of physically connecting to the text, describing her own method as:

...almost illustrative ... I find big strong bold shapes moving from one to another helps my memory more than if I did small emotional-like movements. ...I want to use the images...It is images – if you give me any novel or text I make pictures, but for me making those pictures physically is a good learning tool.

I asked her if she had used this physical action method when working on her monologue for the class practice in the Shakespeare unit; Lady Percy from *Henry IV*. In a correlation with Callum's answer when asked about his Shakespeare monologue process, she replied that she had not needed to because:

...the Lady Percy piece had a good beginning, middle and end... I found it easier to map out...It was more easy [easier] than this Chorus speech, it's so frantic...Medea has just killed her children and the Chorus are telling the audience what she's done It's so all over the place – it is not one story, I can't map it out.

I wondered if therefore, she might not need to use this physical method with Shakespeare's writing, but she underlines that it is all about the content and dramatic narrative action. 'Say if it was Puck or Ariel when describing the ship or finding the flower. It is a story, but it's not got the dramatic bits of the story - it's more describing – or Titania with her long speeches – I would use it for those, yes'.

As Callum had already discovered, the embedding of the physical movements attached to the words can prove problematic to future developmental work on the text. Amelia explains that through performing the movements in tandem with the speaking of the text, an entrenched rhythm emerges. This rhythm is repeated every time she works through it. 'I sometimes have a rhythm of how

I say those words and sometimes this can be a problem – breaking out of that rhythm’.

I asked to see their use of their actions with the *Medea* text in order to film it. I wanted to see an example of their strategies in accessing a text, without any influential interventions from me. Although not Shakespeare, the *Medea* speeches are classical language, encompassing large dramatic content. I was interested in the fact that they were using, (and appeared dependant on), a personally devised method of creating physical spatial shapes (e.g. some form of mental models of images) as a way of not only remembering the text, but of taking an ownership of the text.

5.3.2 Example of Callum’s movement storyboard: Jason from Medea by Euripides

Present: My critical friend, Kenneth Robertson as observer; participant Callum. Filmed in the Music Room at the Arts University. 5th December 2011; each session took an hour and a half approximately.

Description: (there are filmed examples of this work on DVD Three, Appendix Eight, Volume Two)

Callum’s actions are performed vigorously, with a precise denotation of the words. Callum speaks the lines with an energised vocal projection.



‘Abomination’



‘Most detested’

Figure 5. 1 Callum as Jason in his movement storyboard

Text.

You ~ (Callum points forwards)

Abomination ~ (he draws a circular movement with both arms, coming up his body and then downwards to the floor)

Most detested ~ (he points his finger downwards to the right – pointing to the floor)

Of all women ~ (he draws the curves of a woman's shape)

By every god ~ (his hands take up a praying position)

By me ~ (he points to his chest)

By the whole human race ~ (he draws a big circle like a globe)

You ~ (he points forward)

Could endure ~ (he wipes his brow as though undergoing a huge effort)

A mother ~ (he makes a round action in front of his belly as though pregnant)

To lift a sword ~ (he lifts his right hand and arm to shoulder height as if he was carrying a sword)

Against your little ones ~ (he drops his arm and hand to represent the act of measuring a small child's height)

To leave me ~ (he points to himself)

Childless ~ (he rocks his arms as though cradling a baby)

My life ~ (he raises his arms in front of his body with his hands clasped together)

Ruined ~ (he drops his arms towards the floor and then opens his hands)

After ~ (he uses an action as though turning a page of a book)

Such murder ~ (he uses an action as though stabbing himself in the heart with a knife)

Do you outface ~ (he lifts his hands to his face and covers one side of his face with his hand)

Sun and earth ~ (he draws alternate swirling small circles with his finger with the left and then the right arm)

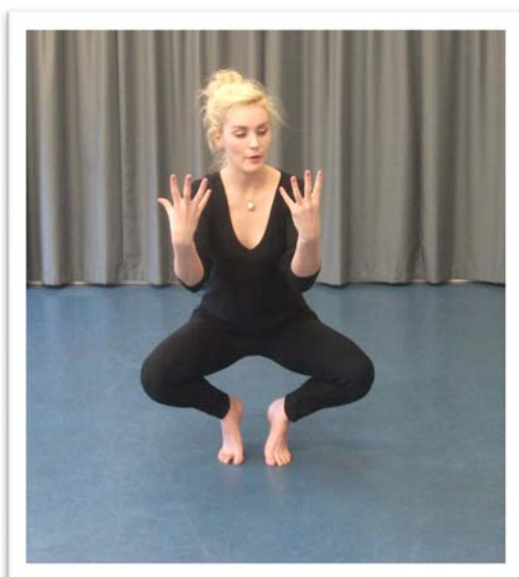
Guilty ~ (he drops his hand twice as though giving a verdict)

Of such gross pollution ~ (he holds his nose and grimaces as though repulsed)
 Callum then stopped speaking as he had forgotten his sequence of movements and therefore could not remember the words or carry on with the rest of the speech. I stopped filming and concluded the session.

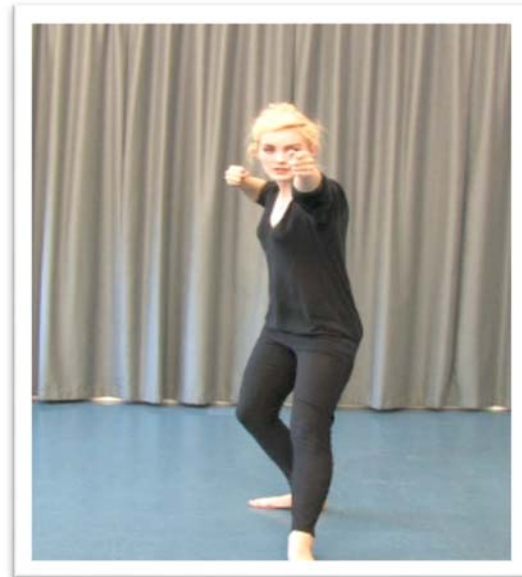
5.3.3 Example of Amelia's movement storyboard: *The Chorus from Medea by Euripides*

Description: (there are filmed examples of this work on DVD Three, Appendix Eight, Volume Two)

Amelia works through this sequence with concentration and expressive feeling, both in her formation of the movements and in her vocal intonation. Although not performed as an acting piece, she gives a sense of artistic interpretation with changes in rhythm, stress, tempo, along with imaginative choreography.



'This pitiable bloody handed fiend of vengeance'



'Bright arrow of the sun'

Figure 5.2. Amelia in her movement storyboard

Text

Earth ~ (she creates a four dimensional globe with her hands)

Awake ~ (she lifts her arms up and then opens them outwards)

Bright arrow of the sun ~ (she pulls her body and arms back as though drawing a bow)

Look down on the accursed woman ~ (she uses both her arms alternately to draw an arc shape going down to the floor as she looks downwards)

Before she lifts up her murderous hand ~ (she lifts her arm and hand as though she was holding a knife)

To pollute it with her children's blood ~ (she brings down her arms and hand as though stabbing a body)

For they are of your own golden race ~ (she lifts arms up to the ceiling)

And for mortals to spill blood ~ (she draws her hand across her wrist as though cutting it)

That grew in the veins of gods is a fearful thing ~ (she strokes her arm where the veins are and then shakes her head in a denying action)

Heaven born brightness ~ (she opens her arms in a circle and then places them as though she was holding a baby)

Hold her ~ (she wraps her arms around her body holding herself)

Stop her ~ (she holds her arm and hand outstretched in front of her in a halt sign)

Purge the palace of her ~ (she closes her hand whilst looking at it and draws it towards her body)

This pitiable bloody handed fiend of vengeance ~ (she lifts both hands looking at them with a facial expression of disgust as if they were covered in blood as she lowers her body into a squat)

All your care for them lost ~ (she squats and looks left to right)

your love for the babes you bore ~ (she stands drawing a circular movement in front her body as though pregnant)

All wasted, wasted ~ (she throws her arms and hands away from her body twice in rhythm with the words)

Why did you come from the blue Sympleglades

That hold the gate of the barbarous sea ~ (she carries out a rhythmic action either side of her body, as though paddling with an oar on a boat, speaking the words with the paddling rhythm)

Why must this rage devour your heart ~ (she wraps her hands around her head in circular motions)

To spend itself in slaughter of children ~ (she places her hands as though holding a rope around her neck and hangs her head downwards as though hung, dead)

Where kindred blood pollutes the ground ~ (she appears to hold something precious in her hands on 'kindred blood' and then drops them to the floor on 'pollutes' and performs a spreading action as though spreading something on the ground)

A curse hangs over human lives ~ (she hangs upside down from the waist)

And murder measures the doom that falls ~ (she hangs over from the waist and rhythmically hits the floor with her hands on 'murder' 'measures' 'doom' and then drops to the ground on the word 'falls')

By heaven's law on the guilty house ~ (from a kneeling position she looks upward).

5.3.4 Analysis of their use of the movement storyboard

Observing Callum's choice of gestures and words in action, it appears that his spoken movement sequence is an emotionally detached process, carried out with little sense of performance or expressivity derived from the words. This use of action does not serve the same purpose as Richard's development of the *Psychological Gesture*, as discussed in the previous chapter on drawing.

The sequence is run through mechanically, like steps in a dance routine. The line structure of the poetic form of the text is not adhered to, but broken up into single words or short phrases of no more than four words together, with a gesture/image attached to each piece. This disruption to the line means that the overall contextual meaning of the speech, or the 'ladder of thoughts' of constructed sense (Berry 2001:149) within the speech, is not represented through Callum's series of significations. His gestures vary in their semantic route; sometimes being iconic, illustrative denotations, or acting as connotative metaphors, with few affective, emotionally driven gestures.

It is likely that Callum is using his movements to create hooks on which to hang his perceptions derived from the text, as in Paivio's *Conceptual Peg*

Hypothesis (2009: 63). By breaking up the text into physical images/ ideographs on which to hook/anchor the words in his mind, his gesture formation turns the words into images that are noun led, or verbs that are demonstrated in a representational image, rather than being experienced in an inner action. For example in the phrase: 'the whole human race', Callum depicts a large globe shape, like a picture of the earth, and in the phrase: 'Against your little ones' his gesture indicates the short height of a child.

Interestingly, (and related to the research work further on in this chapter), when searching for motivations, Stanislavski warns his actors against using nouns to name an objective, stating that a noun intellectualises a concept which becomes 'presented by an image'. This will become representational, rather than 'full, integrated, true action' (Stanislavski 1981:123- 124).

Whyman writes that Stanislavski was sceptical of using only a representational use of gesture, which would create what he called 'stencils' – an external display of the creative process, in crude, unfelt exaggerations. He warned that the external stencil becomes unchangeable, and, 'like the painter he realises every feature and fixes the likeness not on canvas but on himself' (cited in Whyman *ibid*: 48).

Callum could not remember his piece without galvanizing his imprinted model of conceived actions. Was this because, in fixing his actions to single words and short phrases, (becoming noun -like), he had not interpreted/experienced the full meaning of the line, and the thought progression throughout the piece? He had created 'stencils'; representations, as Stanislavski had warned against. Callum mentions in his interviews that his working memory is weak, so he has to break the text into small chunks, with an anchored image to place into his episodic long term memory.

Amelia's route is analogous with Callum's, but has variances. She too sometimes breaks up the lines, but, unlike Callum, she frequently actions a whole sense phrase of up to eleven words, or a complete line as one piece, thereby achieving more idea of the complete thoughts behind it.

In her interview, it is significant that, although working through the body, the visual picture is important. She states that:

I want to use the images...it is images – pictures...for me making those pictures physically is a good learning tool.

In parallel with Callum's sequence, it appears that some of Amelia's process is about rooting the words to an image, rather than grasping the semantic gestalt behind the whole speech. In contrast to Callum, Amelia could remember her whole speech and her enactment was artistically inventive.

Although aesthetically pleasing to watch in performance, Amelia's physical translation of the words does obscure the global meaning of the text, her sign references being confused in function. This mixed use of gesture could interfere with higher concept apprehension as the precise meanings of the lines are obscured through her actions.

In her commentator's role of Chorus, her actions have unclear boundaries. They are sometimes utilised as iconic illustrators, and at other times she inhabits the action of the phrase from a subjective, first person perspective. For example, when Amelia says, 'she lifts up her murderous hand', she is speaking from the spectator's role of the Chorus, describing Medea's action in killing her children, however Amelia's physical action is to lift her arm as though her hand contained a knife. So, in speaking as the Chorus describing the action of Medea from the narrator's perspective, Amelia also embodies Medea's action in a personification, but without the concomitant inner emotion and objective of Medea. At other times the choice of action is ambiguous within the context. On the words: 'hold her', meaning the Chorus instruction to capture Medea, – Amelia places her arms around herself, which could be interpreted as an embrace rather than an imprisoning action.

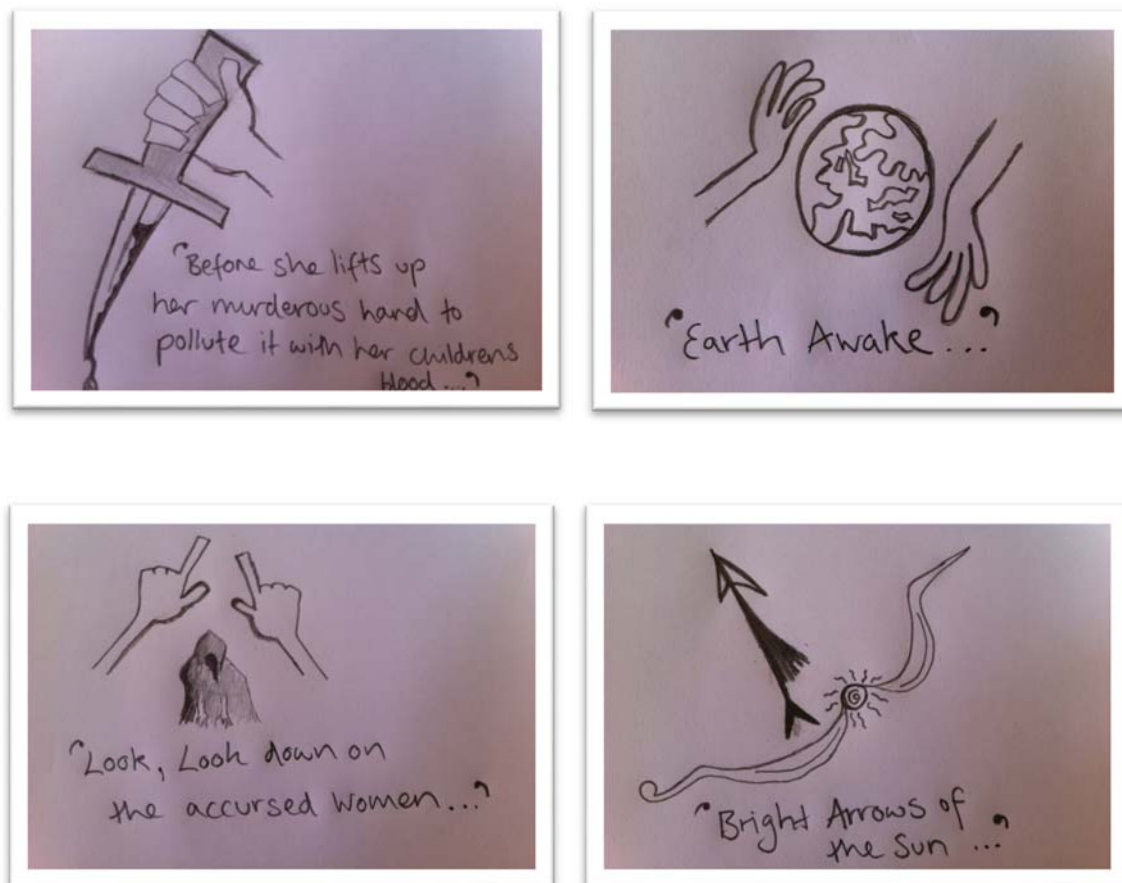


Figure 5.3 Examples of Amelia's drawings of the *Medea* speech, echoing her physical choreography.

Amelia drew these symbolic pictures after she had choreographed the physical work on the speech, as an example of what she visualises as she speaks the words and performs the movements (given me on the 12.4.2012).

This tendency to take the words alone, or in small chunks of meaning seems to mirror the reading action of some people with dyslexia. They often report that when they read the text they see each word individually, or take in small chunks of text, therefore struggling with grasping the meaning of the whole piece.

It, [dyslexia], stops me from understanding the meaning of the text because I'm just concentrating on trying to say one word in a sentence correctly

(Amelia in explanation of her work 12.4.2012)

Callum and Amelia both constructed strong visual – spatial images, and in Amelia's case, an aural awareness of the intonation, rhythm and quality of her spoken words are part of her sensory-motor activation.

In recounting his style of working, the French theatre teacher, Jacques Lecoq, described his 'mimodynamic' exercises where the actor uses gestures to respond to a text, 'to set the text free inside the body' (Lecoq 2000:146). Lecoq was not concerned with a literal interpretation of the meaning of the piece, but only with an expression of the sense of feelings arising from the text, translated into gestural 'mimages'. In Lecoq's practice, these gestures might be completely abstract, but are a response to the sounds, rhythms, textures, colours and dynamics sensed within the text. I believe there are aspects of Lecoq's notion of poetic expression underlying Amelia's movement storyboard, but less so in Callum's. Dalcroze's methods of realising the musical composition in space through sensory movement, also seems to have an affinity with Amelia's work.

There are, however, additional essential reinforcements being propped into place through this activity for both Callum and Amelia. There are empirical studies available that throw light on the participants' dependence on devising these movement sequences – especially for individuals with dyslexia and memory weaknesses.

In his book *Memory for Actions* (1989) Engelkamp presents his *multimodal enactment theory* investigations, which have shown that short verbal phrases that are accompanied by physical actions, are better remembered than if they are simply read or listened to. Engelkamp postulates that this is because the cognitive planning and creation of the physical action compels the mind to focus strongly on the reason for the action, so there is an item-specific encoding in the brain (Engelkamp 1998:41.) Engelkamp and Zimmer have developed their theory together through numerous empirical trials. They write that there are three distinct phases in the encoding of information. These are the sensory, conceptual and motor phases.

The sensory encoding processes are divided into two areas. They can be verbal representations which they designate as *word nodes*, and visual

representations entitled as *picture nodes*. With a correlation to Paivio's *Dual Code Theory*, these two separate pathways connect together to form conceptual meaning. If there is a thought or an instruction given to carry out an action, an activation of the two nodes, word and picture, combine to make a concept of the idea. This is followed by a motor encoding which activates the motor movement. In Engelkamp and Zimmer's view, the motor encoding and movement creates the enactment effect on memory rather than the imagination alone.

Zimmer and Engelkamp have carried out further experiments that sought to test the efficacy of the use of signs, in comparison with enactment actions, as a memory aid (Zimmer & Engelkamp 2003). Using both deaf and non-deaf participants to sign using German sign language for the deaf, or to physically enact verbal commands (made up of nouns and verbs) they discovered that the act of performing the sign language acted as a powerful elaboration on memory – as effectively as the direct physical enactment of the command. Because some of the sign symbols might be considered to be literally descriptive of an action (iconic) and therefore directly comparable to the meaning of the word in descriptive action, they also chose words whose sign did not literally illustrate the meaning of the word. They discovered that it was a physical act, (providing it was connected to the meaning of the word), that greatly enabled memorisation in comparison to those who merely wrote down or read the phrase.

Further evidence regarding their need for memory enhancement can be perceived in Amelia and Callum's methods. Noice and Noice have examined the strategies than professional actors use to learn their lines in contrast with a professional mnemonist Harry Lorayne's techniques (1997: 77). In order to learn a theatrical script, Lorayne used three techniques of visualising and linking. One method added an action to the picture in his mind, thus creating a movement within the image, another method integrated an additional quality to a part of the image, highlighting some aspect within the words of the text, and the third method interweaved two images together to encapsulate some information in the text.

I can perceive a direct link with all three of Lorayne's techniques in making his images distinct, and Amelia and Callum's composition of movements. Through the observation of both Callum and Amelia's choreography, it is apparent that their spatial bodily movements form a mental pattern originally derived from their imaginative associations of the word. The marriage of the visual nodes with the word nodes, form an idea concept which is transferred into discrete motor movements. The spatial directions of the body have a specificity, creating an imaged, conceptual peg, similar to the strokes of the pen on the page.

These findings directly underpin the further work using Stanislavski's Active Analysis.

5.4 Introduction Of The Physical Actions Method Inspired By Stanislavski, And The Use Of Berry's Image - Miming In Interpretation Of The Text (1987:168. 2008:95. 2001:223)

5.4.1 Background

In the early stages of the syllabus of the Shakespeare unit, we explore diverse methods in approaching Shakespeare, such as paraphrasing, looking for directions written into the text, Linklater's auto-suggestive 'dropping in' of the words, Houseman's use of objects and spaces to clarify thoughts, observance of Shakespeare's verse form and Berry's corporeal way into the text.

As part of this procedure, I include Stanislavski's methods of breaking down a scene into Units and Actions and his Active Analysis score. The particular process I use was initially taught to me when I attended a director's training course (*How To Rehearse* 2006) at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, taught by the theatre and film director, Sue Dunderdale (head of the MA Text and Performance and the MA Director's courses at RADA).

Dunderdale sees Stanislavski's process as: '...a release for the actor ...especially with Shakespeare...to get the language inside them' (Whitfield 2002: 88- 89).

5.4.2 Active Analysis; the stages of Physical Actions

This sequence is based on a condensed form of Stanislavski's rehearsal methods on text (Merlin 2003: 30 – 37, 136, Whyman 2008: 267-270), and further informed by my training on directing Shakespeare with Dunderdale at RADA (August 2006).

There are three beginning steps:

- Firstly the actors (and director or teacher) read the scene and discuss meaning and sense.
- Secondly the actors, usually through discussion with others, break the scene down into *units* of what is happening within the text, and then each unit is given an overall title.
- Thirdly the actors examine what their character is doing as they speak the lines. They analyse what and why they are saying it, what they want to achieve, or possibly do to the other actor in the scene. Having made a decision on those questions, the actor gives each want/intention/objective an *action*, labelling it with an active verb. (So the line 'I love you' could be actioned as: 'I hit you', or 'I embrace you', depending on the character's psychological wants, intentions, feelings as they speak the words). This action might be for one line or it could involve a chunk of text.

Having broken the scene up into units and actions, the Active Analysis begins. There are four parts to this active stage, each building on the other.

- When first working on their feet, the actors put down their texts. The director will read aloud the chosen title of each unit and then read out the individual actions, using the actors' chosen verbs. The actors remain silent, and, as the director reads them, they physicalize their actions, using exaggerated movements, which encapsulate the psychological want behind the verb; this is what Stanislavski called the Silent Etude (Merlin 2003:30). They work through the whole unit in

movement, and then return to the beginning for the next stage of the sequence.

- The actor now introduces improvised voiced sound, (not words yet), along with the physical actions. The sound must be as bold and psychologically truthful as the physical actions. This is to get an idea of the emotional wants behind the actions, related to Stanislavski's work on expression of feelings through nonsense syllables, and is not intellectualised (Stanislavski 1981: 254, Whyman 2008:152, 268).
- They repeat the whole piece again, still retaining the physical actions, but using brief improvised words of their own, which capture the gist of what the character is saying or feeling.
- Finally they repeat the whole scene again, but now read the actual lines of the author's text, keeping the actions, but reducing them to a more natural level.

According to Dunderdale, the rationale for this gradual extension is, '...to get an intuitive response, rather than a thought out response'. Dunderdale maintains that for her as director, '... the physicalisation and vocalisation are the most important part because it is very releasing for the actors to find out what is going on in the scene, beneath their ability to talk about things, so you have to be doing things to work out what is happening' (Whitfield 2002: 55).

Rejecting an intellectual study of the text, Stanislavski believed that:

Generally the lines of the play become indispensable to the actor only in the last phase of his creative preparations, when all the inner material he has accumulated is crystallized in a series of definite moments, and the physical embodiment of his role is working out methods of expressing characteristic emotions.

(Stanislavski 1881: 95)

Merlin asserts that there were no formal rules in the process of Actions in Stanislavski's system, and, as long as his sequence is retained, she believes that they can be used freely. She explains that there are also two types of

actions: those driven by imaginary needs, or actions that simply describe the physical life of the role (2003: 134- 135).

Before I began this dyslexia enquiry, my own belief was that this method allows an organic movement and communication within the scene to gradually become visible, rather than being artificially imposed on the actors by the director. The intuitive vocal sounds made without forming words, releases the fundamental feelings, rooting the meaning of the text within the actor. There can be a danger that sometimes chosen actions can become fixed, or restrict any new intuitions from being investigated, but this will not happen if there is a flexible Active Analysis.

5.4.3 Method; Action research Cycle Two

The class work: the beginning of the Action research Cycle Two

For the practice of Units and Actions, I had chosen a scene to work on from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, (Act iii, Scene i), where Isabella comes to tell her imprisoned brother Claudio that he must die unless she sleeps with Angelo. In this scene, the language, graphic imagery, use of metaphor, semantics, need for a precise articulation of the words related to the underlying psychology, is complex. In addition, the emotional stakes for the characters are extremely heightened. The scene offers an excellent exercise piece to engage with in acting Shakespeare: a deep connection with the ideas, feelings, and situation of the character, expressed through the realisation of robust images, unusual word order, Elizabethan world views, to be communicated with clarity.

This participants' trial of my action research initially had to be included as part of my overall teaching of the cohort in the Shakespeare unit syllabus. At the start, it included all the twenty –five second year students that I was teaching.

We began by reading the scene in class, with various individuals taking the roles of Isabella and Claudio, followed by a discussion on the meaning of the words and what was happening within the scene. In advance, I had already divided the scene up into small units of focus, unit A – F, to guide the students and to form a framework of the whole scene for the practice sections for

students to work on. I had previously prepared Unit A in advance as a practice demonstration piece for class work; so I had earmarked the characters' actions to explore in the class exercise, thus artificially imposing my idea of the characters' actions and verb choice.

At this point I deviated from the practice usually proposed when utilising Stanislavski's Actions. Rather than begin with asking what is the character's *objective* (Calderone & Lloyd- Williams 2004: xviii) I suggested they ask themselves what their character is *doing* when they speak. My reason for this is twofold:

- i) In Shakespeare, language is doing, one is doing something with the words. In this exercise, I want the student to get inside each word, to become conversant with the meaning of it, why they are saying it, and, in the utterance, to match word with meaning in a symbiotic relationship. This is the necessity for any actor speaking Shakespeare's words, but particularly for those with dyslexia.

Much that is said within this scene between Isabella and Claudio is multi layered and convoluted in the language. Therefore searching for the objective of the character could become muddling, especially for those with difficulties with reading, words and syntax. By putting the attention outside the words, it would be easy for the individual to miss what is actually within the detail of the language, and to become lost within the layers.

- ii) I did not guide them to use a transitive verb to describe their action, rather than an intransitive verb (as is often advised, e.g. Gillett 2007:210, Alfreds 2007:73). Adding more word rules to an already intricate reading and language analysis task could exacerbate stress levels for those with dyslexia. This could obscure the goal, rather than offering a pathway into the scene.

In the whole cohort class, we worked through Unit A in the prescribed sequence. As a demonstration exercise, I took the role of the director and read the actions out, while student volunteers acted the parts of Isabella and Claudio proceeding through the four stages. This demonstration established the

sequence. We also paraphrased the unit into everyday language and the students acted out the paraphrased Unit A using contemporary language, to anchor their understanding.

Finally, for homework, I divided my cohort of twenty five students into groups of three. I gave each group a small unit of the scene to action together, in order to perform it to the class. One student was to be the director, while the other students would play the roles of Isabella or Claudio.

I put three of my research participants together in one group: Callum as director, Abigail as Claudio and Amelia as Isabella. Verity had to be placed with two non-dyslexic students and she played Isabella.

I gave them a preparation time of two days before giving a class performance of their Units and Actions process. They needed adequate time for the shared task of absorbing the text, deciding on their verbs and actions, sounds and improvised words through rehearsal.

5.4.4 The class performance

In the class performances of their unit amongst the whole cohort, I noticed that Amelia, Abigail and Verity were strikingly impactful in their physical actions. Their devised choreography included inventive physical shapes symbolising interesting interpretations. Their physical actions, vocal sounds and improvised words were energetically committed to, with an apparent ease. As their Active Analysis appeared to be deeply embedded, my expectation was that their final stage of the sequence, (playing the scene with the actual text), would be equally assured.

I was therefore, surprised when, in both groups, Amelia and Verity, (who had the most to say in their units), still stumbled on the reading of certain bits of the text. They read some of the text as though unfamiliar with the words, giving an impression of insecurity, lack of comprehension and poor communication. Their reading of Shakespeare's words lacked the liberated confidence that they had just given to their improvised words, vocal sounds and actions.

This was notable in comparison with their fellow students of similar acting ability who do not have dyslexia, and the assured manner with which they read the lines. I was puzzled that Amelia and Verity's hard work on each stage of their unit had not provided an effective stepping stone into the text, promoting a familiarity with Shakespeare's actual words.

As this work was presented as part of the whole cohort class syllabus, I was not able to film these examples of their work. I therefore decided to film them doing the same units, in a separate workshop, outside of the general cohort class. I wanted to investigate why this discrepancy might be happening.

5.4.5 Peer advice from my critical friend

When sharing my work with Robertson, I reported my participants' problem of tripping over some of the words in the fourth stage of the process, when reading the text. Robertson advised me that in his practice of this system, before giving the actors the text, he reads the lines of the text aloud. The actors carry out their actions as he reads, but they still do not speak the words. Robertson suggested that I might insert this stage into my own practice.

In examining Stanislavski's methods, I discovered that in order to try to bridge the gap between the improvised words and the speaking of the text, Stanislavski mentions feeding his actors the words of the text aurally, before they finally spoke them from the script (Stanislavski 1981:207 Merlin 2003:31).

You scarcely had to work on your lines because for some time in advance I had been suggesting to you Shakespeare's own words when you had to have them, when you were reaching out for them for the verbal accomplishment of this or that objective.

(Stanislavski 1981: 207)

In 2008, I was searching for methods to assist an acting student with dyslexia who had difficulty reading the text. I had attempted to use Berry's Ghost exercise (Berry 2001: 99), where one actor speaks small chunks of the text into the ear of another actor, who will then speak the received text aloud, thus releasing the actor from reading the words. That particular individual found it

an impossible task to retain Shakespeare's words in his memory, assimilate and then speak them.

However, I chose to follow Robertson's advice, and to include his recommended step. I would read out the text, but to ask the participant to only physicalise what they hear, releasing them from the pressure of memorising and speaking the words received aurally.

For clarity, this additional stage would be now called Stage Five in the sequence, and to be added to my filmed examples. This was an expedient decision. The inclusion of Stage Five made their difficulties, and the causes of them, transparent

5.4.6 *Examples of Verity's process as Isabella; the filming of Unit C of Act III, Scene I, 'Measure for Measure'*

Present: my critical friend, Ken Robertson, as observer and to assist with filming. Research participant Verity is playing Isabella and another non-participant student is playing Claudio. Another non-participant student, as the director of their Unit C, is reading out the Actions for the actors. It is filmed in the Movement Studio at the AUB on the 29th October 2011. Time spent three hours approximately.

In this short unit description, I am focussing particularly on Verity's insecurity on the text. She had been imprecise when reading much of the text in the class presentation, but in this filmed workshop, she had difficulties reading one speech, but was fluent in her reading of the rest of the unit. Verity's lack of fluency was on her first speech of Isabella's.

Verity and her fellow actor ran through their sequence as they had rehearsed it for the prior class presentation. This table that follows is the text as they had actioned it.

(My added observations on their type of expressions are marked in red colour).

Table 5. 1. Unit C. Isabella unburdens herself/Claudio tests and protects her

<p>Isabella: ... <i>This outward sainted deputy, Whose settled visage and deliberate word Nips youth i' th' head and follies doth anew As falcon doth the fowl, is yet a devil: His filth within being cast, he would appear A pond as deep as hell.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 1. Isabella unveils the devil</u> Movement: Verity's action is as though she is pulling a cloth away from what it was concealing <i>(Metaphoric action)</i> Sound: 'Aha!' <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Look at him' <i>(This is a very brief verb action for the whole speech and completely skims over the inherent meaning of all the words within it).</i></p>
<p>Claudio: <i>The prenzie Angelo!</i></p>	<p><u>Action 2. Claudio is shocked</u> Movement: Josh steps back and opens his arms <i>(Exaggerated psychologically truthful action)</i> Sound: Intake of breath – 'ah!' Improvised words: 'I don't believe it'</p>
<p>Isabella: <i>O, 'tis the cunning livery of hell, The damned'st body to invest and cover In prenzie guards.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 3. Isabella parades the beast</u> Movement: Verity walks about holding her arms out as though presenting something in front of her <i>(Representational action that is skimming the meaning)</i> Sound: 'ooofff!' <i>(Symbolic sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Yes, this is what he wants me to do' <i>(These improvised words demonstrate that Verity is not addressing the meaning of the beginning of this speech, but already moving on to Action 4, after this one.</i></p>
<p><i>Dost thou think, Claudio- If I would yield him my virginity, Thou wouldst be freed!</i></p>	<p><u>Action 4. Isabella releases</u> Movement: Verity releases her body forwards and hangs downwards <i>(Representational action)</i> Sounds: 'Ugh!' <i>(Psychologically & emotionally truthful sound)</i> Improvised words: 'He wants me to give him my virginity'</p>
<p>Claudio: <i>O, heavens! It cannot be.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 5. Claudio is repulsed</u></p>

	<p>Movement: Josh turns away from Verity <i>(Exaggerated psychologically truthful action)</i></p> <p>Sound: 'Hah!' <i>(Emotionally truthful sound)</i></p> <p>Improvised words: 'I can't let you do it'.</p>
<p>Isabella: <i>Yes, he would give it thee; from this rank offence So to offend him still....</i></p>	<p><u>Action 6. Isabella confirms and hints</u></p> <p>Movement: Takes hold of Josh's shoulders and looks at him <i>(Psychologically real action)</i></p> <p>Sound: 'mmmm huh'</p> <p>Improvised words: 'Yes this is what he wants but...' <i>(These brief words are skimming over all the meaning)</i></p>
<p><i>This night's the time That I should do what I abhor to name, Or else thou diest tomorrow.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 7. Isabella expands</u></p> <p>Movement: Verity opens arms in large circle <i>(The action is illustrating the verb action choice, rather than the content of the words)</i></p> <p>Sound: sound of breath taken inwards <i>(Emotionally truthful sound)</i></p> <p>Improvised words: 'I have to do it tonight' <i>(Improvised words missing the detail of Claudio's impending death)</i></p>
<p>Claudio: <i>Thou shalt not do't.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 8. Claudio is firm</u></p> <p>Movement: Josh lunges towards Verity. <i>(Emotionally truthful action)</i></p> <p>Sound: Clears throat strongly <i>(Emotionally true sound)</i></p> <p>Improvised words: 'You must not do it'</p>
<p>Isabella: <i>O, were it but my life, I'd throw it down for your deliverance As frankly as a pin.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 9. Isabella sympathises</u></p> <p>Movement: Verity strokes Josh's face and kneels at his feet <i>(Psychologically and emotionally truthful action)</i></p> <p>Sound: breathes out and then 'ooooo' <i>(Emotionally truthful sound)</i></p> <p>Improvised words: 'If it was my life I'd give it to you'</p>
<p>Claudio: <i>Thanks, dear Isabel.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 10. Claudio is humbled</u></p> <p>Movement: Josh goes down to the floor. <i>(Psychologically truthful action)</i></p> <p>Sound: Mid pitch hum <i>(Psychologically truthful sound)</i></p>

	Improvised words: 'Thank you for telling me'
Isabella: <i>Be ready, Claudio, for your death to-morrow</i>	<u>Action 11. Isabella inspires</u> Movement: Verity stands and lifts her arms above her head <i>(Representational action)</i> Sound: 'Ah' (laugh) <i>(Psychologically truthful sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Be ready for tomorrow'
Claudio: Yes...	<u>Action 12. Claudio accepts</u>

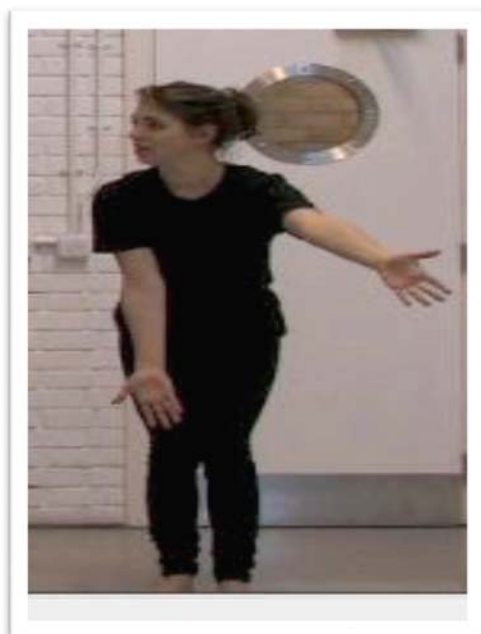


Figure 5.4 Verity's action three: 'Isabella parades the beast'

5.4.7 What happened in Verity's performance of Stages One, Two, Three and Four in her Active Analysis

As in Verity's earlier cohort class presentation, Stages One, Two and Three of the Active Analysis were performed with a lively commitment (although deeper analysis of her choices are investigated further on in Stage Five). Also replicating her class presentation, (despite having ample rehearsal time), when reading the text in Stage Four, Verity made noticeable mistakes over several phrases by missing out and supplanting small words.

In her spoken inaccuracies she said:

- ‘i’head’ rather than ‘*i’ th’ head*’
- ‘as falcon as the fowl’ rather than ‘*as falcon doth the fowl*’
- ‘he would appear as deep as a pond’, rather than ‘*he would appear a pond as deep as hell*’
- She also trips over the articulation of the words, ‘*his filth*’

5.4.8 Insert Stage Five. Feeding the lines to Verity

Acting on the advice of my critical friend, in an attempt to secure the words in Verity’s mind, I now added Stanislavski’s Fifth Stage; his method of feeding the words aurally to the actor. I read Isabella’s lines aloud, directing Verity to action them as she heard them.

5.4.9 Stage Five. What happened with Verity

During this aurally received process, Verity became lost. As I read Isabella’s speech aloud in short, easily assimilated sense phrases, Verity’s gestures remained energised, but changed into vague, poking movements, indicating a scant correlation with the words in the text. In addition, there was an obvious mismatch between Verity’s attempts to find a physical relationship with the words being read to her, and her pre-planned Verb Actions that she had already entrenched in the previous stages of the work. As some of Isabella’s speeches have obscure words linked with images in Shakespeare’s multi-layered metaphors, it was clearly hard for Verity to hold all the words in her working memory, make sense of them, and translate them into actions.

When carrying out Stanislavski’s sequence in the class situation, Verity’s actions, sounds and few improvised words had appeared effective in the first showing. To an observer, it was not evident that she had not fully comprehended the elements within the words. But, when I introduced Stanislavski’s method of aurally feeding the words to the actor, as she attempted to action them, Verity’s lack of the grasp of the details within the text was revealed.

- Verity's Action One is entitled: 'Isabella unveils the devil'. This simple statement is meant to summarise Isabella's six line speech, '*This outward sainted deputy ... A pond as deep as hell*', wherein she describes Angelo's actions and her strong feelings about his character. The speech involves vivid imagery, with homonymic, multi layered meanings entrenched within the word/images. Verity's single action to encapsulate all the six lines was too generalised to capture what Isabella was actually saying. Her improvised words were simply: 'look at him'. This is an extremely skimpy translation of what Shakespeare has included. In a subsequent discussion, Verity admitted that she did not understand the meaning of some of the words in this speech, nor did she have a precise grasp of the intricacies of what she was saying. She had thought that if she had an overall idea of what it was about, it might be enough to get by without her puzzlement being revealed.

Her dyslexia meant that the spelling of words did not offer a key to meaning. Verity had misread the word '*fowl*' thinking it meant 'foul'. She knew Isabella meant something about Angelo being horrible, but she had no notion of the reference of the falcon preying on the small bird, thereby missing out on the metaphor illustrating Angelo's destructive power over her and her brother Claudio. In the editor's notes for '*Measure for Measure*' Lever reports that a bird of prey kills by nipping in the head (1965: 72). Isabella's description of Angelo nipping youth in the head captures the triple meaning of his condemning Claudio to death (by beheading him,) wanting to take away Isabella's maidenhead, plus killing in the manner of a bird of prey. Shakespeare's polysemic metaphor was completely missed by Verity. This is a prime example of the layers within Shakespeare's words that need to be perceived by the actor to enhance performance and to serve Shakespeare's intentions.

- Verity also disclosed to me that she had not understood the speech about Angelo's body being dressed in '*prenzie guards and the livery of hell*'. For the lines:

O, tis the cunning livery of hell,

The damned'st body to invest and cover

In prenzie guards,

It is acknowledged here that the word *prenzie* comes from the First Folio. Editors Bate & Rasmussen in the RSC edition of the play's text state that the meaning of the word *prenzie* is unclear, and could mean precise, puritanical, priestly or princely (2010:60). Some editors such as J. W. Lever in the Arden edition of the play have amended *prenzie* to 'precise' in the play script (1965). I had previously explained this question about the meaning of *prenzie* to all of the students at the initial reading of the scene in class work, and advised them to retain the use of the word, but to understand the meaning of *prenzie* as 'precise'; Angelo is hyper- correct and precise in his behaviour, views and, no doubt, his clothes (*guards*).

Verity's improvised words for this bit of the text were, 'Yes, this is what he wants me to do'. Isabella's exposure of Angelo's double-crossing hypocrisy, hidden underneath his robes of authority is overlooked by Verity. Verity is speaking words wherein the meaning is a blur.

Through an inability to engage with all of the words, (despite her concentrated work on the unit and actions), Verity remained unable to give a fluent reading or speaking of the content of her scene.

5.4.10 Examples of Amelia as Isabella and Abigail as Claudio; the filming of Unit A & Unit B in Act III, Scene I 'Measure For Measure', (with Callum in the role of director).

Reference to the Appendices: there are filmed examples of the Stanislavski Units and Action sequences with Amelia and Abigail on DVD Three, Appendix Eight, Volume Two. This includes evidential examples relating to misunderstanding of the text which is focussed on in this section.

Present: my critical friend, Ken Robertson as observer and assisting with filming. Participant Amelia is playing Isabella, and Abigail is playing Claudio and Callum is their director of their Units A & B. It was filmed in the Movement Room at the AUB, 29th October 2011.

Table 5.2 Unit A: Isabella brings sentence to Claudio who wants to know more

<i>Isabella enters.</i>	<p><u>Action 1. Isabella enters and hovers</u> Movement: Amelia steps back and forth <i>(Representational action)</i> Sound: ‘ah ho ah ho’ <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: ‘Hi, um, hey’ <i>(Psychologically real words)</i></p>
Claudio: <i>Now sister, what’s the comfort?</i>	<p><u>Action 2. Claudio begs for comfort</u> Movement only: Abigail kneels on the floor and hugs Amelia’s legs, rocking back & forth <i>(Emotionally real action)</i> Sound: Crying noises <i>(Emotionally real sound)</i> Improvised words: ‘Tell me, tell me, tell me’ <i>(Psychologically real words)</i></p>
Isabella: <i>Why, As all comforts are: most good, most good indeed.</i>	<p><u>Action 3. Isabella shows optimism</u> Movement: Amelia holds Abigail’s chin, smiling <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: Whistles <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: ‘I have some news’</p>
Lord Angelo, <i>having affairs to heaven, Intends you for his swift ambassador, Where you shall be an everlasting leiger;</i>	<p><u>Action 4. Isabella enlightens Claudio</u> Movement: Amelia points to the sky <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: Amelia sings <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: ‘Everything’s going to be okay’ <i>(This is a reduced generalisation of what Isabella says)</i></p>
Therefore your best appointment <i>make with speed; To-morrow you set on.</i>	<p><u>Action 5. Isabella installs bravery</u> Movement: Amelia holds Abigail’s shoulders and looks into her face <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: ‘Huhm!’ <i>(Psychologically true, related to word meaning)</i> Improvised words: ‘You can do this’.</p>
Claudio: <i>Is there no remedy?</i>	<p><u>Action 6. Claudio questions his fate</u> Movement: Abigail takes Amelia’s face in her hands and then throws her arms upward & open. <i>(Emotionally based action)</i></p>

	<p>Sound: Crying desperate sound. <i>(Psychologically real sound)</i> Improvised words: 'what?'</p>
<p>Isabella: <i>None, but such a remedy as, to save a head, To cleave a heart in twain.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 7. Isabella exposes hope</u> Movement: Amelia mimes opening a small door <i>(Metaphorical action)</i> Sound: Creaking sound of a door opening <i>(Metaphorical sound)</i> Improvised words: 'There is one way' <i>(Reduced meaning and content)</i></p>
<p>Claudio: <i>But is there any?</i></p>	<p><u>Action 8. Claudio demands answers</u> Movement: Abigail bangs the floor impatiently <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: Angry shout <i>(Psychologically real)</i> Improvised words: 'You're not making sense! Tell me!'</p>
<p>Isabella: <i>Yes, brother, you may live; There is a devilish mercy in the judge, If you'll implore it, that will free your life, But fetter you till death.</i></p>	<p><u>Action 9. Isabella reveals a burdened freedom</u> Movement: Amelia dances, waving arms in the air, then stoops over forward with her arms behind her back as though carrying an enormous weight on her back. She staggers forward <i>(Representational & metaphorical action)</i> Sound: Sings and then changes to effortful vocal sounds <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: 'You can live but your life won't be worth living'</p>
<p>Claudio: <i>Perpetual durance?</i></p>	<p><u>Action 10. Claudio confirms</u> Movement: Abigail holds a weight in her arms and then leans forward as though it is on her back and staggers forward next to Amelia <i>(Abigail is copying Amelia's symbolic metaphorical action – although this could be appropriate for meaning if understood)</i> Sounds: Grunts as though lifting weight <i>(Does this sound reflect Claudio's meaning?)</i> Improvised words: 'My life won't be worth living?'</p>

	<i>(Abigail repeats what Amelia has just said as Isabella)</i>
Isabella: <i>Ay, just, perpetual durance; a restraint, Though all the world's vastidy you had, To a determined scope.</i>	<u>Action 11. Isabella exaggerates and clarifies</u> Movement: Amelia lifts her arms high above head and opens them making a large circular movement with both hands arriving together at the bottom, with bent legs <i>(Representational action)</i> Sound: High pitched squeak that drops to lower pitch <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: 'You'll be guilty for the rest of your life'
Claudio: <i>But in what nature?</i>	<u>Action 12. Claudio appeals for truth</u> Movement: Abigail takes hold of Amelia's hands and shakes them <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: Drawing breath and voice in and out <i>(Emotionally true sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Just tell me the truth'
Isabella: <i>In such a one as, you consenting to't, Would bark your honour from that trunk you bear, And leave you naked.</i>	<u>Action 13. Isabella taints the offer</u> Movement: Amelia presents something to him in her hand, then with the other hand stabs him <i>(Metaphorical action)</i> Sound: Whistles then, 'huh' <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Fine, take it but it will hurt me' <i>(The improvised words do not match the meaning of the text)</i>
Claudio: <i>Let me know the point.</i>	<u>Action 14. Claudio scare with persistence</u> Movement: Abigail jerks towards Amelia aggressively <i>(Psychologically real action)</i> Sound: Growls <i>(Emotionally true sound)</i> Improvised words: 'Come on then'

Table 5. 3 Unit B. Title: Isabella tests Claudio who proves himself

<p>Isabella: O, I do fear thee, Claudio, and I quake, Lest thou a feverous life shoulds't entertain And six or seven winters more respect Than a perpetual honour...</p>	<p><u>Action 1. Isabella calms and reinstates faith</u> Movement: Amelia takes his face and lifts his head to the sky <i>(Movement does not match meaning of text)</i> Sound: 'hum' <i>(Neutral sound meaning?)</i> Improvised words: 'Remember who I am, I'm your sister' <i>(These words do not relate to the meaning of the text, showing non-comprehension of content)</i></p>
<p>Dar'st thou die?</p>	<p><u>Action 2. Isabella comforts Claudio</u> Movement: Amelia takes Abigail in her arms and rocks her <i>(Does this action match what Isabella means?)</i> Sound: 'Sshhh, sshhh' Improvised words: 'I'm doing this for the both of us' <i>(These words do not relate to this piece of the text, showing not fully 'on' the words)</i></p>
<p>The sense of death is most in apprehension, And the poor beetle that we tread upon In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great As when a giant dies.</p>	<p><u>Action 3. Isabella belittles dying</u> Movement: Amelia covers her eyes with her hands, sways and gradually falls to the floor <i>(Representational action).</i> Sound: 'Snoring, sshhh' <i>(Representational sound)</i> Improvised words: Dying is just like sleeping <i>(This is a generalised meaning of the content)</i></p>
<p>Claudio: Why give you me this shame? Think you I can a resolution fetch from flowery tenderness? If I must die, I will encounter darkness as a bride And hug it in my arms</p>	<p><u>Action 5 Claudio embraces his fate</u> Movement: Abigail embraces herself and looks to the sky <i>(Representational action)</i> Sound: Breathes out, hums mid-pitch <i>(Representational but also emotionally truthful)</i> Improvised words: 'if this is what I shall do then I can do it like a man'</p>
<p>Isabella: There spake my brother: there my father's grave</p>	<p><u>Action 6. Isabella recognises his honour</u> Movement: Amelia looks at him, then bows forward to the floor</p>

<p><i>Did utter forth a voice...</i></p>	<p><i>(Representational action)</i> Sound: 'Hum! Ha!' Then an intonation on one pitch Improved words: 'I'm so proud of you' <i>(Psychologically truthful)</i></p>
<p><i>Yes, thou must die. Thou art too noble to conserve a life In base appliances</i></p>	<p><u>Action 7. Isabella confirms and compliments</u> Amelia stands next to Abigail, embraces herself and looks to the sky <i>(Representative action)</i> Sound: Cries and then says: 'sshwa, shwa' <i>(Emotionally truthful sound)</i> Improved words: 'You must die and I'll miss you terribly' <i>(Missing the implication in base appliances)</i></p>



Figure 5.5 *Action 4. 'Isabella enlightens Claudio'*

5.4.11 What happened in Amelia and Abigail's Stages of One, Two, Three and Four

In the class presentation, Amelia had used imaginative actions and sounds in her unit. But, like Verity, during the reading of the text in Stage Four, she had stumbled over some of the words when reading. As I had already done with Verity in the filmed workshop, I now decided to add Stage Five – Stanislavski's idea of feeding the actors with the words whilst asking them to physicalise what they hear. Abigail as Claudio had less to say than Amelia, so her management of the text was less exposed in these units.

5.4.12 Insert Stage Five. The feeding of the lines. What happened with Amelia and Abigail

At the beginning of this stage of the exercise, both Amelia and Abigail's actions were illustrative, using a literal translation from individual words and phrases into movements, demonstrating an evident comprehension of some of the text. However, as they continued further, it became obvious that important words were not being engaged with.

Some examples of Amelia's fuzzy apprehension of the text, revealed through her physical actions, were as follows:

- For the words, '*an everlasting leiger*', in action, Amelia made an indefinite jab forward with the arms, with any defined signification unclear.
- Amelia's semantic mis- conceptions were obviously transparent in Isabella's lines:

'None, but such a remedy as, to save a head,

To cleave a heart in twain...'

- For the word 'save', Amelia rubbed her fingers together using a gesture commonly understood to symbolise saving money, or being miserly
- She represented 'cleave' using an action as though winding something around some object

- ‘*in twain*’ was physically represented by an action reminiscent of pulling string between her fingers
- Only the word ‘*heart*’, (denoted by Amelia’s clenched fist forming the image of a heart), was discernibly related to meaning
- In other doubtful action choices, Amelia mimed a dog’s barking mouth for Isabella’s lines: ‘*Would bark your honour from that trunk you bear...*’

Here Shakespeare is using the noun ‘bark’, (the outer layer that grows on a tree), in a verb-like manner, denoting the verb action ‘to strip’. Isabella is intimating through metaphor, that Claudio’s body is like a trunk of a tree, and his honour is like the bark of the tree that could be stripped off – ‘*barked*’.

- When hearing Isabella’s words about the ‘*corporal sufferance*’ of a beetle being stepped on and killed, Amelia made a soldier type of saluting action. The word ‘corporal’, in Isabella’s description, means the body of the beetle; Amelia’s saluting gesture reveals her muddled grasp of the exact meaning of what Isabella is saying.
- Abigail, as Claudio, had less to say than Amelia as Isabella in this unit. However, when physicalizing Claudio’s question: ‘*Perpetual durance?*’ Abigail wildly swung her arms, giving an imprecise exposition of Claudio’s meaning.

It was noteworthy, that in this filmed example of the units, the use of Cicely Berry inspired iconic actions, related to the language, anchored the words precisely - when the meaning was understood. In addition, there sometimes was a clash with the planned actions already embedded through the prepared Stanislavski work, and the newly coined actions emerging in the moment of hearing.

5.4.13 Insert Stage Six. The physicalisation of the word

Building on the exploratory work in Stage Five with Verity, I now decided to add yet another step with Amelia and Abigail, comprising a Stage Six. The

aim was to further investigate their comprehension of the text, to more precisely embed the language meaning in their minds, in conjunction with motor movements of the body, and accuracy of speech.

Leaving aside their Stanislavski Actions that they had already worked on, I asked them to read the text aloud whilst acting the scene, but to particularly explore the words through physical movement, as they actually spoke them, (as with some Cicely Berry exercises).

I directed them to investigate the sense of what they were saying as they read it, by illustrating the meaning through the body. As they were already extremely familiar with the text through prior rehearsal and preparation, I believed that this dual coding process would not overload their cognition.

5.4.14 Stage Six; what happened with Amelia and Abigail

- When reading the text, Amelia, (although sometimes adding succinct actions to some of the words), notably gives no action to the words: *'Where you shall be an everlasting leiger'*.

In Isabella's hint of the possibility of her being able to save Claudio's life by having sex with Angelo: *'None, but such a remedy as, to save a head, To cleave a heart in twain....'*,

- Amelia gives no action for the crucial word 'save' as she speaks it
- She puts her hands on her head as she reads 'head'
- She wraps her hands around her head for the word 'cleave'
- She says 'twine' rather than 'twain' and links her supplanted word 'twine' with a mimed image of string passing through her fingers.
- When reading Isabella's phrase: *'There is a devilish mercy in the judge'*, Amelia graphically illustrates the adjective, 'devilish,' by placing two fingers on the front of her head like horns, giving it tremendous emphasis, but gives no action for the pivotal noun 'mercy', and speaks it very quickly as though unimportant. The

word *mercy* is immediately related to the news Isabella had for Claudio, so should not be ignored.

Significantly, Abigail, (playing Claudio), asks me what Claudio's words, '*perpetual durance*' mean before she has to action it. This pause halts the exercise.

As Abigail's question had broken the playing of the scene, and as I had observed several apparent misapprehensions, I decide to abandon the playing of the rest of the scene and question them about their choices and experience.

5.4.15 Lack of realisation of the content of the text by Amelia and Abigail – (and Callum, as the director involved)

I asked Amelia why, in Stage Six, she gave no action to the words '*where you will be an everlasting leiger*'. When actioning in Stage Five, as I had read out the text, I had noted that she had jabbed the air in a vague manner on these words. Amelia admitted that she was not sure what a *leiger* was.

In her Active Analysis prepared exercise, these words were actioned as: *Action 4, 'Isabella enlightens Claudio'*. Amelia's movement choice was a pointing towards the sky, then she made a singing sound, and her improvised words were, 'everything is going to be okay'. These choices demonstrate Amelia's generalised apprehension that Isabella's words mean that Claudio must die and will go to heaven. The extent of Isabella's determination that she will not have sex with Claudio is portrayed by her promoting a positive psychological perspective for Claudio to accept his death. Her elevation of Claudio to an ambassador status to meet God is not realised by Amelia.

In the speech, '*to save a head, to cleave a heart in twain*' Amelia divulged that she had mis-read the word *twain* and had thought it meant *twine*, like string. The lack of comprehension of the whole speech was shown in several of her actions, as I have already described in '*What happened in Stage Five*'. In her prepared Active Analysis, Amelia's improvised lines for this piece of text were: 'There is one way'. These words miss out the fact that Isabella is saying that if Claudio chooses to live, it would have dire consequences and break her heart. The full meaning is skimmed.

In Isabella's lines: *'In such a one as, you consenting to't, would bark your honour from that trunk you bear and leave you naked'*, Amelia's improvised words for this were: 'fine, take it, but it will hurt me'. (Her action in Stage Five had been a barking dog). This is not what Isabella is saying here.

When Isabella talks about the *'poor beetle that we tread upon in corporal sufferance...'* Amelia had saluted as though talking about an army soldier. In her prepared improvised words, Amelia had said: 'dying is just like sleeping', which, although containing the psychological *feel* of what she is saying, is an approximation of the overall meaning.

I was not surprised that Abigail had asked me before beginning Stage Six, for the meaning of Claudio's question *'Perpetual Durance?'* I had already noted that her action of swinging her arms about in Stage Five had been ambiguous. In her prepared Active Analysis in Stage One of movement, Abigail copied what Amelia had just done in carrying a huge weight, and in her Stage Three of improvised words: 'My life won't be worth living?', Abigail echoed back what Amelia had just said to her. It was therefore, not apparent that Abigail had not really understood the meaning of the words (as she was imitating Amelia), until she had been asked to action it individually as she heard it in Stage Five. Later (email 11th March 2012) Abigail divulged that she had never understood what *'Perpetual durance?'* meant.

Interestingly, Abigail's actions were more emotionally driven than both Amelia's and Verity's, whose symbolic expressions were more representational in origin.

The process of working through Stage One to Six had tested Abigail and Amelia. I could see that they were tired and running out of energy to continue. As they had worked hard on the preparation of the units, the unearthing of their mis-apprehensions was uncomfortable for them. It had become clear to all of us, through the additional Stages, that there was still much within the language that was evading them.

The mixing of the aims and types of actions, from Berry to Stanislavski, which I had introduced in Stages Five and Six, were also becoming bewildering for

us all. Amelia said that she would like to now *draw* the text rather than *action* it, so as to un-muddle all the meanings. We stopped work to discuss our findings. Through this exploration, we had much to grapple with.

5.5 Reflection And Analysis On The Work

In the following Sections 5.5.1 – 5.5.5, I review the efficacy of Stanislavski's units and actions as an aid for those with dyslexia to engage with the content of the text, as experienced by the participants and observed by my critical friend. In Section 5.5.4 I arrive at some final conclusions about this work. In Section 5.6, I then define my rationale for the next step in my research investigation; that of linking the exercise of drawing with Stanislavski's Active Analysis stages.

Theatre director Peter Brook and English Professor Ralph Berry share an appraisal that Shakespeare's diverse layers of meaning in the words should be 'vibrating through the actor', synthesised in the utterance (Berry 1989: 140 - 142). However, as demonstrated in my research exercise workshops, if the actor with dyslexia is not able to read the words, gather accurate meaning from the printed word, remember the words, any emerging 'vibrations' are interfered with, originating from an unreliable semantic base, accompanied by a blurred mental energy.

When working on '*Measure for Measure*', Brook acknowledges that in studying Shakespeare's intentions in the text, 'behind each visible mark on paper lurks an invisible one that is hard to seize'. In order to excavate Shakespeare's clues through studying the text, Brook uses vigilant terms such as: 'we are on our guard', 'we are watchful', 'we must take great care', 'technically, we need less abandon, more focus' (Brook 1968:99). Even if not working from a dyslexic perspective, a considerable attentiveness is demanded in processing the text; if managing dyslexic complications, this task is intensified.

5.5.1 A consideration of the possible advantages and disadvantages in using Stanislavski's method of Units and Actions for those with dyslexia

The dyslexia specialist Gavin Reid has pinpointed established principles to follow when teaching to support those with dyslexia. One of the fundamental

components is the necessity for substantial *overlearning* in order to achieve automaticity (Reid 2003: 151-2, 206).

The task of acting in Shakespeare, and working through Stanislavski's Active Analysis demands a substantial automaticity on several levels, with a high use of episodic and semantic memory. The notion of the storing of information in long term memory is crucial for understanding and comprehension of text (Harrison 2004:53). Functioning underneath the playing of the role, the actor is working through practised patterns, following directions, signalling, receiving, observing, whilst living through their role.

To accomplish this, the acting student needs to retain:

- i. an automaticity in the learning of their character's lines
- ii. an automaticity with the rehearsed psychological and emotional journey progressing through the words
- iii. a muscular automaticity in articulating the words
- iv. a physical automaticity in the actions
- v. an automaticity in the interplay between themselves and the other actors/characters within the play
- vi. an automaticity with the skills of the vocal demands and technical aspects of performance

Adequate time must be provided for overlearning to take place, with repetition as an important ingredient. Rehearsal, planning of structure, sequencing, use of prior knowledge, self-originated ideas and questions, use of multi-sensory oral, auditory, visual and kinaesthetic modalities, all enhance a deep learning and retention (Noice and Noice 1997: 122) and, as Reid underlines, especially for those with dyslexia (Reid 2003: 201, 206).

Stanislavski's system of Units and Actions would appear to fulfil these recommendations. The breaking down of the overall text into smaller segments of theme, which is then further broken down into consideration of the motivation for actions, would seem to offer a perspicuous route into the

text; the repeated stages providing the critical *overlearning* process that Reid recommends, while presenting an opportunity for individual construction of meaning and shared invention with scene partners. When applying Stanislavski's Units and Actions as an exercise, I assumed that the task of reflective analysis would ensure that the participants gained a familiarity and connection with the meaning of the written words which would then trigger their actions. Providing a task that requires a period of time to study the text, rather than an expectation of an instant outcome in reading performance, can relieve the pressure for the individual with dyslexia. Nonetheless, as observed in the practice, an apprehension of the language was not fully gained.

As I have re-iterated, one of the characteristics of dyslexia describes a weakness in memory (short term or working memory) (DES 2004, Reid 2003: 251, 30, Selokowitz 1998:61). Noice and Noice have carried out a large body of empirical research into how the professional actor achieves a high level of expertise in remembering lines in a play through the use of Stanislavski's analysis techniques (Noice and Noice 1997: xvii, 2002:7). Their research has interrogated the use of Stanislavski derived acting strategies, involving the specific use of the analysis and identification of intentions, goals and active experiencing. In a series of controlled tests which compared the methods of professional actors with acting novices, they found that professional actors could remember far more of a dramatic scene than novice actors. While the novices had used rote learning to memorise the lines of a play scene, the professional actors examined the text with 'incredible depth' in order to analyse the ideas underneath their character's words, divide the text up into units of focus, and then utilised an 'active experiencing'; that is a psycho/physical actual *doing* of the action behind the words. Noice and Noice call this a type of *cognitive-emotive-motor* processing (2002: 10). Through studying the processes of professional actors on the text, they noted the fact that the actor works backwards from receiving the words of the character; they then search for the motivations/feelings that has inspired the words, which is then expressed in physical movement, which consequently makes the words concrete (ibid. 2007: 86). As Noice and Noice have shown, there is some considerable advantage in using the actions system for both the actors'

processing of meaning and memory enhancement. Their research did not, however, include an enquiry into outcomes if working with actors with dyslexia.

5.5.2 What the participants stated they found helpful about the Stanislavski process

- i) Callum proposed that Stanislavski's units and actions are '...very good for getting the first layer out of the way. When you get confronted with a text, you think 'Oh God – this makes no sense' - so you use the Stanislavski, just to get rid of the first layer of confusion'. He thinks that the Stanislavski method is good in an 'initial, possibly quite simplified vague way, ... because one action can condense large amounts of text or visual descriptions into just one movement, one sound , one sentence'. He would have to find a dictionary to look up precise word meanings. Callum finds the movement element helps him as a basis to learn his lines, but also to provide a rationale for using big dramatic movements in heightened scenes. He believes that the use of the large actions in the exercise assists him in finding a truth in what he is saying, which gives him more confidence with the words and movements on the stage (29th October 2011).

My comment: although it is probable that the actions provide a memory support and expressive tool for Callum, it is noteworthy that he uses the words 'simplified' and 'a vague kind of way' in describing the effectiveness of Stanislavski actions in encapsulating the 'large chunks of the text' into 'one action'. This matter is further discussed in my conclusions in Section 5.5. 4.

- ii) Amelia said that she found the process gave her a familiarity with the lines, enabling her 'to pick up the lines quicker than if I had to sight-read or just read it'. Finding the verbs, voice and improvised text helped her focus on the character's intentions. She said that 'putting a physicalized action to it reminds the body so that when we came to reading the text I had that thought in my head...I had the text but I had that muscle memory in my body...so you remember

what your muscles did, so it ...naturally makes you inhabit that character's thoughts and emotions – so, yes, this process helped me with that'. She added, 'I might have stumbled over my lines but I felt more truthful in my acting', (29th October 2011).

My comment: in consonance with Callum's physical storyboard for *Medea*, it seems that the physical actions can provide a valuable mnemonic device for Amelia (although they do not necessarily provide a recognition and particularisation of all of the language). In observation, it would appear likely that Amelia's sense of 'truth' might stem from her energised commitment and imagination in creating physical actions/images related to a generalised feeling and meaning, rather than from a specificity directly related to the words in their entirety.

- iii) Verity reported that 'by working on processes to realise the text it is now very clear to me when one does and does not understand it, whereas before, all Shakespeare readings sounded the same to me, whether the reader knew what they were saying or not'. Verity points out that the Stanislavski method 'is good to familiarise and justify' and that the 'process helped her to learn the language faster by associating the physical movements with the text'. Verity surmised that the use of actions had helped her to understand the meanings and emotions behind the words, whereas before this work, the words would be empty when she read them.

Verity prefers to use large stylised movements rather than naturalistic ones. She relates:

When using physical movements in the Stanislavski process, I will always symbolise the action using my form to embody the feeling, rather than performing the action realistically. For example, [for] 'She pleads', I would curl up into a small ball with my hands and feet clenched tight, rather than kneeling on the floor with my hands clasped 'pleading'.

Verity thinks the benefits of the Stanislavski work for those with dyslexia are 'huge', saying: 'It broadened my understanding of what I perceived to be a daunting subject matter, something I have always tried to avoid, as I saw it as an impossible challenge' (18th March 2012).

My comment: there is further enlightenment about Verity's ability to absorb the text in the next stage of my action research described further on in Section 5.6.1.

- iv) Abigail felt that Stanislavski's Units and Actions were useful in breaking down the text, to help her understand the meaning. She underlined that she has learnt through the workshop experience that the actions must be accurate to the language and not generalised. The process of having to paraphrase the text first to understand it and then putting movement, sound and improvised words to it, helped to highlight any uncertain words or phrases, and to build her confidence in understanding and speaking 'a very daunting piece of text. It is a really good basis – like building a wall' (29th October 2011).

My comment: in the doing of the exercise, Abigail revealed that she had not understood the words '*perpetual durance*', although she had repeated them several times throughout the sequence. This lack of understanding which came to be highlighted in the action research workshop meant that she realised that a deeper analysis and memorisation about the language was required. It is recognised that despite Abigail determining the meanings, it is likely that she could forget them. Abigail's difficulties with sight-reading and absorbing the text was facilitated to a certain extent by this work, forming as she remarks, 'a basis'. The further work with Abigail moving beyond the physical actions is related in Section 5.6.2.

5.5.3 What the participants stated they did not find helpful about the Stanislavski process

- i) Callum reported that he struggles with ‘finding the right words to describe what I want to convey, whether it’s a lack of vocabulary or just a block in my brain, but I find that I’m never that articulate when it comes to choosing the words I’m looking for’. He finds it difficult to choose a verb to identify the character’s actions. When he has settled on a word, he often finds it no longer seems to fit when he is up on his feet acting (29th October 2011).
- ii) Amelia stated that the physical actions are hard to leave the body once imprinted through practice. It can be challenging to change them or develop them further once they have become set. Sometimes having to physicalise the words can become confusing and one cannot show everything that you imagine through the body. She would prefer to use drawings for this stage (29th October 2011).
- iii) Verity observed that when using Stanislavski’s Units and Actions on a text without heightened language, the process can be done almost ‘on the spot’, but it takes much more time to be aware of the words, understand them and structure and section the text in Shakespeare (18th March 2012).
- iv) Abigail reported that she found it too hard to multi - task when I had asked her to read and physicalise the meaning of what she was saying in Stage Six. She now realises that she would have been more confident with this if she had ‘explored the text in greater depth’. Abigail said she would have liked to have done the exploratory drawing of the text instead of the physicalisation of the words in Stage Six (29th October 2011).

5.5.4 My conclusions about the efficacy in the use of Stanislavski’s Unit and Action method on Shakespeare’s text

The clash of aims between carrying out Stanislavski’s actions and retaining a focus on Shakespeare’s words became evident as soon as I added Stage Five

and Six into the sequence. Amelia, Verity and Abigail were all insecure on reading and speaking various parts of the text despite their conscientious application of verb - action identification, and improvised sounds, devised actions and words. When observing them trying to action the words in Stage Five and Six, I realised that a use of Stanislavski's actions method can camouflage the fact that the actor has not fully understood the word content. Summarising a chunk of the text under a single heading with a verb action, can neatly skim over the specifics of the content, thus by-passing the vigilance that Brook underlines is needed (1968:99). Contextual information or emotional feeling alone can produce a generalised action which evades the implicit details, avoiding a precise de-coding of individual words. If the actions and emotional feelings are delivered with aplomb the observer can be persuaded that the actor is conversant with the content. By asking the participants to action the individual words or small phrases in Stage Five and Six, it became apparent that this intricate understanding was lacking.

This assertion is further backed up by theatre practitioners William Gaskill and Oliver Ford Davis in their discussion about the value of using Stanislavski's actions for actors on Shakespeare's text. When considering how Stanislavski's physical methods might be utilised by the contemporary actor 'as an antidote to the tyranny of the text', actor Oliver Ford Davis cautions that Stanislavski's actions cannot substitute for Shakespeare's verbal dexterity or emotional variety (Ford Davis 2007: 109) while theatre director William Gaskill specifies that the method of actions can destroy the intellectual meditation, deliberation and an actor's intuitive awareness of the sound of Shakespeare's language and verse (Gaskill 2010: 56). It can be argued that the unit and actions work provides a mapped route for both the actor and their character through the global perspective and progression of the text. Nonetheless, the participants in this action research sequence, by expressing an intention through a pre-allotted verb and action seem to have gained a fuzzy conception of the emotional state of the character within the situation, while the significance of several prominent words in the text remained insecure and unanchored.

In examining the experience of those with dyslexia, phenomenologist researcher Mathew Philpot has labelled the dyslexics' interaction with the text

and their body as a 'dys-location'. The dyslexic learner having an overpowering freedom over the objects in the text can fail to recognise or settle on the fixed meaning of the word (2000:132). Philpot suggests that a disequilibrium occurs between the meshing of the text with the body of the reader (ibid.143). He claims:

Symptoms such as blurring or moving words, the inability to recognise words and the passing over of single words and sometimes whole lines can be interpreted as a peculiar slackening of the tensional arc or fold that brings an object and body together in the form of co-existence and presence.

The participants in this action research cycle when using Stanislavski's active analysis have all remarked that they believe that Stanislavski's system has helped them to become 'truthful' in their acting and to understand what they are saying. In their examination of some actors' excellent memory skills when using actions on a text, Noice and Noice stipulate that the actor has to 'work backwards – from receiving the words first' (Noice & Noice 2007:86). Therefore the font of the action, comprehension, motivation and anchored 'truthful' meaning must originate out of a thorough apprehension of the words and what they may contain. Throwing light on the mistakes that Verity, Abigail, and Amelia made in skidding over significant details in the words (and Callum's difficulty in remembering his *Medea* speech) Philpot argues 'that the dyslexic can be susceptible to an insufficiency of involvement with the text which results in diminishing of meaning. The objects of the text (letters, words and syntax) become undifferentiated so that all objects are equally important (Philpot 2000:132-3).

Remarking on how Shakespeare's dramatic speeches and words are 'over loaded', 'astonishingly rapid' and 'stuffed full', English literature scholar Simon Palfrey claims that when encountering Shakespeare '...if we get the gist we can simultaneously be aware of how much we are missing' (Palfrey 2005: 20). In exploring Stanislavski's actions on Shakespeare, it appears that those with the 'dis - location' effect of dyslexia (Philpot 2000) consistently miss details of import in the text, frequently remaining oblivious to this in their self-

assessment of their spoken performance and cognitive understanding. Despite these difficulties, when paying attention to the participants' appraisal of the Stanislavski action work, it is noteworthy that they found value in the foundational base it gave them. Recounting some of their observations, Abigail reported that the Stanislavski work was '...a really good basic - like building a wall', Callum stated that it is '...very good for getting the first layer out of the way', Amelia suggested '...putting a physical action to it reminds the body...I had that muscle memory in my body...', while Verity thought 'the benefits of the Stanislavski work for those with dyslexia 'are 'huge'. I therefore conclude that this work does assist the participants to a limited degree in entering and gaining a familiarity with the text. In my experience of teaching the participants, I believe that if they had attempted to read and perform the scenes without this Stanislavski work their reading and understanding would have been even more inconsistent.

By further investigation into the subject, the particular contentions can be defined. Advocating a Stanislavski approach to the acting of Shakespeare, acting teacher John Gillett & voice teacher Christina Gutekunst (2014) have detailed the background preparation they deem to be necessary for the actor when interacting with Shakespeare's text. They have included the established components of Stanislavski's method, such as: a reflection on the Given Circumstances, deciphering the Super Objective, pinpointing the lesser Objectives, the Inner Motives, the Previous Circumstances, and analysis of the text through action. To guide the actions chosen by the actor they propose that the following questions must be answered (ibid. 312):

- I am in these circumstances, saying these words, what do I want?
- What might my range of actions be?
- What is at stake for me in pursuing my objective?
- What obstacles are in my way?

Of significance for the enquiry of this study, these questions do not involve a scrutiny of the semantics, syntax and functions of the language, but centre more on what might be uncovered underneath the language within the context

of the play. In their instructions, Gillett & Gutekunst do emphasise an observation of the images in Shakespeare's text for the speaker to give full life to the words, including specifying the need to note the images for literal things. Examples of literal images are provided from *Othello*, such as: '*devils*', '*thou young and rose lipped cherubim*', '*a sweet smelling weed*' (ibid: 329). These particular word images are easily conjured in the imagination as singular descriptive pictures.

Although underscoring the importance of experiencing the 'significance and power' and 'emotional content' of the images in the language (ibid. 330) Gillett & Gutekunst do not address how complex and multi-layered the images can be in Shakespeare's writing, nor how Shakespeare's full blown language can provide additional aspects of focus beyond the simple question of 'what do I want', or 'seeing the images and breathing them in' (ibid. 330). Palfrey pinpoints that '...we cannot account for how Shakespeare's characters work if we stick with an idea of clearly stratified, singular, psychologically coherent individuals' and when emphasising the ambiguous elements often inferred in the language Palfrey explains '...it is simply about the spoken moment bearing multiple lines of possible unfurling' (Palfrey 2005: 158). The language proceeds beyond the naturalistic in qualifying, amplifying, describing, embellishing, and suggesting multi - inferences. Recognising the difficulty in unpacking and embodying what might be discovered within Shakespeare's words for the interpreter, Palfrey ruminates on how the words can be three dimensional, re-iterating that we can say one thing while thinking another and that the mind is capable of holding more than one option at a time. Because of this, Palfrey underlines that there can be complexity in knowing quite how to prioritise the different sign systems going on at a single moment in Shakespeare's words (ibid.158).

Many individuals without reading difficulties might well be challenged in capturing the intricacy of these multi-dimensional phrases into a verb and action, while clearly such obscure ambiguities can intensify the confusion in the shifting word-meanings for those with dyslexia.

5.5.5 Critical friend comment

Robertson suggests that the participants had difficulties with managing Stage Five (physicalising the lines, while hearing the text) because I had suddenly imposed this addition into their prepared work on Stages One to Four. If they had time to prepare this stage of the work with the other stages they would have already anchored more actions to underpin the text. When Robertson uses Stage Five in his own work with acting students (although not specifically working with dyslexics) he tells me that their actions flow with the dialogue because they have worked them out in advance. He thinks because I had not initially put this stage into the work, their actions had become fixed. It was now too hard to suddenly put in new gestures around their previously embedded ones, as when I had asked them to action the language in Stage Six.

I agree with Robertson's comments to a certain extent. However, even if they had time to plan out more detailed actions underpinning the language, it still would be possible to camouflage the fact that they had not fully grasped the meaning of the specific words. The performance of emotionally driven actions summarise the general gist of what is happening within the scene, rather than getting to grips with the actual verbal details, or observation of the verse form. But this begs the question of how one might get to grips with all the words without 'pantomiming' the meaning in a banal manner.

5.6 A Bridge Into Speaking the Text: Inserting The Drawing of Words-Ideas-Images-Feeling Into Stanislavski's Unit And Action Sequence

One of Shakespeare's fundamental literary tools is that of the metaphor; which suggests a similitude between two things, one said, and the other meant. This figure of speech can create vivid mental pictures which are transported through the 'vehicle' of the metaphor (Palfrey 2005:19). Palfrey proposes that in the transportation of meaning, the metaphor works like the fancy packaging wrapped around a gift. The packaging acts to heighten the expectation and intensify the pleasure of the reception of what is hidden within the wrapping (ibid. 26.). Reflecting on what might assist in the participants' unwrapping of the opaque layers encompassing what is secreted within the text (whether in metaphorical or literal images) I pondered if the exercise of drawing and an

analytical re-reading of the drawings (if amalgamated into Stanislavski's stages of actions) might provide a tool for anchoring word recognition. By working through the layers of linguistic wrapping within the drawing, the nuggets of meaning might become transparent.

When Amelia and Abigail's actions in Stage Six came to a halt, they said that they thought the drawing of the text should be used as part of the Actioning sequence in place of Step Five – (having the words read aloud and then actioned). Respond to their suggestion I decided to explore the *Measure for Measure* text with Verity and Abigail in this manner.

5.6.1 Verity drawing of Isabella's speech

(Reference to the Appendices: there are filmed examples of Verity 'painting the text through the body' and describing the significance of her drawing on DVD Three, Appendix Eight. These examples links directly to the progression of the work described in the section below).

Filmed in the Movement Studio. Time of workshop thirty-five minutes. Date 12th December 2011. Present: Verity and myself. The tools that were used: a large sketch pad and a selection of pens.

Verity had consistently stumbled over the speaking of the nine lines of Isabella's speech: '*This outward sainted deputy...*' to '*The damned's't body to invest and cover in prenzie guards*'. This therefore, seemed an appropriate piece to work on.

Having discovered that Verity had not understood what she was saying, we discussed the polysemy and word meanings within the speech, until I was assured that Verity was clear about the whole text.

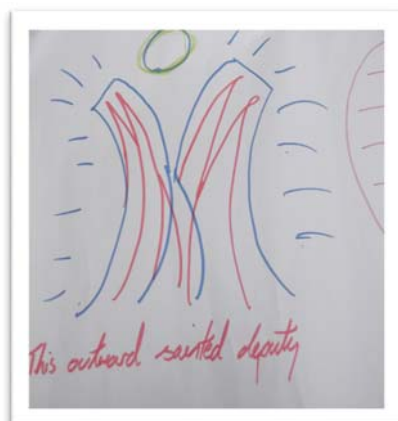
I then read out to her key phrases from the speech in their sequence. She repeated the words aloud, while drawing her personal interpretation of what she was saying, feeling and visualising. She worked rapidly, committing her images to paper. Her images appeared to be evocative and symbolic, rather than literal illustrations.

When we had finished working on the nine lines up to '*prenzie guards*', Verity then 'read' her pictures aloud, taking time to explore the phrases with a variety of vocal expressions connected to her inner experience. She took each phrase several times over, linking the words to her images.

I then asked her to get up on her feet and to read the speech, bringing all that she had discovered about the words through her drawing process into her reading. There was a marked contrast in the quality of her reading from her previous speaking of it when she performed her Units and Actions. She now spoke the words slower, giving them weight, and they were laden with intention and truth.

Verity then explained her images to me and what they contained. Here is an example of some of them:

Figure 5.6 Verity's drawings



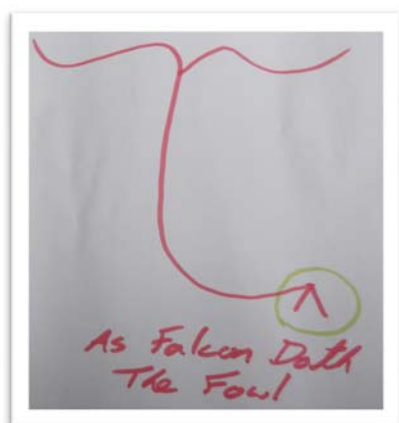
Phrase: *This outward sainted deputy.*

Verity's explanation: 'There is a halo on top as he is supposed to be a holy man – *deputy* - represented by the blue colour because he is royal in the sense that he has power in his situation- *this outward*- his robes (the sweeping down of the pen) showing his richness and the outward lines say 'surprise! Look at me!' He is seen as a person with power.'



Phrase: Nips youth i' the head

Verity's explanation: 'This is in two colours. Claudio is green, although he made the mistake shown in the journey of the circle, he gets found out and it's bad, however Angelo wants to make the same journey. In the centre of the circle is Isabella's virginity. Angelo wants to get inside the circle to Isabella's virginity - this triangle is Angelo piercing Claudio's circle, causing him to fall- Isabella wants to protect her virginity inside the circle, but Angelo can pierce through the circle with the triangle'.



Phrase: As falcon doth the fowl

Verity's explanation: 'It's a bird shape here – swooping down to kill the fowl at the bottom of the line, and it's circled in green to remind me that the green is Claudio, and Isabella - I see Isabella as green - pure and innocent'.

Verity says that doing the drawings allows her to gain a deeper understanding and feeling for the words. Each individual image for a small chunk of text was important, rather than a single picture conveying a large amount of text. The physical action of holding the pens, the muscular tension and intensity brought to the drawing also has impact. Verity said that she uses this type of imaging in her life all the time. When she hears an interesting word, if someone tells her what it means, she will forget it very soon. She has developed a way of deliberately fixing a strong image with the word in her mind to embed it in her mind as a mnemonic tool. Verity said, 'The perfect way for me, is to make my legs and arms the paintbrushes and the floor is the paper, so I paint the words with my body'.

I suggested that we try this body painting with the speech she had just drawn. I then read out the same phrases from the speech, which Verity expressed in large, symbolic movements. Sometimes her actions were reminiscent of her drawings, but were not identical replicas. When she had finished, Verity commented that she thought she was able to capture more details in the drawn pictures than in the physical actions. Verity stated that, if doing actions, there was no concrete thing left to work on, to develop further. Verity thought that the drawing process should precede the actioning of the words.

5.6.2 Abigail's drawing of Claudio's speech, (Measure for Measure Act III scene i)

Filmed in the Movement Studio. Date: 12th December 2011. Present: Abigail and myself. The tools that were used: a large sketch pad and a selection of coloured pens and pencils. Time of workshop sixty minutes.

Abigail went through a comparable process to Verity, using Claudio's speech. The speech is packed with images, intricate language, and is emotionally demanding.

The text.

Claudio:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;

To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;

This sensible warm motion to become

A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit

To bath in fiery floods, or to reside

In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;

To be imprisoned in the viewless winds

And blown with restless violence round about

The pendent world: or to be worse than worst

Of those that lawless and incertain thought

Imagine howling, - tis too horrible.

The weariest and most loathed worldly life

That age, penury and imprisonment

Can lay on nature, is a paradise

To what we fear of death.

Firstly Abigail read Claudio's speech aloud, stumbling over several of the words. I then took her through the drawing process by feeding her crucial phrases from the speech, line by line, which she responded to through drawing and speaking the phrases aloud, then writing them. After 'reading' through her drawing interpretations aloud, she read the speech again. As with Verity, her reading had gained enormously in fluency and connection.

In the Stanislavski physical work Abigail's actions had been predominantly emotionally and psychologically derived. Here, in her drawing, she has used a similar approach, with a recurring use of emotional arousal, delineated in expressive pen use. In comparison with Verity's drawings, (which are symbolic) Abigail's pictures are immediately readable for the observer and do not require much explanation in meaning.



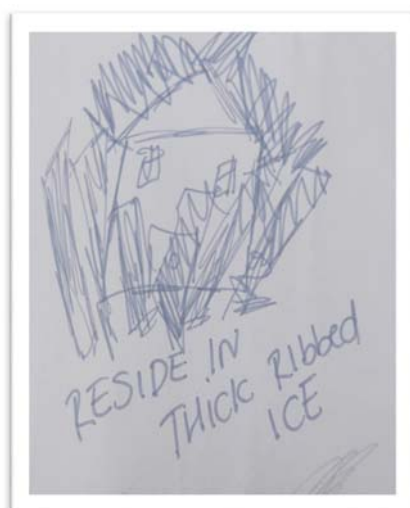
Figure 5.7 Abigail's story board for Claudio's speech: *'Ay, but to die and go we know not where'*

Figure 5.8 Abigail's drawings



Phrase: *Death is a fearful thing.*

Abigail has used a forceful scribbling for the word *Death*. She has torn the paper by committing to heavy, frenzied pen strokes, revealing the intensity with which she engaged with the meaning in the word. For both the words *death* and *fearful*, she has included a layering of colours, signifying the depth of her feeling attached to the words, and the analogous emotions evoked through her perception of the colours red, blue, and brown.



Phrase: *Reside in thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice*

This picture encapsulates the meaning of *residing*, by the idea of an existence within the house. The term *thick ribbed ice* is created by the figurative representation of thick chunks of ice in a rib-like enclosure, imprisoning the residing in the house. The *thrilling region* is delineated by rough strokes in the background. A silver colour has been chosen to capture the coldness of the ice and the *thrillingness* of the region.

Abigail underlines that at the start of the process, she was sceptical about the rationale for drawing. She explains:

I found it challenging to draw my first response to the words ...as well as letting my lack of drawing skills sensor [censor] my creativity. But after analysing my drawings and looking at the emotions I felt when creating them, I realised I was able to deliver the text with a much greater understanding of the psychology and meaning.

Despite her original doubt, through engaging with the drawing process, Abigail states that, 'there are many benefits to this work for a dyslexic student. It really helps to build confidence when approaching Shakespeare's text. The text itself is what's most daunting, so analysing it first using drawings and physical actions helps to build the confidence' (March 2012).

5.7 Conclusion

The Stanislavski process is proficient for providing a knowledge schema; a holistic overview of the psychology, feelings, wants and narrative journey of the character within the circumstances of the scene. The gathering of information in processing the text can be labelled as a *top down approach*. This approach is about imbibing the global macro picture, formed from prior knowledge, stored as schema (Crystal 1987: 71, Spiro in Spiro, Bruce & Brewer 1980: 265, Harrison 2004: 35).

The influence of Berry's work in somatically and intellectually experiencing each word or phrase can be said to answer the crucial question: *what exactly am I saying?* This calls for an examination of each word – to be 'on the word' (Berry 2001: 122). Spiro labels this textual base as a *bottom –up approach*, while Crystal identifies it as a micro approach (Crystal 1987: 71, Spiro in Spiro, Bruce & Brewer 1980: 265).

In individual methods of processing and constructing meaning from the text, Spiro stresses that an over reliance of 'top down' approaches can be detrimental for those that have difficulty with taking in the words. As demonstrated by Amelia and Verity, relying on 'top down' processing encourages a guessing of unfamiliar words, based on context rather than decoding of what is actually there. However, too much reliance on 'bottom up' processing, literally breaking the text up letter by letter and word by word, can detract from a comprehension and retention of the whole (Adams in Spiro, Bruce & Brewer 1980:16-17). Adams recommends that an interplay between 'top down' and 'bottom up' process is necessary to obtain fluent reading and comprehension, but stresses that this can most successfully occur when word recognition is overlearned (Adams in Spiro, Bruce & Brewer 1980: 18). Harrison reports that the latest findings in reading state that a 'bottom –up'

processing is vital, as word meaning is obtained in one eye fixation before moving to the next fixation, as we read (Harrison 2004: 36).

The psychologist David McNeill (1992) whose research focus is the role, meaning and rationale for human gesture, believes that physical gesture has an impact on thought. McNeill's gesture - types are the spontaneous paralinguistic that occurs as we speak, in concurrence with what we are meaning. He states that language is linear, with ideas presented in segmented, standardised form, but the accompanying gesture is a distinctively personal presentation of the individual's inner imagery twinned with the thought – the gesture revealing the mind. Fellow psychologist Raymond. W. Gibbs adds to McNeill's hypothesis, explaining that image schemas, derived from mental representations and spatial motor movements, are, 'the essential glue that binds embodied experience, thought and language'(Gibbs in Hampe 2005:113).

The meaning of the text lives through the mind of the reader. It is thus important that the gesture is authentically rooted to the word. A gesture that does not belong in any sense with the word, directs the individual using the gesture, away from the meaning.

Through the observation of my participants' reliance on the building of visual constructs through drawing or physicalising of the text, it is becoming apparent that their image schema conduits and expressions, are frequently muddled in their linguistic function and intentions. It appears that my participants (although relying on a visual - spatial imagery) are not alerted to the range of the types of signs, and the referents that they signal, to define and extract the meaning of the words.

5.8 Future Work

In the next chapter, with a new set of participants, I investigate if using a more conscious application of the type of gesture, its *representamen*, *object* and *interpretant* (Peirce in Tejera 1988:11) might assist in a realisation of the words, offering further tools for entry into the text.

CHAPTER SIX

Grasping Towards Being Present In The Text: Entangling Into Memory

6. Introduction

In the last chapter I dwelt on the participants' unpredictability in securing meaning from Shakespeare's text when employing Stanislavski's system of Actions. I had discovered that Stanislavski's action work can mask the fact that the individual has sometimes gathered only the gist of meaning in skimmed clusters, not grasping singular word denotations, or the word's potential to signify more than one available sense. This affected their spoken communication of the text.

I also looked at two participants' utilisation of a physical storyboard, where they had constructed a visuospatial model of the text, as a mnemonic aid and denotation anchor. As the intentional fixed meanings of their gestures were often confused in semantic signification within the context, their physical anchors were problematic in aiding absorption of the word, and obtaining the gestalt of overall meaning. To attempt to overcome this factor, I had begun to explore the use of drawing the perceived content of the text, amalgamated with Stanislavski's sequence of Actions.

Introduction of the participants featured in this chapter

The four participants involved in this chapter are Participant Nine (Sophie), Ten (James), Eleven (Hollie) and Twelve (Elizabeth). An historical and socio-psychological overview about each individual in this chapter is placed in Volume Two, Appendix Three, pages 361 – 366. Throughout this chapter at the relevant points, there are references given to draw the reader's attention to the linking evidential material contained in the Appendices.

6.1 Overview Of Chapter

In this chapter I work with four new participants. I embark on my third action research cycle of the study wherein I endeavour to address their uncertainty

of focus by introducing a seventh stage into the Stanislavski Actions sequence; that of identifying their chosen gesture-type and its signification in relation to the words. I continue with a case study method in examining the function of their individual approaches when marrying image with the written text.

6.1.1 Key to the overall structure of the chapter

6.2 Action research Cycle Three: my addition of a Sixth Stage into the Five Stages of the Stanislavski Actions sequence

Here I present the context, my rationale, and underlying theory behind my strategy of action research, in Cycle Three. I report on the introduction of my strategy, and what happened.

6.3 Action research workshop.

I describe a trial workshop and its disappointing outcome. Through reflection on the feedback from the participants and critical friend, I analyse the problems encountered. Drawing from a review of the literature, there is a focus on memory, process and dyslexia.

6.4 The participants' individual methods of entering the text

This section is an in-depth study of the method and function of three of the participants' individual strategies in using image for accessing the text.

6.5 Consideration of the participants' methods, associated with the facilitation of memory

Through an appraisal of ancient methods for memorising text that are comparable with my participants' methods, and a contemporary view given by a psychologist with an expertise in dyslexia, I endeavour to arrive at some deeper understanding about how and why the participants are using their visual modalities in accessing the text.

6.6 Conclusion and plans for my final action research

6.2 Action Research Cycle Three; My Addition Of A Seventh Stage Into The Six Stages Of The Units And Action Sequence.

Theatre director Mike Alfreds addresses the need for the actor to sustain the thoughts behind the numerous clauses embedded within Shakespeare's lines of verse. When conveying this necessity to his actors, he uses the kinaesthetic image of, '... juggling balls that have to be kept buoyantly aloft until the entire thought-sentence has been completed, only then to be caught and brought to rest' (2007: 198). Using an exercise which he calls the *Logic Text*, with the actors, he combs through the text's structure, grammar and sense. Although admitting that some actors can become irritated by this process, he stipulates that the actor cannot play the situation if they do not recognise connections in the text, or understand it (2007:196-199). When using Stanislavski's Actions in rehearsals, Alfreds underlines that some actors struggle with selecting appropriate verbs for their actions. A lack of facility in grammar can lead to feelings of inferiority within a group where some might have superior literary skills. To counter this, rather than insisting on exact verbs, Alfreds encourages a feeling – led approach. For example, the actor might say, '*I mmmmm you*', or '*I grrrr you*', relying on an emotional expression, (ibid: 168). This accords with the sequence I use, where in Stage Two, the actor uses only actions and improvised sounds.

Although actors with dyslexia could be freed by not having to select a verb, the lack of definition in '*I ahhhhhh you*' (ibid. 168), maintains an ambiguity about the precise meaning apprehended in the words. Barton points out that sometimes, in Shakespeare, the language can be more important than the character, and that one should, 'make the language your first concern' (Barton 1984: 59).

6.2.1 Rationale: the transaction of the text

Carey and Clarke Carey refer to various types of symbols in language representing both the image and the idea, and the need for these linguistic symbols and images to be attended to by the reader to enhance a communication of the text (2010: 45). Introducing the idea of *literal* and

evocative images in their physical imaging exercises, Carey and Clarke Carey advise the actor not to worry about 'getting it right' (ibid. 176, 46) nor about making 'complete sense of the speech', when transferring their mental images into physical actions (ibid. 44). Carey and Clarke Carey's exercises are, however, not aimed particularly at those who might have dyslexic difficulties in grasping what the written words are pointing towards.

Reader-response theorist Wolfgang Iser delineates that the symbols of literary language do not represent an empirical reality, but function as a representative for '... the condition of conception and perception which enable the observer to construct the object intended by the signs' (1978: 64). Iser proposes the need for a holding form in which the reader can place themselves and construct their understanding of the text (ibid. 66).

To assist in defining the semiotic role in accessing meaning, I have found Charles Peirce's theory of semiotic signs (Tejera 1988:11) helpful to gain clarity for myself about the process of attaching a gesture or drawing to the words. In particular, the triadic relationship of three basic elements, which are:

- The *representamen*: 'a ... *representamen* is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect' (Peirce in Tejera 1988:11)
When reading Shakespeare, this could be the word-sign on the page.
This sign stands in reference to its object.
- The *object*: 'I have sometimes called [the *object*] the ground of the *representamen*' (Peirce in ibid).
This is the literal sense of the word.
- The *interpretant*: What has been created inside a person's mind by the *representamen* (Peirce in ibid).
This is the comprehension and interpretation about the *object* relation.

Peirce proposes that there are three classes of the *interpretant*. The first is the *emotional*; which is the feeling produced from it, the second is the *energetic*; which involves the effect of the manner in which the *emotional interpretant* is produced, and the third is the *logical*, where the meaning and significance is appropriated (ibid. 24).

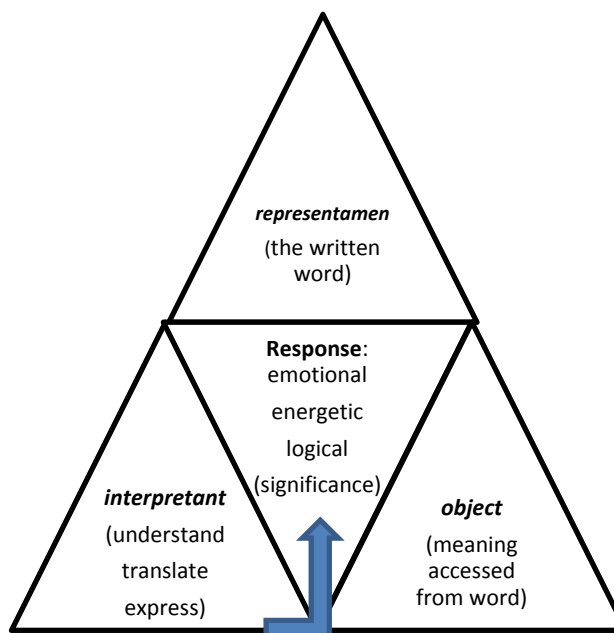


Figure 6.1 Relationship of Peirce's signs with reading and acting of the text

To attempt to build such a framework for my participants, I introduced an additional Stage Seven into my Six Stage version of Stanislavski's Units and Actions sequence: to identify what type of gesture was being used, and what precisely was it signifying in relation to the word.

Peirce's three classes of the *interpretant* are related to my purpose in asking my participants to identify what *type* of gesture they had chosen for each action, (*the energetic*), the concomitant feeling, (*emotional*) and intended meaning (*logical significance*), mapped to the content of the word, (the *representamen* and its *object*). Through the task of clarifying their *interpretant* served through the 'holding form' of their gesture/action, my supposition was that their constructed meanings would become clarified in their minds. As the author and educator Louise Rosenblatt emphasises, 'a sign is simply squiggles on a page or vibrations in the air until an idea in somebody's mind links the sign with what it points to' (2005: xxii).

6.2.2. The method: identify the gesture

Following the exercise sequence on the same text as outlined in the last chapter, I divided the class into groups of three, each individual within the group working as either Claudio, Isabella or a director. For homework, leading to a class presentation, I asked them to break their allotted unit of the scene down into actions, each which must be given a verb of intention through analysis of the text. Then, building on my work done in the last chapter with my previous participants, as an additional Stage Seven, I asked them to identify, (through discussion and rehearsal), *what type* of physical action they had chosen to couple with the word, and to reflect on why they had chosen that type of gesture.

Following some exploration of practical examples of various gestures married to text in the class, for further guidance, I gave the class a hand-out, naming and describing the different categories that I had devised for types of actions. As part of their class presentation, following their acting of the sequence, they would go back over their unit and present to the class their action labels and explain their choice of gestures.

The gesture types I categorised were adapted and extended from the psychologist David McNeill's description of gestures in *Hand and Mind* (1992). They were:

- i) The *iconic or literal gesture*. This is a direct illustrative presentation of the text, making the mental image explicit.
- ii) The *metaphorical gesture* – this makes an image of an idea – by one thing representing another - and through the image makes the idea concrete.
- iii) The *symbolic or representational gesture* – this is an externalised mimicking of something, rather than a portrayal of something that is felt inwardly.

- iv) The *affective or Psychological Realism gesture* – this expresses the emotional or psychological state and has an inner feeling behind it, often shown through natural gesture.
- v) The *evocative gesture* - this is created through associations, a sensuous inner response fired non- literally from the word meanings; it might be instigated through letter sounds, imagined textures, shapes, colours, atmospheres – auditory, visual, tactile or kinaesthetic images arising through the speaking and hearing of the words.

Recognising that distinguishing a gesture type might be an intimidating activity for some, I gave them an example of Claudio's speech, ('*Ay, but to die and go we know not where*', Act iii, scene i) in which I had already broken down and actioned the speech from my perspective, giving examples of what type of actions I might give to it. I emphasised that there is no 'correct' type of gesture. If there was an overlap with another, part of the process was in their recognition of this, their reflection, analysis and choice, related to what they perceived in the language.

6.2.3 What happened with participants Elizabeth, Hollie and Sophie

I put three participants together to work on Unit C: Sophie as director, Elizabeth as Isabella, and Hollie as Claudio (while James was placed with two other members of the group who are not dyslexic). I gave Hollie, Sophie and Elizabeth Unit C to work on.

The participants' reaction to the task differed from the rest of the cohort. While their fellows all stated they understood the task, the three participants came to speak to me on two occasions outside of class time, expressing bewilderment and anxiety about what they had to do.

In the class presentation of the unit work, the majority of the students within their groups managed the gesture labelling task on their units of text effectively, identifying their type of action and explanation with confidence. James, (my fourth participant), appeared to do well in this exercise, using interesting actions. However, as I had placed him with two non-dyslexic students, it is likely that their contribution may have supported him.

Conversely, when it came to Elizabeth, Hollie and Sophie's group's presentation of Unit C within the class, they were unable to complete the exercise. Elizabeth (playing Isabella) carried the main responsibility of the actions of the unit, while Hollie (as Claudio) had little to say. Sophie, in the director's role, read out the actions, but Elizabeth became flustered and began to merge all her actions together in a chaotic sequence. It was unclear what she was actioning, related to which words. Elizabeth stopped early on in the process. She tried a few times to continue, but kept stopping, in confusion. Due to the additional stress caused by the class observation of Elizabeth's difficulties, I decided not to pursue this further, resolving to come back to it later in an action research trial.

6.3 Action Research Workshop; Cycle Three

Present: participants Hollie, Sophie, Elizabeth and critical friend Ken Robertson This session took place in the Movement Studio at the Arts University. 10th December 2012.

At the completion of the Shakespeare unit, I arranged a workshop for Sophie, Elizabeth and Hollie to perform Unit C again. I gave them two weeks' notice, so they might have time to re- think and practise what they had originally planned to do in the class presentation. I asked my critical friend to observe, and had the camera ready to film the workshop.

Before filming, I decided to try a rehearsal. Almost immediately, at the beginning of Isabella's lines, Elizabeth came to a standstill and said she could not remember the actions or the sequence of sounds and improvised words.

She stated that she found the exercise stressful and overpowering. She explained that, rather than thinking about the meaning of what she was doing, she was simply trying to remember the planned actions, and they were in chaos in her mind. Elizabeth attempted the sequence three times, sometimes getting a little further on in the unit, but finally she seemed to find it impossible to remember her gestures, sounds or words, or any of the sequence. The other participants appeared unable to assist her through contribution or explanation. I abandoned this exercise as it was clearly an anxiety-laden experience for Elizabeth. I did not film this workshop, as it would have been emotionally upsetting for Elizabeth.

6.3.1 Report and analysis of the participants' difficulties with the gesture identification sequence

In an attempt to decipher exactly why this exercise had placed my participants into an apparently disabling situation, (especially Elizabeth), I combed through my initial interviews with them. In reading through, it was notable that all four participants had remarked on their poor memories and challenges with processing, either in their initial interview, or in written statements following this exercise.

6.3.2 References to memory and processing weakness in initial interviews with Sophie, Elizabeth and Hollie

In interview Elizabeth underlined, '[At school], I had a lot of help with spelling and my memory - like retaining things short term, I find it hard to remember....my memory is quite a big problem, my short term memory'. Elizabeth also spoke about her tendency not to take things in when people are speaking to her, and that she finds it hard to process information; 'it takes me a while to understand what we have to do' (8.10.2012).

Sophie related that, 'my memory is awful...I can remember things from long ago, but short time things...I just can't remember, and if I don't write things down ...I wouldn't remember anything'. Confessing that she has a short

attention span, Sophie explained that she gets ‘overwhelmed with information’. ‘ I just can’t remember my lines and I worry that I come across as someone who doesn’t really care and hasn’t done the work...if I highlight everything I can take it in more’ (8.10.2012).

Hollie stated that she cannot multi-task, and that her dyslexia assessment report pointed out that, ‘my working memory wasn’t as good as I thought and that they said I’d get the information, but I wouldn’t be able to process it fast enough’ (8.10.2012)

6.3.3 What the three participants stated they found problematic in the gesture identification exercise

Sophie

In written statement (21.3.2013) Sophie, as the director of the unit, recounted that they went through each action together as a group, but ‘we found it very confusing, as what seemed simple to someone else makes our brains feel like we are having to do a thousand things at once’. Emphasising memory weakness several times Sophie said, ‘I felt like it was too much for my brain to think about all at once and *found it hard to remember* what we had agreed as *my memory is bad* and got in a muddle’. Reiterating memory overload, Sophie went on, ‘there were so many different elements to take in that we jut [her spelling] got confused and *couldn’t remember* what we were doing... my brain felt very muddled and confused when *trying to remember* what each symbolic/iconic subheading meant ...and *remembering* what each action was with the text on top was daunting, even though we kept asking, we couldn’t get to grips with what was being asked of us’ (my italics).

Elizabeth

In a written statement Elizabeth imparted that she found it too hard to multi-task, doing actions in conjunction with ‘speaking at the same time’ (4.4.2013). When having to use improvised words or sounds, she relayed that her brain became blocked and panicked. ‘I found it hard to explain what I wanted to say. I couldn’t think fast enough on the spot, I knew what everything meant, but my

brain wasn't letting me do it'. Elizabeth reported that she 'could not think of good words for the actions', she was bewildered by having to give titles to the actions, and 'couldn't get her head round any of it'. She explained that even when she knows something really well, sometimes she just cannot do it, either because *she cannot remember*, or '...the words won't come out of my mouth. When pressurised or stressed, it all gets much worse' (my italics).

Hollie

Hollie stated that, 'I found it extremely difficult having to think one thing, say another and do a different action all at the same time...to carry out the psychological or metaphorical gesture of imagery or emotion, while saying a paraphrased version and having actions called out of what you are meant to do and thinking of where you are meant to be'. Hollie continued that, 'I found it was hard to simply paraphrase the text, instead I wanted to translate it word for word into a modern language (21.3.2013).

Comment

By paraphrasing, Hollie is referring to *Stage Three* in the sequence when a few improvised words are used to capture the meaning of the text. Hollie's difficulty with devising improvised words could reveal that she did not have a full comprehension of the text. If translating the text literally word for word, the onus would be on supplanting one word directly for another, possibly looked up in a dictionary or thesaurus. If paraphrasing freely, one has to extrapolate, and re-make meaning in one's own mind, ensuring that the extemporisation fits with the text; thus gaining an ownership of the thoughts.

The pull between the intricate word meaning in the text, and the psychological state of the character once again came to the fore. Hollie reflected: 'We viewed the exercise in a much more Stanislavskian light, where we thought the action would be an overall gist of what is happening, giving a skeleton to the piece'. Hollie articulated the dichotomy in semantic goals:

The importance of this text would have been apparent to us if we did the actions to the language rather than an overall gist of the language in an action. For

example for the word 'freed', [as in *Thou might'st be freed!*], to do a giving action toward Claudio and then flap arms gently, angelically. That seems easier and more anchoring of the importance of the language for me that doing an action metaphorically.

Hollie's description of the physical action for, '*Thou might'st be freed*', would have been effective, and the kind of interpretation I was anticipating that they would produce. However, her misunderstanding of 'metaphor' is clear here, as the action of flapping wings for the word 'freed' could be construed as a metaphor, (like a freed bird, or angel flying to heaven), whilst still attending to the kernel of the meaning in the writing.

6.3.4. Memory, processing, comprehension and dyslexia

Scrutinising their interviews, I have noticed how prominent the word *memory* is in their explanations of difficulties. The staggered Stanislavski exercise of *Actions*, although chunked into small components of discrete stages, demands the activation of several systems of memory, both long and short term, in process and retention.

Memory weakness is becoming an important focus in this study. As already stated in previous chapters, in reviewing the literature, a weak working memory is frequently cited as a sign of dyslexia (Mortimore 2008, Thomson 2009, Grant 2010, Nicolson & Fawcett 2010, Reid 2003, Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008, Morgan & Klein 2000, Dehn 2008). Grant, designates a limited working memory as meaning that 'only one part of the picture can be thought of at any one time, rather than the whole picture', (Grant 2010:14). McLoughlin et al, refer to adults with dyslexia as having dual difficulties in memory and information processing (1994:17). They list adults with dyslexia having difficulty with sequencing, organisation, working memory tasks, such as remembering instructions or carrying them out in the right order (ibid.19-20).

In their guide for teachers about supporting memory and learning, psychologists Susan E. Gathercole & Tracy Packiam Alloway (2008:70) have listed examples of the warning signs of working memory failure for the teacher

to note, evaluate and attend to by adjusting their teaching content. These signs of working memory overload are recognisable in my participants' behaviour in this actions exercise. Some of these elements are:

- a) Incomplete recall
- b) Failure to follow instructions
- c) Task abandonment, which can present itself as a 'zoning out'. The task is dropped as they can no longer remember or take the information in. (Both Elizabeth and James described in their initial interviews about their problems of 'zoning out' and not hearing what is being said to them).

Beneventi *et al* (2010) carried out several tests on dyslexic children and controls, in a series of trialled tasks which gradually increased working memory loads. They then measured the activation in relevant parts of the brain using MRI scans. Recognising that there was reduced activation in the prefrontal, parietal cortices and the cerebellum in those they tested with dyslexia (and not in the controls) they concluded that those with dyslexia did have a working memory deficit. They therefore recommended that provision for learners should ensure that there is a reduced working memory overload.

In reading comprehension, the individual has to store semantic and syntactic information previously garnered from the text, at the same time as analysing and integrating fresh information as they continue to read. According to Daneman and Carpenter, some of this information is drawn from long term memory, and activated into working memory where it is assimilated and finally, comprehended into a whole (1980: 450, 463). Yuill, Oakhill *et al* suggest that poor comprehenders have a deficit in storage in working memory, when simultaneously processing other information (1989: 360). When learning and reading, working memory and long term memory operate together (Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008, Nicolson & Fawcett 2010).

Nicolson & Fawcett's *automatisation deficit hypothesis* (2010:67) focusses on procedural memory, claiming that those with dyslexia often have problems with making automatic a range of skills, such as dual tasking and motor skills. They also propose that those with dyslexia have a *procedural learning difficulty*,

specific to the cerebellar, suggesting that dyslexia reflects impairment in the procedural memory system (ibid. 204). They assert that this can significantly affect learning. In discussing the role of declarative and procedural memory, they draw from Ullman's theory (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010:190) which proposes that language is utilised in both memory systems; the declarative system being in control of the word lexicon and explicit facts, and the procedural system accountable for grammar, implicit rules and language being transferred into complex representations.

6.3.5 Critical friend observation

Robertson compared the confusion experienced by the participants in doing this exercise with those who are not dyslexic, stating that, in his experience, individuals usually find the Units and Actions exercise enabling as both a memory and sense aid. He introduced a psychological perspective of intrinsic motivation, remarking on the participants' behaviour, aside from their language confusion:

It has become clear that some of the students with dyslexia are highly motivated and push themselves to succeed, whereas others may give up too easily on tasks and feel they have a limit which they cannot go beyond, (such as Elizabeth in this exercise). As we have seen, the type of individual varies and therefore the outcomes are different in each case.

The danger of low self-esteem effecting the progress of those with dyslexia is well documented (Riddick 1996, Mortimore 2008, Morgan & Klein 2000, McLoughlin et al 1994, Thomson 2009, Grant 2010). Having a particular interest in the cognitive development of those with dyslexia, educator Robert Burden has written at length on the implications of a damaged self-concept and learned helplessness affecting the motivation and educational success in those with dyslexia (Burden 2005). Burden emphasises that, '...behaviour can often be predicted better by their beliefs about their capabilities than by what they know' (ibid. 21).

6.3.6 Conclusion about Action research Cycle Three

During this action research cycle, in my attempt to assist my participants in comprehending and anchoring the text, it appeared that I had achieved the opposite outcome; overloading their memory systems, exposing them to difficulties with dual tasking, procedure and the arrangement of information in their minds. In doing this, I had also contributed to their feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, situated amongst the majority of the cohort who delivered the exercise with ease.

6.4 The Participants' Individual Methods Of Entering the Text

6.4.1 Sophie's use of technology

Sophie has brought an original method to this investigation, using PowerPoint as a working medium. Having viewed the pictorial storyboard of *Sonnet 65* in my computer tool *Sensing Shakespeare* (and, in voice class exercises, used my storyboard picture cards to construct *Sonnet 65*) this process initiated a reaction in Sophie's approach to the text. Sophie reported that, 'I connected especially to the visual elements that stuck pictures and colours in my mind and helped my imagination' and '...it made it a lot less daunting to read and I found myself picturing objects like 'black ink' spilling on the page and it took my mind off concentrating on trying to read the words' (feedback 2012, see Appendix Two, Volume Two, pages 349 - 350).

Under her own incentive, Sophie took this visual genre into her work during the Shakespeare unit. For all the key assessment points, (the monologue presentation, the group sonnet presentation, and her acting scene with another actor), she created PowerPoint storyboards, mostly made up of photographs and image ideographs denoting her subjective construction of the text. Visually literate, they are impressive in their detail, imaginative allusion, requiring much effort in their compilation.

Two days before her monologue presentation on the 25th October 2012, Sophie gave me a copy of a PowerPoint visual storyboard, signifying her

monologue for Adrianna in *Comedy of Errors* (Act ii, Scene ii). Sophie reported that she used the creation of a PowerPoint slideshow to work on the lines of the text at home. Sophie took a considerable amount of time to find what she considered to be the 'right image' to supplant the words when building her pictorial sequences, explaining that, '[it] does take a while to make but it helped me a lot as I was making it, as I was absorbing and teaching myself and making discoveries from thinking about the different meanings and looking up words I wasn't sure of. It made sure I didn't just browse over something I didn't understand, as I had to know what it meant to make the slide' (29.10. 2012). Once the slides were constructed, she used her visual text as a learning aid by speaking and acting the words of the text while watching the slide images run through their sequence on the computer. She relayed that, '[it] hooked the text into my brain as I had sectioned it out in manageable chunks and could play the slideshow while I was reciting the text. The added words reminded me of the structure and form that I had looked at, such as alliteration and the richness and meaning of some words'.

An excerpt from Sophie's monologue: Adrianna in Comedy of Errors (Act ii, Scene ii).

*Ay, Ay, Antipholus look strange and frown,
Some other mistress has thy sweet aspects;
I am not Adriana, nor thy wife.
The time was once when thou unurg'd wouldst vow
That never words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never touch well welcome to thy hand,
That never meat sweet –savour'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake, or look'd, or touch'd, or carv'd to thee.
How comes it now, my husband, O, how comes it,
That though art then estranged from thy self?-
Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
That undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better part.
Ah, do not tear thyself away from me;
For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
And take unmingled thence that drop again
Without addition or diminishing,
As take me from thyself and not me too*

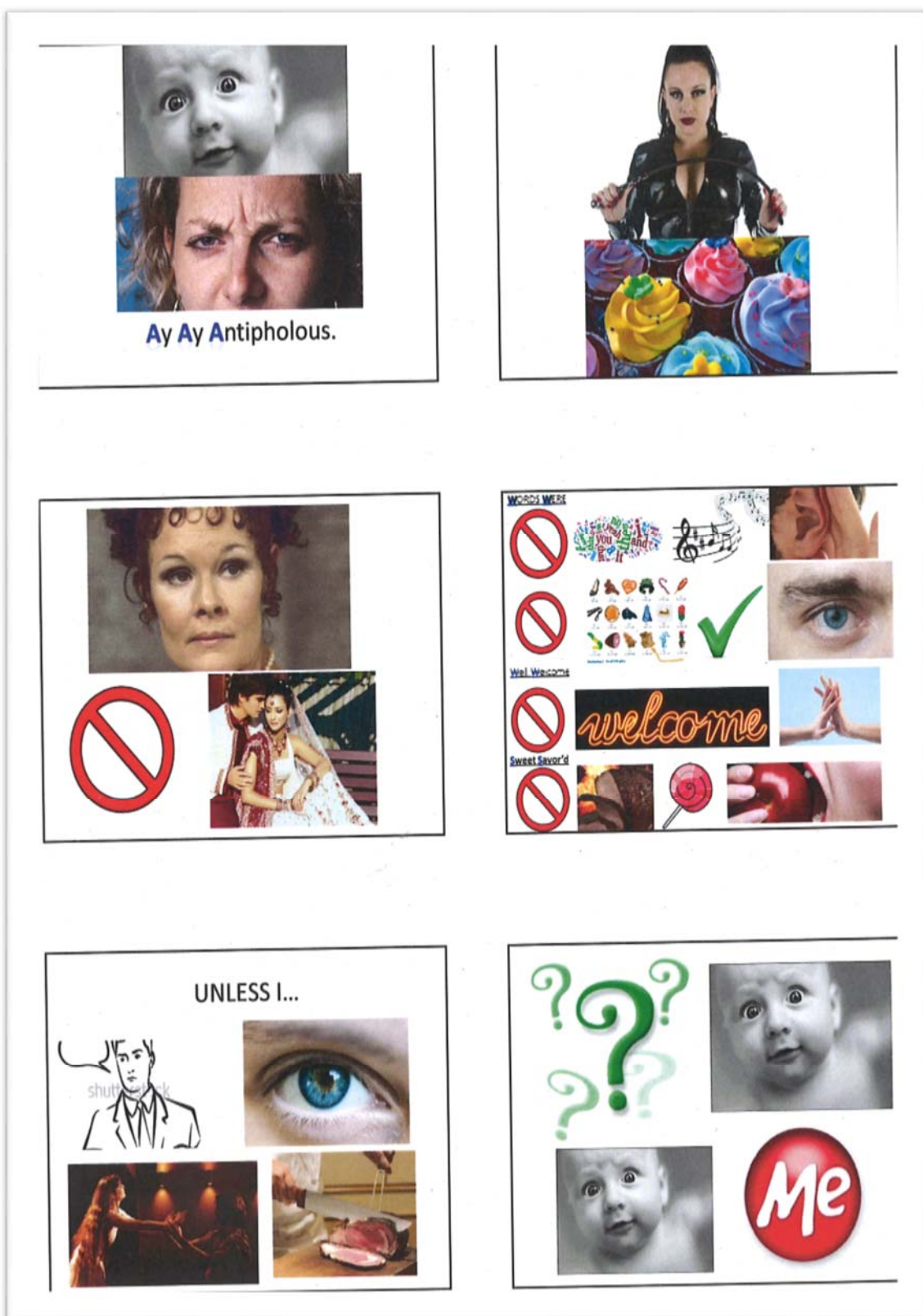


Figure 6.2 Page One of Sophie's PowerPoint slideshow of Adrianna's monologue

Description and Analysis

Slide one:

'Ay, ay, Antipholus look strange and frown'.

The alliteration is picked out by the blue colour printing of the first letter of the words *'Ay, Ay, Antipholus'*, with a picture of a baby with huge eyes, using a visual rendition of the homophone *'Ay, Ay'*. What is notable to me is, (akin with Amelia and Callum's physical storyboards), sometimes Sophie's image representations do not make sense within the context of the piece – such as using pictures of eyes for the words *'Ay, Ay,'* where word meaning is *'yes, yes'*.

Throughout this study, I have been perplexed by the participants' mixed use of referents within the gestalt; their image anchors, or physical representations sometimes being particular to the word alone, and not making sense within the whole. The theory of Peters *et al* (1985: 129), in researching prose recall amongst school children throws light on these methods as a form of meaning-making mnemonic.

Peters, Levin, McGivern & Pressley (1985) draw a distinction between two types of visual imagery effects. There is *Representational imagery* which denotes the kind of images that occur naturally in the mind of many readers when reading concrete narrative; some of the content is represented in the mind in literal pictures. For example, Sophie has included a *Representational* image of a woman frowning to denote the words *'look strange and frown'* (although she has changed the sex in this context as Adrianna's comment is aimed at Antipholus' facial expression).

Transformational imagery is when a re-coding of the text's information is utilised, creating a visual mnemonic symbol (as in Sophie's use of an image of eyes for *'Ay, Ay'*). *Transformational* imagery can work by an auditory and visual re-coding of information. As Peters explains, 'the visual images do not correspond directly to the text as presented, yet they provide a direct retrieval route back to it'. This recoding method functions as a stimulus for 'meaningfulness' in difficult text, especially as a memory device (ibid.135).

Slide two:

'Some other mistress hath thy sweet aspects'

The word '*mistress*' is represented by an image of a contemporary sexualised concept of a mistress, rather than simply a woman. Sophie has pictured the words '*sweet aspects*' as sweet tasting little cakes, but in this case Shakespeare indicated the pleasant care/love/look of a husband. Here again, Sophie is using *Transformational* imagery.

Slide three:

'I am not Adrianna nor thy wife'

Here Sophie presents a photograph of the actress Judie Dench in the role of Adrianna, an international symbol for meaning 'not allowed' and a picture of a man and woman in a conjoined, tender pose. In this case Sophie is using *Representational* imagery; simply denoting directly what is said in the text.

Slide Four:

*'That never words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never touch well welcome to thy hand,
That never meat sweet-savour'd in thy taste',*

Sophie underscores the three alliterations, '*words were*', '*well welcomed*' and '*sweet savour'd*' by presenting them as part of the graphic design, with the alliterating consonants picked out by being emboldened in blue colour and customised.

Sophie describes a multi-sensory approach to her ideational graphics, running parallel with the text. There are palpable associative *Transformational* connections being made using colour, touch, taste, kinaesthetic movement, auditory sounds, which feed directly into her acting and speaking (29.10.2012).

Some images I use provoke a feeling, such as the word 'welcome' I used in an orange lit up writing as it

provoked feistiness reminding me of the sexiness. Some help me bring the words to life such as a picture of torn paper helps me to imagine the sound of paper tearing, so when I say the word it is sort of onomatopoeic. The pictures of spit and contaminated boils on the skin help me to spit the words out, and also by thinking about the horrible pictures, it helps me feel and portray resentment and disgust.
















  <p>Undiviable Incorporate</p>	  
 	       
<p>Take thyself from me and not me too.</p>  	<p><u>Touch thee to the quick</u></p>   

Figure 6.3 Page two of Sophie's PowerPoint slideshow of Adrianna's monologue.

Description and analysis:

Slide one:

'That undividable, incorporate'

Despite Sophie's impeccable care with the visual content of each slide related to the words, she still made mistakes with her spelling of some words, as in this example of 'undiviable' for *undividable*.

Slide three:

'Ah, do not tear away thyself from me',

The *Representational* image of the woman's face is torn in half, thereby working also as a *Transformational* image. The *Transformational* image signifies the word 'tear' in the text by being torn in half, and the contextual action of the husband breaking away from her as the wife, and the emotional tearing pain Adrianna feels as her husband distances himself from her. In addition, Sophie related that the auditory image she received from the picture of tearing paper informed the way she articulated the word as she spoke the lines.

Slide Four:

*'For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
And take unmingled thence that drop again
Without addition or diminishing,...'*

Here Sophie has used some *Representational* images to translate this complex sentence: 'my love' is represented by the image of the heart, the 'drop of water' is shown as a water drop next to the large expanse of water to represent 'breaking gulf'. Using *Transformational* imagery to capture chunks of complex language meaning, a picture of a sieve is presented to show how impossible it would be to catch and separate her essence from his, representing the difficulty in separating a single drop of water from the ocean, and a plus and minus sign for 'addition and diminishing'.

Sophie explained: 'if I was to read the word sweet and then look at a picture of a shiny juicy apple, I would imagine myself crunching into it. As I said the

word, my mouth shape would change. The word would have more meaning to me which I hope would convey to the audience', (2012). Sophie accentuates the power of inferring images from the verbal form, which then gain an additional layer of embedding in the mind, when decoded back into words. She defined that:

I can imagine the images a lot easier in my mind than just the text, but obviously my brain has to work more into translating the images back into what I need to say for the text. When I try and imagine the text, I can see it in my mind as a block of text but it is blurred and I can only see the first line, where as I can pretty much visualise the whole order of the PowerPoint without much trouble.

Along with intelligent representation and recoding of meaning, there is artistic merit in Sophie's image designs, demonstrating an aesthetic faculty. As Sophie expounded, the aim of her graphic display is to securely underpin her ability to speak and imaginatively express the text in her acting performance, whilst embodying the character of Adrianna.

In her monologue performance of Adrianna, Sophie's characterisation was strong and vivid; the emotional and psychological responses of her character reverberated through her whole body, with clear articulation of word and thought sense.

6.4.2 James and Macbeth's soliloquy

In his scene for the final presentations, James played Macbeth (Act 1, Scene Vii). The scene begins with Macbeth's soliloquy:

*If it were done, when 'tis done, then t'were well
It were done quickly: if th' assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but thus blow
Might be the be - all and the end- all – here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. - But in these cases,
We still have judgement here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th'inventor: this even- handed Justice*

*Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First as I am his kinsman and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
 Who should against his murtherer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet tongu'd, against
 The deep damnation of his taking off;
 And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
 Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
 That tears shall drown the wind.-I have no spur
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on the other –*

In the first few rehearsals, James's rendering of this speech showed no actor's transformation of characterisation away from himself, whilst he blurred much of the speech into a block of words, broken up in the middle of phrases, spoken in a light, unconnected voice. James revealed his lack of understanding of the content by skimming over or mispronouncing several of the words, running the thoughts of the speech together, with some strangely articulated words with a misplaced emphasis.

In rehearsal, when working through the monologue with him for sense meaning, I found that James had misunderstood much within it. He did not know what *trammelled* meant, (to catch in a net - which he consistently pronounced as 'trammer' and always missed out the determiner '*the*' before the word '*consequence*'). He therefore had no idea what Shakespeare might have been intending to communicate by '*trammel up the consequence*', nor how to speak those words when inhabiting the character of Macbeth. He told me that he thought Duncan's *surcease*, (his death through Macbeth's murder) was something about Duncan being a successful king. He thought that Duncan, rather than Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, would be the one '*jumping the life to come*' by dying, not understanding that Macbeth is saying that he would evade the risk to come in the afterlife, by risking his immortal soul (Bevington et al 2007: 78). In the image laden exposition when painting the

metaphoric picture about the horror of the re-action to Duncan's death: '*Pity like a new-born babe, Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd Upon the sightless couriers of the air...*', James thought that Duncan was *Pity* and that Duncan would be hors'd upon the *sightless couriers of the air*, rather than *heaven's Cherubins*.

In a previous voice class I had already focussed on the ten lines in this section of the text, beginning with '*Besides this Duncan*' and finishing with '*...and falls on the other*'. These lines demonstrate Shakespeare's use of incredible imagery as an example of personification, metaphor and simile, linked to clues given about Macbeth's growing hallucinatory state by the extravagance of the images in the language. During this discussion of the text in voice class, I had noticed that James's attention had wandered, into a 'zoning out', with a dream-like expression and glazed eyes. James had already mentioned in his initial interview that this 'zoning out' is something that happens to him quite often. Gathercole & Packiam Alloway (2008) state that this is a sign of working memory overload. James therefore had not remembered the analytic breakdown on meaning and language use that we had already examined in class on this text.

To attempt to get to grips with the meaning of the language, and to try to anchor it in James' mind, I asked him to devise a physical storyboard of the words/meaning (as Amelia and Callum had done with their Greek Chorus pieces in the last chapter). In class rehearsal, I worked through the whole monologue with James, ensuring that he created a physical action for the meaning of each phrase or word in the running sequence of the monologue. Imitating Amelia's and Callum's methods of establishing a spatially defined action- image for each word or small chunk of text, running in a learned sequence, this work is similar to Carey's *line painting* exercise, where the individual 'paints' simple imaginary images in the air with their hand as they read the text (Carey & Clarke Carey 2010: 37, 170). However, I was working towards an immersed whole body commitment, with attention of the preciseness of movement related to word meanings to address the vagueness of James' understanding.

In particular, I remember working with him to point out Shakespeare's riding images within the speech:

Phrase: *'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent'*;

Action: James 'spurs' himself with his hands into his own body's sides.

Phrase: *'but only vaulting ambition'*.

Action: James jumps as though a horse leaping over a jump.

This physical action story board was not filmed as it was devised in a class rehearsal for the unit. At this point I also asked James to work out a drawing storyboard of the speech in his own time.

Following the creation of the physical storyboard, James' movements, when he acted the speech, now became stuck in an illustrative, literal demonstration of the meaning of the words of the text, rather than being the natural gestures driven by Macbeth's psychological or emotional state. As he spoke the words of his monologue, I could perceive James' mind inwardly running through the series of physical images that we had created. His concentration of thoughts and energy withdrew into himself, as he appeared to mentally shuffle through the devised physical cues. Although greatly reduced from the initial large movements he had originally created, into smaller physical suggestions, James appeared trapped with using these embedded illustrative movements with each phrase. He was confused when I pointed this out to him.

For example, as he acted the monologue, for the phrase, *'for this blow'*, he would do a thrusting, hitting movement, for *'poison'd chalice'*, he would lift an invisible cup to his mouth, all denoting literal movements signifying the word meaning, rather than a gesture underpinning psychological explanation.

I began to be concerned that in my desire to assist James with understanding the language and the articulation of the full words, I now had blocked his connection to Macbeth's thoughts. He seemed unable to uncouple Macbeth's intrinsic thoughts within the language, from the devised storyboard movements related to word meaning, now embedded through his body. (This had been

Callum's problem in the last chapter with his Greek tragedy storyboard. This relates to McLoughlin and Leather's assertion that those with dyslexia have problems with the function of the Central Executive component in memory, finding it 'hard to change a habitual manner of doing things, such as a set reading style' (2013: 21).

However, in the last couple of rehearsals and final performance, I was surprised, as there was an enormous improvement in James's acting. Suddenly James was acting with Macbeth's movements driven by a psychological realism, and he was no longer breaking the text up into inappropriate clauses. Amazed by his progress, I asked James what he had done to break out of his prior patterns of demonstrated actions, and he explained that he had used the process of drawing a storyboard of Macbeth's thoughts onto paper. He stated that it had been the drawing of the speech that had freed him. (This is despite the fact that he never said the line, '*trammel up the consequence*' as written and always reverted to his original rendition, 'trammer up consequences').

After the unit concluded, on the 10th December 2012, I met with James so he could show me his drawing storyboard. As he claimed it had assisted him so powerfully, my expectation was one of tremendous elaboration. At first glance, his drawings appeared to me to be undeveloped and child-like. However, as he talked me through them, I began to understand their serious value for James as a metacognitive tool of construction. Each drawing acted as a perceptual window, opening a container for much larger chunks of information. James explained that artistic accomplishment was not the point of his drawings, saying, 'Leonardo De Vinci I am not, but it's got what it needs and as far as meaning and stuff, I can get it all from this. I get time to think about it and do it, which makes it a lot easier'.

James had used three sheets of A 4 size paper, which he had folded into four, making four separate picture spaces on the page. James describes his storyboard as like, '...little caricatures, which are just about capturing their feeling and the thoughts'. When he pictures the text in his mind:

I picture it slightly like that, as a comic book almost, so I can picture each individual part and then I know the feeling and I know what's going on....so it's kind of every little bit of his mind injected into the pictures...which is handy for me... I can learn that as a sequence of feelings a lot easier than if I read it and thought, 'so okay, it's this and now it's this and now he is thinking this'.

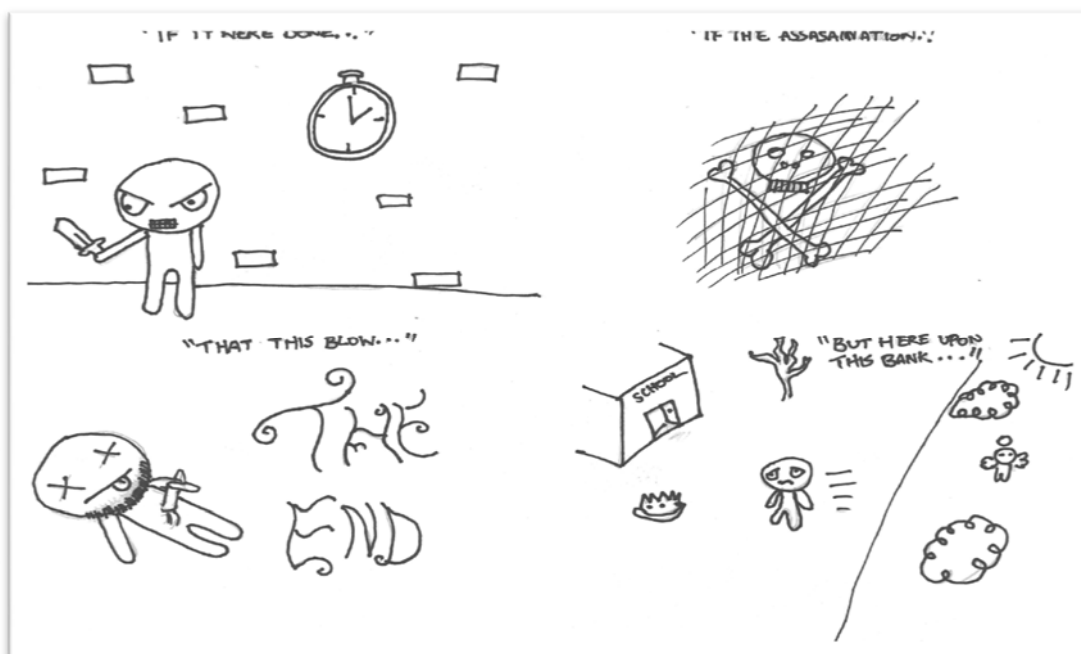


Figure 6.4 James' pictures for *Macbeth* in Sheet One

Description and Analysis

Picture one: *if it were done, when tis done, then t'were well it were done quickly*

James' explanation: 'The first one is a picture of little Macbeth with a dagger and there's a stop watch behind him to signify that they want it done as fast as possible'

Picture two: *If the assignation could trammel up [the] consequence and catch with his surcease success*

James' explanation: 'it's a picture of a skull and cross bones and then netting over the skull and cross bones. The skull and cross bones is the consequence

so that's possibly his death – Macbeth's death if anyone finds out... the netting is the consequences being got rid of because they did it quickly, it's all over'.

Picture three: *That but this blow might be the be- all and the end- all - here,*

James' explanation: 'We've got a picture of Duncan with a knife in him and the words 'the end', which signifies that's it, the end of everything'.

Picture four: *but here upon this bank and shoal of time,*

James' explanation: 'I read somewhere that shoal was actually a word for school in Shakespeare's time and I've done a picture of heaven and he is running away from heaven towards the crown and a more desolate area but as long as he is king he doesn't mind running away from that sort of thing'.

My comment: James is correct here. The first Folio refers to 'school of time', but Block reports that 'shoal' is now the usual word use (Block 2013:360).



Figure 6.5 James' pictures for *Macbeth* in Sheet Three

Description and Analysis

Picture one: *'Besides, this Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office, that his virtues will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against the deep damnation of his taking off'.*

James' explanation: 'I've got a picture of Duncan, he's on the floor dead with his halo and his crown broken, he has also got some wings, but the halo and wings signifies his greatness and his virtue and how people will want to follow him rather than Macbeth, if this does happen I've got a couple of faces saying 'a great man' and 'he is still my king'.

My comment: It is interesting that in the text, Shakespeare paints the metaphoric picture of Duncan's virtues seemingly taking on an appearance of angels pleading and blowing trumpets, but James has still made Shakespeare's words work, by giving the virtues to Duncan growing on his back as angel wings, while there are faces 'trumpeting' his greatness in their speech.

Picture two: *'And Pity, like a naked new-born babe, striding the blast',*

James' explanation: 'I've got a knife that is going into an X mark in the middle of the explosion and its causing this baby explosion - I don't know if I should have drawn a vagina but I did, and the baby is shooting out of the vagina because of the blast - the baby represents the love for Duncan.

My comment: A misplaced idea possibly of *blast*, but James has found another meaning for the word and his metaphor still works psychologically.

When describing the challenges of paraphrasing Shakespeare's words, and the various possible meanings that can be explicated from the language, Block asks whether all perceived meanings should be deemed as correct, and asks, 'is one meaning for one person to hear and another for another to understand?' (Block 2013: 17).

An example of Block's point on variation of translation is to be found on this very line. In Block's interpretation, *Pity* is directing a blast of air, causing the whole world to weep over Duncan's murder (ibid. 285), while I understand it as *Pity* walking on the blast of the angels' trumpets in 'striding the blast'.

Picture three: *'or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd upon the sightless couriers of the air, shall blow this horrid deed in every eye, that tears shall drown the wind'.*

James' explanation: 'I was thinking of drawing horses, but I really couldn't draw horses, so I did it as letters and the letters are flying through the wind to send this information to the public, to everybody, so you've got the wind with letters with 'Truth' on them, and then you've got somebody at the bottom who is reading it and the letter is on the floor and the person is crying.

My comment: We lose Shakespeare's picture of baby angels (*Cherubins*) riding on horses, which is also a metaphor for the wind, (*sightless couriers of the air*), and Shakespeare's pointing to horse – related metaphors – '*hors'd upon the sightless couriers of the air*', and below – '*spurs*', '*sides*', '*vault*', '*o'erleap and fall on th'other*', but James' analogy still works well in the overall meaning.

Picture four: *'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself and fall no th'other'*

James' explanation: 'I have got the first picture of him saying I can't do it, obviously he is being negative about it, and then when he is thinking about the crown in the second picture, suddenly he is wanting to do it and he is more positive about it, but altogether he is confused as he is in two minds of what he wants to do'.

My comment: This is the psychological translation, rather than the pictorial element related to horses and riding inherent in the language commented on above. It is interesting that the horse related elements are missed, because these were some of the illustrative word translations that James was so stuck with in his rehearsal performance, following the physical story-boarding. He has rid himself of these in his drawn storyboard, going for the narrative instead.

James is a talented musician and singer. Fascinatingly, James reflected that when drawing his storyboard, he realised that he discovered a similarity between the utilisation of pictures and music. He said, 'It clicked in my mind, as music is very much like letters'. He compared the two, saying:

the best metaphor for it is actually music because with music you get so many tones, you can get jealousy with the darker tones, you can get anger from the minus going into the normal cords, and then you can have the light happy melodic tunes, and it is exactly the same because you can encapsulate all whether in the music or in the pictures. It is like a series of notes and after you start playing for a while you see, begin to be able to picture in your head so you don't need the music.

Despite the difficulty James had in letting go of the movement/action work created in the physical storyboard, James still described it as 'useful'. He thought the physical actions should precede the drawing, but then the drawing work should follow, 'because that is the way for it to cement and stick in my mind'.

6.4.3 *Hollie and Dorotea in Cardenio*

In her initial interview with me, Hollie revealed that she had been born with her ear channels too small, which affected her hearing and she had to have them enlarged. As a child she had trouble understanding the alphabetical letters, their sounds in the pronunciation of words and how they related to the spelling of them, which is said by many to be the root cause of dyslexia in the phonological deficit (Snowling 1998, Snowling & Hulme 2005, Montgomery 2003). It is unclear whether Hollie's early hearing problems contribute to her difficulty with recognising the sounds of letters in words.

When Hollie was a first year student, I noticed that her articulation of words was poor, with imprecise sounds. Hollie has aspirated /t/ and /d/, and she often leaves out crucial consonants in the middle or endings of words. Before the

Shakespeare unit began, I knew that a key goal for me would be to improve Hollie's articulation, communication of language and reading fluency. Nicolson and Fawcett describe the act of articulation as 'our most complex motor skill, and that needing the finest control over muscular sequencing' (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010: 135).

In her initial interview (8.10.2012) when describing her love for life drawing, Hollie's insecurity with language was demonstrated when she muddled two words: she said *inanimate*, and then quickly supplanted it with a slurred pronunciation of the word *anonymous*. She was not sure which word was correct, when speaking about her practice of drawing *inanimate* objects.

This insecurity with finding the appropriate words and forming their full pronunciation is a cognitive skill, involving verbal working memory and explicit memory retrieval (Desmond & Fiez in Nicolson & Fawcett 2010:167) and there are several theories linking weak articulation with dyslexia. Aligned with their theory of the *automatisation deficit* Fawcett and Nicolson also identify in dyslexics an *articulatory deficit*. They contend that, 'there is considerable evidence that dyslexic children are impaired in articulatory skill, though it is not clear whether this is caused primarily by a phonological deficit or by a motor skill deficit in the rate or accuracy of articulation (ibid.97). In a controlled trial, Griffiths and Frith asked adults with dyslexia to repeat phonemes aloud and then to identify a picture that showed the articulators in the physical position that formed the sound of the phoneme. They found that the dyslexics struggled to relate the sound to the picture and that, 'dyslexics were significantly impaired in articulatory awareness' (Griffiths & Frith 2002) while Tallal claims that there is a deficit in proprioceptive awareness of the body positions, which can also affect speech articulation (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010: 35).

During her initial interview with me (8.10.2012) Hollie told me that when learning text she breaks it into sections, giving each 'little pinpoint' an imagined picture, and then she highlights each 'pinpoint' with a different colour. She uses this approach to make things 'more prominent in my head when I'd go back to it'. In lectures she explained that she would:

...be thinking about it and listening but I would be drawing the whole time. I'd understand all the things and I'd write a sentence down and I'd doodle all over the sentence...I'd go over it in pen. I'd make certain characters different...It allows me to focus on that sentence a lot more – like a separate entity and I'd think, 'ah, now I understand it a lot more.

Hollies' Acting Scene

Hollie played Dorotea in *Cardenio* Act I, scene vi. *Cardenio* is cited as the 'lost re-imagined' play, compiled by director Gregory Doran, and Spanish author Antonio Alamo, sourced from various play texts and possibly originally written by Shakespeare and John Fletcher (Doran 2011: 5).

Some of the language in the scene is fairly cryptic, not only for the listener, but also for the actor reading and speaking it. A short example of the complex meaning and word use, and long sentences in a speech within the scene is given below. Here Dorotea finds that she is being forced to give up her virginity by an over-ardent suitor.

Dorotea:

*If I were now between a lion's paws
And were made certain sure of liberty
If only I'd forsake my honour here,
'Twould prove all as impossible for me
As for the lion to give his essence o'er.
Then even as you have engirt me round
So likewise have I binded fast my mind
With virtuous and forcible desires
(All of which are wholly different from yours),
As you shall find if force you seek to use.
I am your vassal, not your slave my lord;
Nor ought the nobleness of your high blood
Have the power to stain the humbleness of mine,
I do esteem myself (though but a girl,
A farmer's daughter, but a country wench),
As much as you yourself, though noble born.*

During rehearsals I concentrated on Hollie's articulation, and continually drew her attention to her pronunciation. Although always in a state of flux, her diction

improved tremendously. Gradually she began to take ownership of the language and the character, and the observer could take in what she said, despite the difficult language. When working with Hollie on articulation exercises, I reminded her of her drawing techniques of customising important information by doodling over the words, when listening to lectures or learning texts (8.10 2012). I suggested to her that she might achieve a deeper assimilation with the language and her articulation of it, if she developed her drawing techniques on her *Cardenio* text.

At the end of the Shakespeare unit, Hollie handed in her customised *Cardenio* text, along with her evaluation essay about her work (30.11.2012). In the evaluation Hollie commented:

As I was still struggling with the disjointed language of the piece during rehearsals I began to explore ways to allow the language to become more flowing. One attempt to overcome this obstacle was with a method I found when exploring sonnets earlier in the term. I began illustrating the text visually to help celebrate each word in its own separate entirety, allowing me to feel, see and experience the word and it was during this exercise it allowed [me] to uncover the extent of how important the word 'honor' [her spelling] was to Dorotea....She is a determined, strong woman with the power to fight him with her formidable language, and this for me was only discovered as I began to illustrate and embrace her words

Hollie's *Cardenio* text is interwoven with visual symbols. Adjacent to the customised text, she has drawn four larger images capturing whole phrases and encapsulated meanings. In interview (14.5. 2013, 15.8.2013), Hollie explained her drawings to me.

DOROTEA.

If I were now ~~between~~ ~~a~~ ~~lion's~~ ~~paws~~
 And were made certain ~~sure~~ of liberty
 If only I'd ~~forsake~~ my ~~honor~~ ~~here~~,
 'Twould prove all as ~~impossible~~ for me
 As for the lion to give his ~~essence~~ o'er.
 Then even as you have ~~engirt~~ me round
 So likewise have I ~~binded~~ fast my mind
 With ~~virtuous~~ and ~~forcible~~ ~~desires~~
 (All which are wholly different from yours),
 As you shall find if ~~force~~ you seek to use.

FERNANDO.

Pray, who ordains this ache I worship.

DOROTEA.

I am your ~~vassal~~ ~~not~~ your ~~slave~~, my lord;
 Nor ought the ~~nobleness~~ of your ~~high~~ ~~blood~~
 Have the power to ~~stain~~ the ~~humbleness~~ of mine,
 I do ~~esteem~~ myself (though but a girl,
 A farmer's daughter, but a country wench),
 As much as ~~you~~ yourself, though noble born.

FERNANDO

Figure 6.6 Hollie's Cardenio text

Description and analysis of the four large pictures:

Picture one. *'If I were now between a lion's paws
And were made certain sure of liberty,
If only I'd forsake my honour here'*

Hollie's explanation: 'I drew a picture of two lion's paws (which represents Fernando) grabbing the word liberty written in gold. Firstly, it's written in gold to highlight how important and precious her freedom is to Dorotea. Secondly, it represents her body being physically grabbed by Fernando' (all communications here and below made on 15.8. 2013).

My comment: These larger pictures have broken the text up into four units of action, capturing several lines within each image. They represent the action as described in the text, while acting as a container for an overall *psychological* understanding of what is happening to Dorotea from the actor's perspective.

Picture two: *'Twould prove all as impossible for me
As for the lion to give his essence o'er.'*

Hollie's explanation: 'I drew the lion's/Fernando's paw holding a golden crown, which represents his power. However, his claw is gripping onto the crown tightly to show how hard it would be for him to simply give up his power', (his essence o'er)'

My comment. The image captures a *psychologically* driven action encompassing the metaphor of the lion presented in the script.

Picture three: *'Then even as you have engirt me round
So likewise have I binded fast my mind
With virtuous and forcible desires'*

Hollie's explanation: 'I drew a picture of a brain that signifies Dorotea's mind, the halo above it shows her honourable and pure thoughts. This is surrounded by the lion's paws, which signify that even though Fernando (the lion) has

physically pulled himself to her, trying to pressure her into bed, she has protected herself with her morals’.

My comment: Hollie’s drawing unpacks the unusual language, the image encompassing Dorotea’s attitude.

Picture four: ‘*I am your vassal, not your slave my lord;
Nor ought the nobleness of your high blood
Have the power to stain the humbleness of mine*’,

Hollie’s explanation: ‘I drew the crown on top of a pillar to show the prestige he thinks his noble heritage or ‘blood’ has. The crown is bleeding his blood onto the floor to show that even if Dorotea is a farmer’s daughter and lower in social status (below the pillar), she cannot be stained by his intentions to have sex with her out of wedlock, hence the ‘not allowed’ sign over the smaller golden crown which represents her honour/virginity’

My comment: The drawing presents Dorotea’s argument, using vivid metaphorical symbols. In her explanation Hollie demonstrates a certainty of comprehension, emboldened by additional interpretation through the drawing.

A clip of Hollie’s explanation about four of her drawings customising the text:

1. *forsake* is coloured with grey strokes to illustrate the fast carelessness of her honour being thrown away
2. *honour* is starred with gold colour to highlight its importance, and here is underlined to further reinforce how significant it is to Dorotea
3. *binded* has green vines growing over the word as to show vines interweaving round the letters as Fernando physically does to Dorotea
4. *desires* is in the centre of gold and red- like flames of passion

Hollie explained the role of her drawing on the text, saying (15.8.2013):

The customised words on the text are different; when I draw onto them, that's what the words look like and feel like in my head, making it also easier to articulate as I can see how the word feels or is meant to feel like. The drawing on the words is more to help with pronunciation and feeling, flow and energy of the language. When I draw on the words it helps me visualise the meaning of the word

My comment:

In recommending interventions for those with learning disabilities with weak working memory, Dehn advocates the *Paired Associates Strategy*. This entails drawing an image next to the information to be learnt and is empirically proven as an effective mnemonic and comprehension facilitator for those with cognitive disabilities (Dehn 2008: 284).

6.5 Consideration Of The Participants' Methods Associated With Memory

In interview about her PowerPoint storyboarding (29.10.2012) Sophie includes its use both a meaning maker and a memory aid saying, 'it helped me process and understand more as I feel I have to make sense of things myself before I absorb and remember them. I often have to write things in my own words. It also helped with my memory as a cue, [her spelling for cue]'. Further on in the interview she describes a picture as a '...reminder for my memory...', and the images making it 'a lot easier', (my underlining).

James (10.12. 2012) in analysing his perceived link between music and drawing pictures repeats the idea of drawing being a memory aid saying that '...you can remember the pictures like a musical score' (ibid. 6). James, (ibid. 4), also reiterates the efficacy of the drawing process offering time to think, making it, 'a lot easier'. James uses the words 'a lot easier' related to the drawing three times in this interview.

Hollie, when describing her technique of doodling over her lecture notes said she ‘...could remember the words visually when I had to recall the information’, and ‘it’s a lot clearer and easier’ (8.10. 2012).

In his promotion of effective learning through multi- media technology, the psychologist and educator Richard. E. Mayer draws attention to Allan Paivio’s concept of the *Dual Code theory*, arguing that understanding occurs most deeply when learners build significant associations between pictures and words (Mayer 2009:7). Sophie, James’ and Hollie’s written verbal labelling placed next to the picture allow the words and pictures and their concepts to be held in working memory at the same time, ‘...thus increasing the chances that learners will be able to build mental connections between them (ibid. 2009: 229).

6.5.1 Recognition of the use of mnemotechnics

An ancient perspective

The methods used by my participants’ link directly with the ancient Greek and Roman utilisation of *mnemotechnics* as a method for their memorising of oratory speeches. According to the historian Frances Yates (1966:18) the Roman Cicero, in his *De Oratore* on the art of rhetoric, suggests that when delivering a speech, each topic should be transferred into an image and then placed within a particular locus within the imagination. This method is further described by the Roman Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (ibid. 18). Quintilian teaches that the speaker should imagine a building full of rooms and then each topic image be placed within a different room and memorised, thus to be retrieved when delivering the speech, as one mentally walks through the building. There are similar tactics endorsed by the unknown Roman author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Anon in Caplan 1954). The author announces that there are two types of memory: the natural memory, which flows with our thoughts, and the artificial memory, which must be trained (ibid. 207). Firstly he introduces the idea of placing the thing that needs to be remembered as an image into a definite background, which must be ‘small scale’, so that they might be ‘grasped’ by the natural memory. The background that the images

are placed upon should be like a wax tablet, able to be run forwards or backwards in memory sequence, so that, 'reminded by the images we can repeat orally what we committed to the backgrounds' (ibid. 213). This reminds me of James' simplistically drawn spaces; one image holding a whole segment of the speech story, and Sophie's PowerPoint pictures placed within the slide sequence.

Secondly (reminiscent of Sophie and Hollies' brightly coloured pictures, and Jimmy's use of red in every drawing) he advises that the images must be 'as striking as possible', so they are distinct and lodge deeply in the memory, saying: ' if we set up images that are ...doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks...so that the image may be more distinct to us; or if we... disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking...will ensure our remembering of them more readily' (ibid. 221). His image examples of intense colour, crowns and blood are also utilised to stir the emotions.

Significantly for this study's enquiry into how the multiplicities in Shakespeare's language might be understood through context, or key word meanings, the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* makes much of the difference between images for 'things' (*memoria rerum*) and images for 'words' (*memoria verborum*). Yates (1966:24) explains that memory for 'things' is for the subject matter, 'the argument, a notion, a thing', or, as Foer suggests, 'the gist' (Foer 2011: 123). The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* tells us that 'often we encompass the record of an entire matter by one notation, a single image', (anon in Caplan 1954: 215) - as demonstrated by James' *Macbeth* storyboard.

The memory for 'words' (*memoria verborum*) means that one must 'represent the words by means of images' (ibid. 217). This presents the challenge that fixing a single image for a word could necessitate storing countless images in the memory to represent numerous words, making it a far more difficult method than memory for 'things' (*memoria rerum*). The author advocates practice 'go[ing] over a given verse twice or three times to ourselves to

stimulate the natural memory' (ibid. 223). Accentuating the subjective nature of the image, he expounds:

One person is more struck by one likeness and another more by another. Often ...when we declare that some form resembles another, we fail to receive universal assent because things seem different to different persons....Everybody therefore should in equipping himself with images suit his own convenience.

A contemporary perspective

I described my participants' visual methods to psychologist Rod Nicolson (who developed the *cerebellar/automatisation deficit theory*), and asked him what he thought was the rationale behind the participants' translation of the text into pictures. Nicolson suggested that the participants are using a combination of frameworks (Nicolson communication 2012). He posits that:

- i. The advantage gained from re-coding from one form to another forces a deep processing and a spread of encoding – thus, the better it is remembered, as in Craik and Lockhart's theory (1972).

In the various stages of processing text, attention is given to the visual characteristics of the printed word, its sensory features, rehearsal of sounds, pattern recognition and the use of elaborate coding related to semantic-associative stimulus enrichment. A word may trigger associations, images, stories and on the basis of the subject's past experience with the word as meaning is extracted (Craig & Lockhart 1972). When reporting on the implications resulting from their trials on levels of processing, Craik and Tulving (1975: 292) underlined that it is the *inner mental process* that has efficacy:

The stress is on mental operations; items are remembered not as presented stimuli acting on the organism, but as components of mental activity. Subjects remember not what was "out there" but what they *did* during encoding.

- ii. It is easier to recall items that have been fitted into a scheme, as in Bartlett's *Schema theory* (1932).

Here recall is a construction made on the basis of attitude, driven by emotional response, the subject often selecting certain features to use as anchors, which fits into their expectations, connected to their past knowledge, and viewpoints (Baddeley 1996:116)

- iii. By creating a visual representation in an accessible format on paper, they capture all the items down in one unit.

Using a visual representation can circumvent the limitations of verbal working memory (Mayer 2009:65). One image can be a holding ground for the communication of several ideas, although 'read' in one glance.

- iv. By designing sequences related to actions, they are using their kinaesthetic sense in a procedural learning mechanism which is independent of declarative cognitive learning mechanisms (Nicolson & Fawcett 2010: 190-192).

6.6 Conclusion

Throughout the work in this chapter, and the previous two, I have been assembling a more complete understanding of the range of problems, and proclivity towards certain working methods demonstrated by the participants. In pulling the threads together into a cohesive whole, I am harnessing my learning towards the formulation of another pedagogical facilitation. This strategy will aim to:

- Utilise and integrate physical and visual trans-mediation
- Unite the global and specific within the text
- Support comprehension, memory and processing challenges

- Promote the participants' recognition and development of their own individual practice, securing an ownership of their preferred modalities, through devising and performance methodologies

In the next chapter I shall test these ideas in my fourth action research cycle, buttressed by the theory, in order to arrive at my findings of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Deconstructing And Re-Constructing Towards The Performative Action

7. Introduction

In the last chapter I reported on the trialled practice of categorising types and function of gesture in actioning language and its failure in assisting the participants, whilst driving them into a state of memory overload and anxiety.

7.1 Overview Of Chapter

In this chapter I report on my instigation of another devised strategy, in conducting action research Cycle Four. Drawing from Kintsch and Rawson's text analysis theory (2005:209) interconnected with various acting methodologies, I test this process as an enablement for those with dyslexia in comprehending, memorising and acting the text. This work is trialled in a participant- led performance. As part of this action research, I formalise the participants' individual strategies as working practice. Finally I analyse the outcome.

With reference to the Appendices: there is a filmed example of the participants' performance of *Venus and Adonis* on DVD Three in Appendix Eight. Throughout this chapter at the relevant points, there are references given to draw the reader's attention to the linking evidential material contained in the Appendices

7.1.1 Key to the overall structure of the chapter

7.2 Context

Here I introduce the background to the work and give a brief report on the participants' behaviour

7.3. *The theory behind the strategy*

This section introduces the theory underpinning the strategy, and considers the role of memory in comprehension of the text.

7.4 *The method: procedure in the voice class*

This section describes how I adapted the theory into an acting method, my aims, and how I put the method into practice.

7.5. The facility of visual devices and embodied cognition

This section presents the theory underpinning gesture and drawing.

7.6. The story-telling assignment

Here I outline the strategy exercise for the assessed presentation

7.7. The Venus and Adonis project (Action research Cycle Four)

I describe their performance, the aims, the generated data, and the assessment criteria.

7.8. Consideration of the participants' performance and drawing

7.9. Feedback on the effectiveness of the strategy from the participants and critical friend.

8. Conclusion

Here I conclude with a theoretical explanation and rationale for the strategy.

7.2 Context

In order to extend my research period with the participants, I overlapped my work into their next unit of study following *Shakespeare*, which was entitled *Actor and Audience*. The main syllabus of this acting unit (which centred on devised contemporary work), was not taught by me, although I taught the unit's accompanying voice classes. The classes were comprised of nine lessons, conducted over a five week period. The voice syllabus concentrated on the techniques of reading aloud, and an exploration of story-telling genre, with an assessed performance.

7.2.1 A report on the participants' behaviour when reading in the voice classes.

This report about my participants' behaviour is taken from observation notes that I had made during my teaching in the voice classes (January 2013).

Further to these notes, the participants, Sophie and Hollie, had both provided explanations of their behaviour in personal communications.

At the beginning of the study of reading technique in voice class on the 8th January 2013, the students were reading aloud about the technical practice of reading. When it came to Sophie's turn, she stumbled over the odd word, and then suddenly she ran out of the room crying. Returning to the class she explained to me that reading about the reading process upset her because she felt frustrated by her inability to read fluently, fearing being judged as stupid. In a written account she explained, 'I feel like people get annoyed when there is a slow reader... the more I panic the more I stumble', and 'I cried not because I was upset but because I was furious with myself for not being able to do it...learning to read is what children do and its embarrassing that I can't do it' (10th January 2013).

Reid underlines that a high level of anxiety and frustration accompanies dyslexia (2003: 78) while Thomson accentuates the dyslexic individual harbouring feelings of stress, suppressed anger and anticipated failure (2009:215).

In another voice class (24th January 2013) Hollie was reading a story aloud with fluency and expressive feeling. She stopped abruptly, staring at the page, unable to proceed. Apologising for her break, she explained that although she 'could see the black marks on the page' and understood in her mind that they were words, she could not 'read' them. In written communication she explained 'they became just like shapes hence I couldn't understand them' (24th January 2013). She continued that 'it was a bit like a panic attack when you know logically in your mind that you can breathe, but at the time you think you can't. So at the time of getting carried away in the emotion of the piece, and the panic of not being able to find my place on the paper, the words became unreadable to me' (ibid. 2013).

James gave the impression of reading with confidence. However, gradually I began to notice that he sometimes broke the sentences up into inappropriate

pauses, or gave a mis-placed emphasis on a word, thereby demonstrating lack of comprehension. In interview (19th March 2013) he said that, 'it is a strange thing because it varies from day to day whether I can read and take information in'. He continued: 'It's usually because I have not got it in the first place...I could read the paragraph and kind of get it but I'll get to the end of it and it won't make sense in my head and so I'll have to read it another time'.

Elizabeth read slowly, making some mistakes in pronunciation, or supplanting one word for another or inserting small words such as 'the' or 'a' or 'very' that were not in the text. Elizabeth referred to this tendency in her initial interview on the 8th October 2012, confessing, 'I always add words in, they just come out. I don't know where they come from'.

7.3 The Theory Behind The Strategy

Neuro-scientist Walter Kintsch has a particular research interest in how people understand language, while Katharine Rawson is a psychologist whose research explores the cognitive processes underlying the automatization of reading. Kintsch and Rawson describe the concept of 'comprehension' as 'fuzzy', and the empirical phenomena of comprehension as 'ill defined'. For those that can read fluently, they liken comprehension to a way of perceiving, maintaining that cognitive analysis is only needed when understanding is blocked (Kintsch & Rawson 2005:209). Language processing weaknesses can be at the centre of reading comprehension problems which can affect the ability to assimilate textual information, and extrapolate meanings (Perfetti et al 2005: 239, 232).

It is important to differentiate between decoding and comprehension of the text (Elliott & Grigorenko 2014:41). However, although those with dyslexia are often noted as possessing good comprehension skills, this comprehension can be undermined by a lack of automaticity in decoding skills (Thomson 2005:193, Reid 2003: 122). Reid stipulates that dyslexic challenges are not only about reading, but include cognitive factors such as memory, speed of processing, organisation and identification of the main points in the text (Reid 2003: 246).

The educational psychologist David Grant specifies that successful reading requires more than reading words with accuracy, but also involves retaining information and not being distracted when reading. These are all aspects that those with dyslexia struggle with (Grant 2010: 34).

To address the sometimes perplexing muddle of focus of meanings within a text, especially for my participants with dyslexia, I have drawn from Kintsch and Rawson's analysis of levels of text processing (2005: 209). This has proved highly advantageous as a navigating mechanism for getting inside of the text. As part of a co-ordinated system, there are four areas of distinct focus, which Kintsch and Rawson have defined as *The Text Base*, which represents what is explicit in the text.

The Text Base is made up of:

i) *The Microstructure*. (Local level)

This is the linguistic level of processing; the individual words, such as decoding the symbols, recognising the whole word and analysing the grammatical roles of the words. Semantic analysis emerges through a network of word meanings, units and propositions. These are further analysed through a detection of word connections, their relationships within the text, leading to inferences and predictions.

So, in Shakespeare, the *Microstructure* would include recognition of word meaning, rhetorical device and the structural form it is written in.

ii) *The Macrostructure*. (Global level)

This relates to larger units of text, wherein the overall ideas, themes or topics arising from the whole piece, can be identified. The understanding of these ideas can be informed by the reader's prior knowledge.

In Shakespeare, the *Macrostructure* would include the story line, impressions about characterisation, and other ideas arising from the text.

iii) *The Situation Model*

A deep understanding of what is the potential within the text goes beyond what is presented on its surface through immediate word meaning. Here the reader actively constructs a mental model of the situation in the text, involving 'imagery, emotion, personal experience' (ibid. 211). It is not necessarily completely verbal, but can be built from pictures and diagrams interlinked with the words. Inferential thinking is crucial, where the reader fills in the gaps, or merges clues in the text with prior knowledge in order to create notional meanings. This construction can work across several levels, with familiar areas activating automatic knowledge.

In narrative and story-telling, other dimensions of constructive analysis are required; these can include an inference of the protagonist's motivations and goals, the causal relationships between actions and events, spatial location of occurrences, and an understanding of the elements of presented arguments. There will be individual differences in interpretations formed through the background knowledge, memory, and socio cultural context of the reader.

In Shakespeare, the *Situation Model* would include the psychological and emotional state of the characters, and the imaginative world constructed within the text.

iv) *The Construction- Integration Model – blending it all together*

An imprecise mental model is built from an amalgamation of both the *Macro* and the *Micro structures*. In the integration period, the model is strengthened by sifting out and discarding irrelevant information and unclear links between propositions, resulting in a secure mental model. Strong propositions are enhanced, while weak ones are dropped. This representation is then placed into long term memory (Louwerse & Graesser 2006:9)

7.3.1 *The role of memory in text comprehension*

When reading, the construction of meaning relies on the ability to hold large amounts of information in working memory, while simultaneously making links

with prior knowledge stored in long term memory (Oakhill & Garnham 1988: 149). As the capacity for working memory storage is limited, Kintsch and Rawson propose that a conduit is extended into long term working memory. Long term memory becomes linked to the contents of short term memory through retrieval measures. These retrieval structures exist where there has been a domain expertise acquired through practice. They advocate that poor or novice comprehenders need active compensatory strategies put in place to enable retrieval structures to be accessed to build the *Situation Model*, without which, they suggest, comprehension will be superficial (2005:225).

7.4 The Method: Procedure In The Voice Class

In the classes the whole cohort worked on exploring the differing genres of storytelling. We experimented with conveying the story using a Brechtian representational reported style (Mitter 1992: 58) and then the opposite, relaying the text through a subjective experiencing, as in *Psychological Realism* and Stanislavski's methodology of 'truth' (Stanislavski 2008:152). We played with a communication of the text through extended stylistic physical movement and voice, and then using a naturalistic communication.

In further exercises, I drew from Alfred's experiments with the differing modes of the narrator's point of view: the narrator as outsider, working in the third person, commenting on or leading the action, the narrator playing the dual roles of actor in the first and narrator in third person, stepping in and out of the action, and finally, the narrator in first person, experiencing and speaking directly from the 'me' (Alfreds 2013: 67).

I introduced an adapted, simplified version of Kintsch and Rawson's theories on the *Macro* and *Micro* structures of the text. Because I was wary of overloading my participants with terminology and instructions with a multiplicity of focus levels, (as I had previously done in my unsuccessful action/gestures exercise), I did not include the concept of the *Situation Model* or the *Construction- Integration Model*. As the *Situation Model* incorporates emotions and mental images, I envisaged that they, as actors, would be accessing those

areas naturally, while the construction and integration of the text into long term memory is an unconscious process. Both of these aspects would inevitably be part of the focus of the work.

7.4.1 My instruction for the ‘Gestus and Grasp Elaboration Strategy’

As an explanatory exercise, I put the whole class into small groups. I gave each group a short story, asked them to comb through the text carefully and define for themselves the *Macro* global topic ideas arising from their understanding of the text.

To stimulate their imaginations, I merged the *Macro* with an acting technique. Drawing from Brecht’s physical action method, I aligned the *Macrostructure* of the text with his idea of *Gestus*; meaning in German, ‘the gist and gesture and point’ (Willet 1977:173). The *Gestus* sums up in a physical gesture or image, an opinion, idea or mixed message that the actor wishes to convey. Mitter describes it as ‘generating a space adjacent to the text’ (1992:48).

Firstly, in small groups, I directed the students to sketch out some representations of their ideas for their *Gestus Macros* on paper, using analogy and metaphor, with a title written next to them. When their sketches were complete, to then share their drawings and ideas with their group, so their various interpretations could be debated. The group members would then identify which *Macros* they wanted to use. The whole group would develop the sketch ideas further through embodiment, by creating expressive physical frozen images - *Tableaux Vivants* (living pictures) as meaning anchors. When in their *Macro* positions, to speak their *Macro* titles aloud with vocal expression, so that they might deeply imprint their denotations.

Following the *Macro* global identification, I directed them to isolate some key *Micro* words within the story; those which conjured up brilliant images, critical word meanings, associations, or audio-sensory imagery. As a performance exercise (as I had done with the *Macro*) I merged the *Micro* with another acting method. In explanation to the students, I aligned this image/word anchor to

Stanislavski's idea of *Grasp* (Merlin 2003:66) where he wanted his actors to really 'grasp' the material. Stanislavski said: '...grasp is what a bull dog has in his jaw. We actors must have the same power to seize with our eyes, ears and all our senses' (Stanislavski 1980:217). Merlin emphasises that to be in a state of *grasp* when performing, 'you just need a great sense of inner activity...which totally absorbs you, both in your action and your partners' (Merlin 2003:66). In underlining the power of 'inner grasp', Stanislavski lists it as one of the most important features of the creative process (Stanislavski 1980:279).

I instructed them that I wanted them to particularly '*grasp*' the *Micro* key words in the text, fixating on the words inventively through concrete images, using their voice and body. As with the *Macros*, to explore their thoughts and inner images through drawings released onto the page. Having created and shared their *Micro* images, the group should build physical frozen images of their *Micros*, whilst they spoke the words aloud.

This use of *Tableaux Vivants* resonates with Boal's *Image Theatre* exercises, which he devised to explore social oppression. 'The image speaks...the body thinks... think what the image thinks" said Boal (1992:192). In *Image Theatre* the individual or whole group, assume a frozen physical picture, either originating from a single individual idea or morphing into a group message to be examined, or activated – represented through the body position in tableau, (ibid.164). These living images, (although sometimes complex and multi-layered) are available to be analysed by the whole group, and do not disadvantage those with difficulties with the written word. As a form of thinking-in and through-action, both by the actors and the participating observers, the tableaux can be re-configured to encompass other meanings and outcomes, thereby providing an excellent learning and communication tool.

7.4.2 My aims in adapting the Macro and Micro Text base for the cohort class.

- I. To advance a system of recognising and compartmentalising aspects of meaning and hierarchy within the text

- II. To support a deep absorption of the language emanating from the text
- III. To embed a visuo- spatial- auditory mental pattern of the text
- IV. To develop artistic performance through shared interpretative creation
- V. To offer an elaboration method to make the text more memorable; to offer a conduit from working memory into long term memory, to heighten understanding, as advocated by Kintsch and Rawson (2005: 224)

7.5 The Facility Of Visual Devices And Embodied Cognition

In questioning how my *Gestus and Grasp Elaboration Strategy* might augment an entrenched knowing of the text, especially for my participants with dyslexia, I acknowledge that my theoretical assumptions are hypothetical. However, they are arrived at from my own phenomenological experience of acting in Shakespeare, reflection on my close observations of the activity and responses of my participants, and an extensive study of the literature.

By adding a physical dimension to Kintsch and Rawson's theory, there is an immediate correlation with Noice and Noice's (2006) studies of professional actors' expertise in memory for lines ascertained through physical actions and cognitive elaboration, and Engelkamp and Zimmer's *Multi-modal Enactment Theory* (1989) where they have shown that verbal phrases accompanied by physical actions are better recalled (see Chapter Five).

In psycholinguistic research investigations, Robert Krauss *et al* in their *Lexical Retrieval Hypothesis* (2000:61) have studied the purpose of natural human gesture with speech. Krauss proposes that gestures aid in the retrieval of elusive words from semantic memory through employing a different spatio - dynamic format to represent the meaning (Krauss 1998). I am drawing from Krauss *et al*'s knowledge; making crossover associations in how their theories might relate to my participants' use of contrived gesture, related to language and speech.

7.5 1 The Lexical Retrieval Hypothesis.

In analysing the functions of gesture, Krauss *et al* (2000:61) acknowledge that, due to a lack of definitive empirical data about gesture production, any

proposed models can only be viewed as 'tentative and highly-speculative'. Despite this statement, they go on to underline that their painstaking observations of the functions of gesture have deepened their understanding, and that their suppositions, arrived at through lengthy experience, should be given serious consideration.

In the *Lexical Retrieval Hypothesis*, Krauss *et al* (2000: 261) focus on the *lexical gesture* (opposed to other types of gesture) which they define as 'bear[ing] a meaningful relation to the semantic content of the speech they accompany' (ibid.263). Breaking the *lexical* identity down further into sub - categories, they believe that *iconic* and *metaphorical* gestures are both *lexical*, which are sometimes called *representational* or *ideational* gestures (ibid. 263, 275, and 276). Krauss *et al* assert that the implementation of these *representational* gestures help the speaker realise a lexical entry, by crossing modal channels. The spatio-dynamic aspects (such as mental images connected to the concept) are kept alive in memory through the gesture, while the appropriate language is found. In their model they assume that memory and knowledge are encoded in several forms of representational formats and one can activate another. A concept might require more than one format to adequately express or realise it, so the verbal system might be translated into an image system or the other way around.

The hypothesis theorises that the two systems of speech and gesture production work simultaneously. In their model, there are three stages in the verbal propositional system: that of the *Conceptualiser*, *Formulator* and *Articulator*. The *Conceptualiser* is the preverbal stage where the intention is produced, at *Formulation* the idea is matched in the mental lexicon and then encoded into grammatical form; the *Phonological* encoder then sends instructions to the articulators and finally the words are spoken. Through auditory analysis in the auditory monitor, the speaker can assess and correct their utterances. The auditory monitor is also connected to the gestural motor planner.

In conjunction with this verbal process, when the concept first arises in working memory, a non-verbal representation, (such as an image) is passed to the

spatial dynamic feature selector, which goes to a *motor planner*, then to a *motor programme*, which gives instructions for the implementation of the gesture. This gesture is then monitored kinaesthetically and fed into the *phonological encoder*, where the words are formed. The spatio-motoric modality of the gesture assists in the creation of meaning, formation and articulation of the final realisation of words. There is a connection between the auditory monitor, the articulator, the phonological encoder and the motor gesture which all feed into each other; thus the preciseness of articulation of the word is underpinned, whilst the working memory is supported.

Making connections with my work, I surmise that the use of exaggerated, planned gestures will not only activate and cement the image with the word, but enable an enhanced, more developed realisation of it, thus it will be embedded with more potency. In addition, as the articulator is also connected with the gesture and an auditory feedback loop, related to Baddeley's phonological loop (Baddeley 2007:8), the *Lexical Retrieval Hypothesis* strongly supports the participants' formation of the words.

McNeill argues that gesture and speech are a form of thinking, 'a way of cognitively existing' and that 'by performing the gesture, the core idea is brought into concrete existence and becomes part of the speaker's own existence at that moment' (McNeill & Duncan 2000: 156). Akin to gesturing, drawing utilises both the mental and physical in a motor action to keep a concept alive in working memory.

7.5.2 Drawing as realisation

The academic research of artist and educator Terry Rosenberg, centres on how thought (the settled) and thinking (the unsettled) is modelled in representations. He describes the act of drawing as a thinking space in action, between the not yet formed and the formed (2008:109). Thinking is set into action as the pencil strokes are made on the surface in a feedback loop of doing, seeing and responding to what is seen. Significantly, Rosenberg uses the same verb that I have borrowed from Stanislavski for my title of the *Micro* exercise: 'to grasp'; wherein, Rosenberg elucidates, the hand can *grasp* the pencil, but also, through the drawing, the mind can *grasp* the idea; - 'to grasp

something is to know it' (Rosenberg 2008: 111). Through the act of drawing one can free 'the mental grasp' into a concrete form of knowing, to be viewed, appraised, memorised and evaluated – thus, Rosenberg advances, drawing can function as an epistemological tool of knowing (ibid. 112).

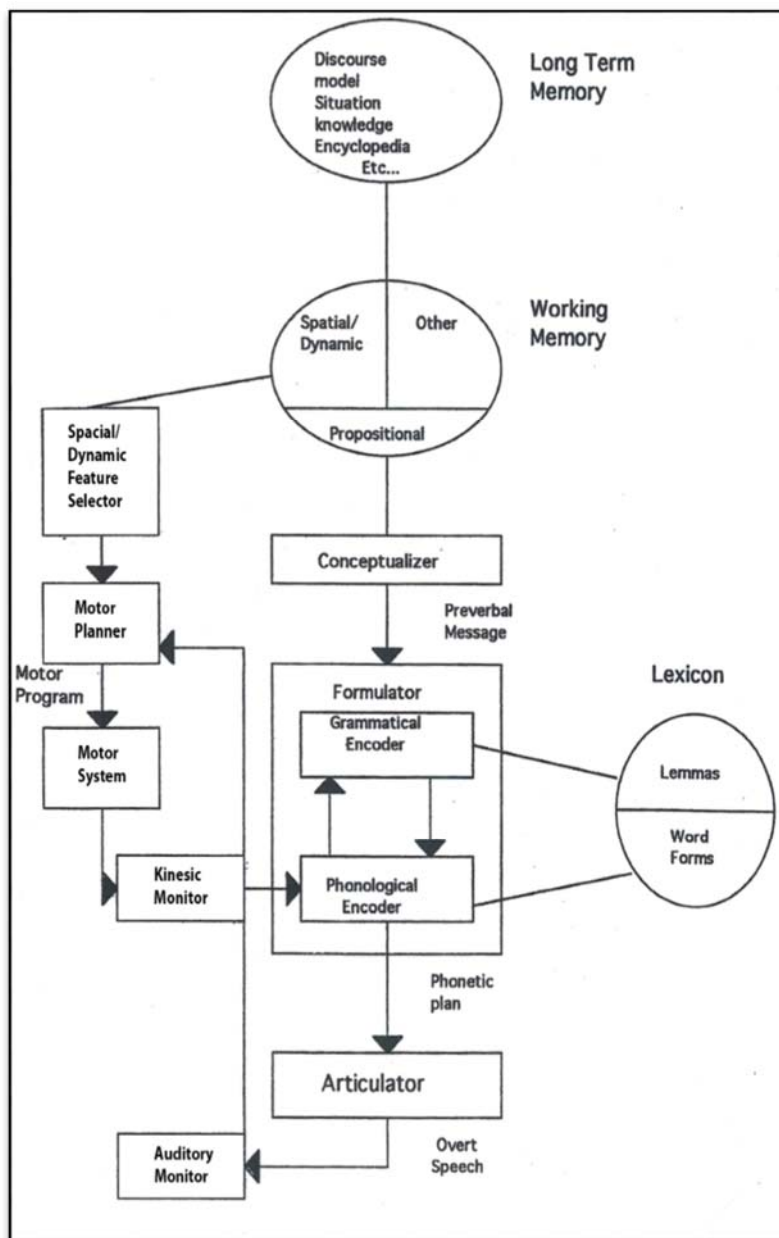


Figure 7.1 The Lexical Retrieval Hypothesis.

A cognitive architecture for the speech-gesture production process. Re-drawn from Krauss *et al* (2000:267)

7.5.3 Dyslexia and visualisation

Education psychologist David Grant accentuates that it is important to avoid making generalised statements about those with specific learning differences (2010: 91). Nevertheless, when undertaking psychological assessments of students with dyslexia, Grant has measured their experience of visualisation

when reading. Through his trialled observations, Grant relates that, 'both dyslexic and ADHD students reported a more vibrant visual experience when reading, and a greater number experienced imagery when reading, (with only 18% of dyslexics ...reporting no visualisation when reading)' (ibid. 91). Grant asserts that, 'it appears reasonable to conclude that in general visualisation is more common in dyslexics and those with ADHD than in dyspraxics or those who have no specific learning difference' (2010:93). Reid also maintains that 'dyslexic people often think in pictures, rather than words' (2003:173) and that...' visual skills and strategies in remembering and retention are important and should be developed with those who have dyslexia, (ibid. 208).

7.6 The Storytelling Assignment

The cohort were asked to devise their own story telling performance in small groups following the *Macro* and *Micro* procedure already explored in the classes. They were to use a published text, or their own material, of approximately twenty minutes in length.

7.7 The Venus and Adonis Project: Additional Specifications Given To The Participants

Using this story- telling assignment as an action research opportunity, I grouped my participants together, continuing to use Shakespeare's text as a working tool. This performance would be self -directed by the participants. I asked the participants to work on Shakespeare's poem, *Venus and Adonis*. Although ambitious in language, this poem offers consummate story- telling opportunities as it is written in the narrative reported form.

Crucially, I asked them to include their personal modes of processing as part of their devised performance. Specifically, as part of their performance genre, to incorporate Sophie's PowerPoint visual storyboards, Hollie's art work, James' musical interpretation, and Elizabeth (who had not yet shown any personal strategic methods), to explore emerging ideas within the group.

7.7.1 My aims for the participants

- I. To provide an opportunity for the individual where they might use modes that enhanced rather than constrained their capabilities. Montgomery (2003) has drawn attention to the need for specialist provision in teaching for those with a '*double exceptionality*'; those who are highly gifted but with a disability, such as dyslexia. Montgomery posits that 'bright dyslexics' should be given compensatory learning activities, arguing, 'it is not too much to insist that some special route to achievement needs to be found for every dyslexic while literary skills are being remediated' (Montgomery 2003:42).
- II. By giving the participants a 'locus of control' (Burden 2005: 20) a credence to their endeavours, and a window for self-discovery without fear of being admonished for breaking away from a prescribed expectation of performance, I aimed to give them a sense of self competence. When debating the beneficial experience of mastery for those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, Burden specifies that a sense of self competence is not enough, but that there must be '*...an improved understanding of how the application of knowledge or skill leads to successful outcomes together with a belief in one's own capability in making that application*' (Burden 2005:22).
- III. Drawing on student- centred constructivist teaching principles, I aimed to offer a social learning space. By working with each other, they would be able to share and learn from each other's (dis) – abilities and counter-actions, as in Vygotsky's Stage *one, two and three* of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, wherein performance is assisted firstly by those with superior expertise, which then shifts into a reliance on the self without reliance on others, and finally, when the learning becomes internalised and automatised (Tharpe & Gallimore 1988:36).

- IV. To support artistic experimentation.

- V. To offer a structure which facilitates the integration of items into long term memory.

7.7.2 Introduction to the performance of Venus and Adonis

(Reference to the Appendices: there is a filmed example of the performance of *Venus and Adonis* on DVD Four, Appendix Eight). Peer evaluations of the work are placed in Volume Two, Appendix Six, pages 386 - 387).

The first performance of *Venus and Adonis* was an assessed voice presentation, on February 25th 2013. Observers were three senior lecturers from the Acting department, and my critical friend. It was performed again in order to be filmed in the Studio Theatre at the Arts University on March 18th 2013, with Ken Robertson as critical friend, who also filmed it. The Head of the School of Performance, Val Greathead, and senior lecturer in Acting and Singing, Katharine Piercey, were also observers.

The camera was set on 'automatic', which meant that it read the light, colours and shapes of the whole space, rather than focussing on the details. It was not filmed in high definition, so unfortunately, in the filmed version, the participants' facial features are undefined. The camera was also set in one place, and consequently some of the action, at times, goes beyond the range of the camera's lens. Although lacking sophistication in film and sound quality, the film does provide clear evidence of the participants' performance.

It is problematic to attempt to capture the ephemeral and corporeal experience of live performance in written words; nor is this exposition meant to act as a review of the content of the performance. In order to provide insight into the research focus, I am using an ethnographic 'thick description' approach to, '... recapture the lived experience of leaders and participants in the dramatic activity', through 'vignettes...performances ...pictorial representation as

important data presentation forms' (Taylor in Ackroyd 2006). This re-telling of parts of the performance, the participants' process, the photographic representations, attempts to operate as an analysis of the methods used, demonstrate the participants' progress, and examine the outcomes of the *Macro* and *Micro Text Base* action research, as a potential teaching strategy.

Although the text of *Venus and Adonis* is classical, the performance style was contemporary. To accommodate their interdisciplinary practice, the participants had set the stage with a large painting canvas, placed centrally up-stage, with painting utensils set at the base of the canvas. Another large screen was placed stage left, for the PowerPoint slide show. James played Adonis, and the three female participants all played Venus, speaking or reacting together as one person, or individually. Within the narrative verse, Shakespeare has woven individual lines spoken by the protagonists. In performance, the actors flowed through the positions of narrator in first person, narrator stepping in and out of character, and narrator outside of character.

7.7.3 The performance of *Venus and Adonis*

Although lacking a director's guidance, and albeit sometimes naïve in the focus for audience attention, their rendition of *Venus and Adonis* was rich in individual contribution, ability and performance ideas. The inclusion of live painting, the evocative PowerPoint images moving across the screen in tandem with the words, (manipulated by Sophie), the employment of the *Macro* and *Micro* physical imagery, were all underpinned by vocal soundscapes and musical interludes with James' composed music. This resulted in an ensemble performance, bursting with feeling and energy. The performance began with all participants taking up a physical *Macro Gestus* tableau that they had titled,

'you always want what you can't get', referring to Venus' desire for Adonis, which he had rejected.



Figure 7.2 Macro Gestus Tableau: *'You always want what you can't get'*



Figure 7.3 Macro Gestus Tableau: *'Don't pick a fruit before it is ripe as the result will be bitter'.*



Figure 7.4 Micro Grasp Tableau:

'The field's chief flower'

At the start of the performance, following their initial presentation of their first *Macro* tableau, they conjured up the world that Shakespeare describes at the beginning of the poem. Before speaking any lines, Elizabeth and James began a soundscape of imitative birdsong and atmospheric vocalisation, whilst playing the ukulele; Sophie set about painting a purple sky, the sun, green fields and trees on the backcloth. As Elizabeth spoke the first lines of the poem, the PowerPoint images, echoing her words, began moving across the screen:

*'Even as the sun with purple coloured face
Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,...'*

Hollie, embodying the horse that Adonis is riding, wearing a model of a horse's head, appeared on the stage, galloping to the sound of horse's hooves, created by Elizabeth and Sophie banging coconut shells together, as they spoke the lines:

*'Rose cheeked Adonis hied him to the chase,
Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn...'*

Throughout the highly physical performance, the participants utilised their *Micro* and *Macro* tableaux to underpin the words, communicating their interpretation of meaning and artistic expression. The poem proceeds, as Venus approaches Adonis:

*'Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain to him,
And like a bold-faced suitor 'gins to woo him.
'Thrice fairer than myself', thus she began, 'The field's chief flower, ...'*

An example of Sophie's PowerPoint for these lines follows below (Figure 7.5). It is notable that, despite her care with choosing images for her PowerPoint, when writing underneath slide four, Sophie has spelt *thoughted* as 'thorted'.



The figure consists of six rectangular panels arranged in a 3x2 grid. Each panel contains an image and a handwritten caption below it.

- Top Left:** A drawing of a sun with a human-like face, colored purple, set against a background of green trees. *Sun with purple coloured face had torn last leave of the 'weeping mom'*
- Top Right:** A painting of a cherub with wings and rosy cheeks, resting its chin on its hand. *rose cheeked Adonis*
- Middle Left:** A photograph of a shirtless man holding a handgun, with a man in a suit looking on in shock. A large red heart is overlaid on the image. *hunting he loved but love he laughed to scorn.*
- Middle Right:** A composite image showing a woman's face on the left and a classical painting of Venus on the right. A yellow sticky note is placed over the woman's face with the text: MA 350, CARR, 1602 7720080. *Sick thurted Venus mshas amam unto nim*
- Bottom Left:** A painting of a woman's face with a bold, dramatic expression. *and like a bold faced sultar gins to woo nim*
- Bottom Right:** A painting of a Native American man wearing a feathered headdress, next to a large, vibrant red and yellow flower. *the Fretdis 'chief' flower.*

Figure 7.5 Example of the beginning of Sophie's PowerPoint signifying the first eight lines of the poem



Figure 7.6

Micro Grasp Tableau:

'She feedeth on the steam as if on a prey'



Figure 7.7

Hollie's Micro Grasp



Figure 7.8 Micro Grasp Tableau: *'All is imaginary she doth prove: he will not manage her although he mounts her'*.

At the end of the piece, this *Macro Tableau* below was produced by the participants while singing, using an analogy of dying flowers, as Venus has lost Adonis:



Figure 7.9 Macro Gestus Tableau:

'Good things always come to an end'



Figure 7.10 The painting at the end of the performance. *'Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky, So glides he in the night from Venus' eye'*. (The white smudge in the sky representing Adonis, the red colour signifying Venus's desire. Sophie's PowerPoint to the left, showing classical pictures of Venus embracing Adonis).

7.7.4 Assessment of the participants' process and performance.

Attempting to assess an aesthetic process and product that has no definable demarcation, which is subjectively perceived according to opinion and culture, can be problematic (Cowan 2006: 157, Taylor 2006: 11). There is much debate on the manner and currency of assessing creative practice in higher education (Kleiman 2005; Kleiman 2008). As an educationalist researcher into methods of assessing artistic practice in higher education, Paul Kleiman opines that assessment which is based on learning outcomes and criteria references can lead to replication of existing knowledge rather than development of innovation (2005:15).

Although wary of 'quantifying human experience' (Taylor 2006:11) and 'reproducing systems of oppression and domination' (Gallagher 2006:73) because of the assessment requirements of the unit I was obliged to mark the participants' work according to a set of criteria. The Voice Assessment

Learning Outcome contributed to the overall final mark for each participant in the 'Actor and Audience' unit. It was used as a benchmark to assess several factors within the participants' performance. The Learning Outcome is stated on the assessment sheet as:

'Demonstrated performance skills, physical, and vocal, intellectual and imaginative that enable you to communicate your performance more effectively in relation to the demands of the text and the needs of the audience'.

This Learning Outcome is broken down into seven elements which guide the formative feedback.

These assessed elements can be negatively impacted upon by aspects of dyslexia, undermining high attainment - as I have summarised in the Table below.

Table 7.1 Formative feedback criteria

Criteria for marking voice skills in <i>Venus & Adonis</i>	Assessment implications for those with dyslexia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Articulation, clarity of word.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The articulation of words can be blurred, possibly due to lack of automatisisation, weak procedural memory, confusion of syllable order or phoneme pronunciation (Griffiths & Frith 2002, Fawcett and Nicolson 2010, Snowling 1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Posture; use of physical release to support breath/speech in text</i> • <i>Breathing; developed use of breath to support intention related to thought and text</i> • <i>Resonance, range and projection, flexibility, vocal freedom</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posture, body and mind can become tense due to stress, unable to respond with freedom. • An uncertainty in thought and speech can lead to inhibited breath use, vocal restriction, weak articulation, affecting vocal quality and full embodiment of word.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Emotional connection to text and character</i> • <i>Technical application; integrating technical practice with character, performance and classical text</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inability to multi task, read, memorise, comprehend, analyse, whilst generating active performance can be problematic, both in rehearsal or performance (Soan 2004: 195). Freedom of expression is curtailed. • In the rehearsal process, cognitive overload, attention focus and 'zoning out' can appear as though

	<p>the participant is not working. Being called 'lazy' at school is a common experience for those with dyslexia (Thomson 2005:216). Tod and Soan point out that those with dyslexia can be slow workers who often fall behind (2004:200).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with reading the text, making constant mistakes, can block the development of the work, and test the patience of peers or teachers (Whitfield 2009).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commitment, focus, energy</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to 'overwork' and 'overcompensate' can be a characteristic of those with dyslexia (Reid 2003: 79). This tendency can lead to anxiety and lack of confidence affecting the assurance of the work (Tod & Soan 2004: 193, Burden 2005).

7.8. Consideration Of Performance And Drawings

Below I report on:

- each participants' performance
- the function of some of their drawings, as representational and transformational tools

Sophie

Sophie achieved an *excellent* level for all of the assessment criteria. Appearing in command of the words in meaning and pronunciation she appeared to live the content through her whole psyche and body as she spoke and moved. Combined with her committed performance, Sophie was dual tasking in an extraordinary manner. Throughout the performance, as she acted the text, she held and controlled the device that changed the slides on the PowerPoint. At each changing word, Sophie imperceptibly manually changed the PowerPoint pictures, exactly on cue, although her attention and body was focussed on the performance. In written interview (21.3.2013), Sophie admitted that it was difficult as '...I am very uncoordinated and clumsy and there were more than fifty slides to remember'. She added, 'I realised that by doing these slides I

subconsciously learnt everyone else's lines as well as my own which really helped my knowledge and interpretation'.

What was remarkable in this performance was how deeply Sophie had assimilated all her pictures, knowing exactly what piece of text they represented, so she was able to multi-task. Although she was immersed in the acting of the piece, her mental schema of images was running through its sequence as she clicked for each picture change, with a synchronisation of modes. In addition, Sophie's PowerPoint content was aesthetically interesting in interpretation, colour and picture choice, whilst her found meanings were intelligently and meticulously represented.

The decision to play the PowerPoint alongside the acting of the piece meant that the audience's attention sometimes became divided. However, I was not taking a critical director's perspective, and was pleased that her work was visible and contributing dynamically.

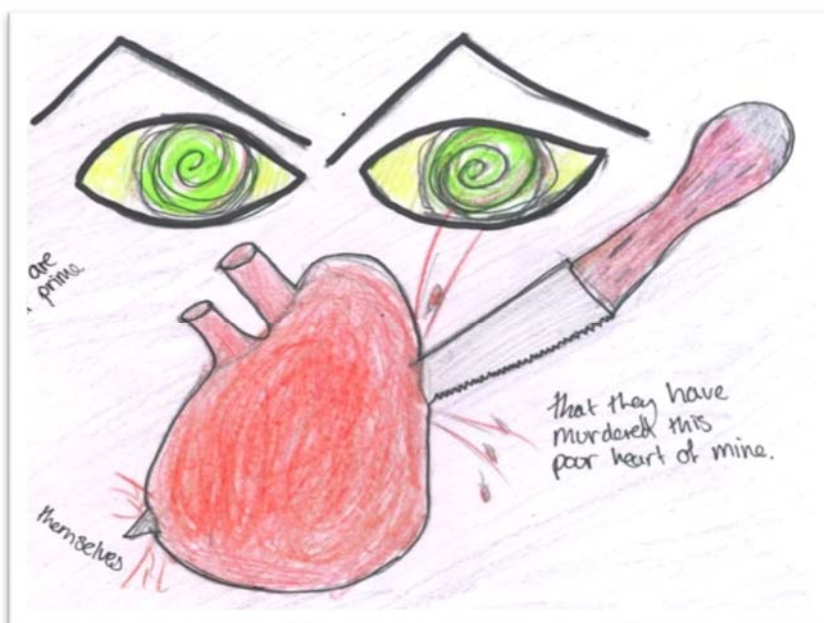


Figure 7.11
Sophie's Micro Grasp: 'they that have murdered this poor heart of mine'.

Comment: This is an *action* picture. In the eyes and the heart, the pencil strokes are swirling, full of movement. The lurid colours and strong black eyebrows add impact; the placement of the heart, as subject, is central, with the active verb *murdered* highlighted by the knife moving diagonally across the page, piercing the heart, the blood bursting from the wound. The graphics powerfully underpin the words.



Figure 7.12 Sophie's Micro Grasp: 'Wishing her cheeks were grown full of flowers so they were dewed'

Comment: This has an attractive design quality, in colour and form. The heart shape of the eyes and mouth signify Venus's love for Adonis. The cheeks are packed with flowers; the picture doing exactly what the words say.

James

Although achieving a range of levels from *threshold* to *good*, James struggled with attaining some aspects of the assessment criteria. This might be due to manifestations of his dyslexia and overlapping specific learning differences interfering with his abilities (as listed in Table 7.1) rather than lack of application. Speaking with a clear voice and engaging with sensitivity, he made several mistakes in the performance. Occasionally he hit a wrong note on the ukulele, tripped over words, or muddled word orders. Although subtly displayed, it was perceptible how he paused briefly, with a suggestion of uncertainty, before speaking. He acted as if each chunk of action was placed in a separate department in his memory, and he could be observed thinking each bit through in advance, outside of his performance. Although James wrote some music for the piece, it did not demonstrate his considerable musical abilities.

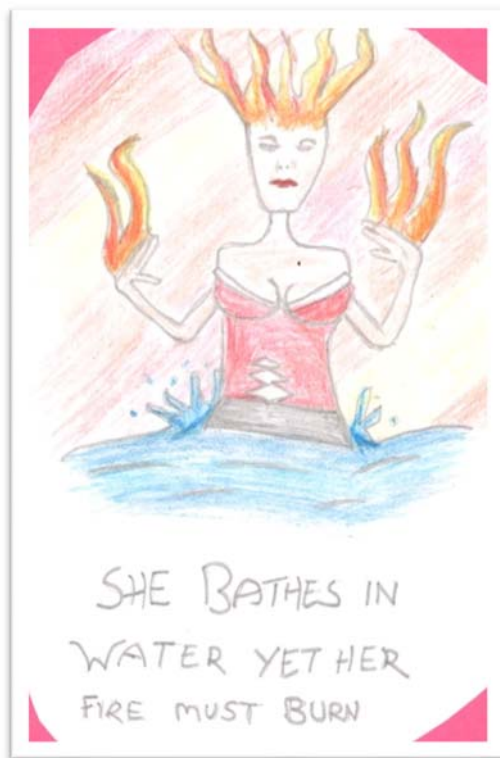


Figure 7.13. James' Micro Grasp:

'She bathes in water yet her fire must burn'

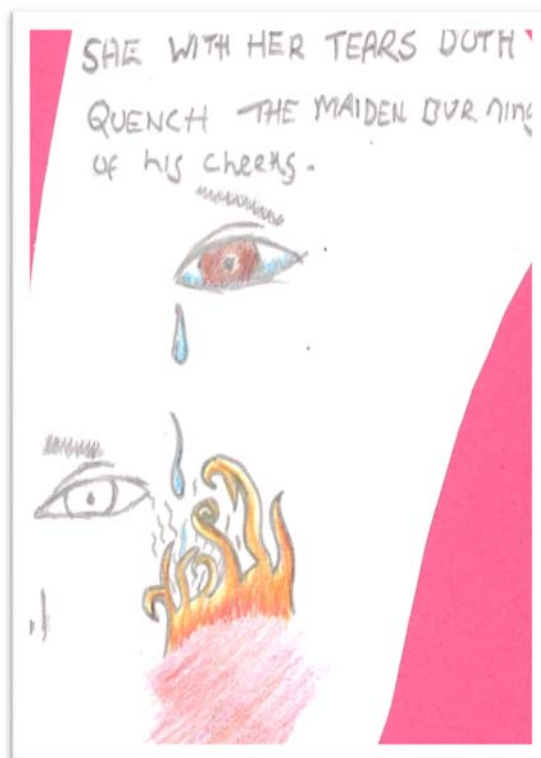


Figure 7.14 James' Micro Grasp:

'She with her tears doth quench the maiden burning of his cheeks'

Comment: James' pictures have a naive quality, yet their design and colour have dramatic power. Venus, with voluptuous figure and flames of passion burning from her head and hands, cuts a spectacular figure; below the water shapes echo the flames. These drawings are more developed than his *Macbeth* cartoons and represent the word content directly, rather than functioning as containers for story narrative.

Hollie

Hollie attained most of the criteria from a *competent* to *very good* level. Her performance in the piece was committed and her speech definition improved since I began working on Shakespeare with her. However, in her communication of the text there were still some words which were under-articulated.

Hollie had customised her *Venus and Adonis* text in enormous detail. The flourishing of her drawing talent, previously unexploited, is evident in her *Macro* and *Micro* sketches.



Figure 7.15 Hollie's Micro Grasp '*Field's chief flower*'

Comment: Here the metaphor is a literal translation into picture form, creating a paired 'key word' mnemonic, as a memorable semantic elaboration (Sadoski & Paivio 2009: 167) functioning as a *Transformational* Image mnemonic, (Peters et al 1985:129), and as a *Memoria Verborum* – memory for words, (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* in Caplan 1954).



Figure 7.16 Hollie's Macro Gestus: *'You can't always get what you want'*

Comment: Hollie's drawings portray Venus longing for Adonis. The drawings work as a *Psychological Gesture*. The *Psychological Gesture* acts as the 'imaginary body', 'calling up feelings, emotions and will impulses' (Chekhov 1985:133).

Elizabeth

Elizabeth's performance attained a *very good* level in the assessment criteria. This was in contrast to her disintegration when working on the Stanislavski Units and Actions exercise. In the *Venus and Adonis* performance she was energetic and centred, speaking with definition of word and demonstrating a precise intention of actions.

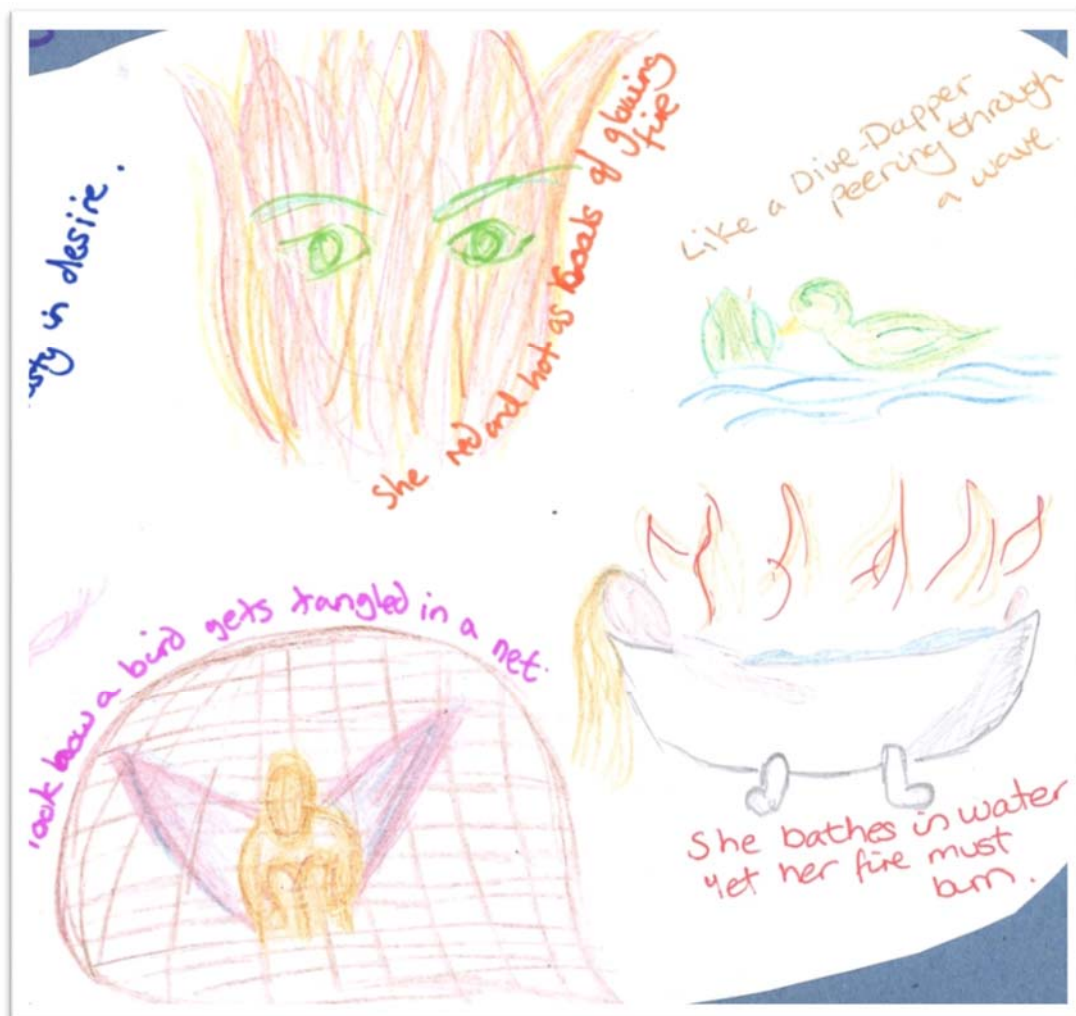


Figure 7.17 Some of Elizabeth's Grasp Micros

Comment: These drawings are impressionistic in nature, neatly capturing the word content. The top right hand picture depicts two ducks; one duck tipped into the water, illustrates exactly what Shakespeare's elusive term '*dive dapper*' refers to, while the image for '*bird tangled in the net*' catches Shakespeare's metaphor of Adonis captured by Venus, shown here as a human figure with wings, encompassed by a net.

7.9 Feedback On The Efficacy Of The Strategy

Following the performance, I collected feedback from the participants about the possible efficacy of the *Macro* and *Macro* exercises in assisting them with their dyslexia challenges. This was recorded in an interview with James (19th March 2013) and written answers to questions from Hollie, (21st March 2013) Sophie (21st March 2013) and Elizabeth (4th April 2013). I also received feedback from my critical friend (April 2013).

Their feedback affirms that they believe that this exercise functions as a powerful tool to overcome, or by-pass some of their prevailing difficulties, whilst supporting their development in several areas.

The emerging common themes in their answers have divided into eight categories, with a circulatory correlation between them, as shown in Figure 7.18 on the following page.

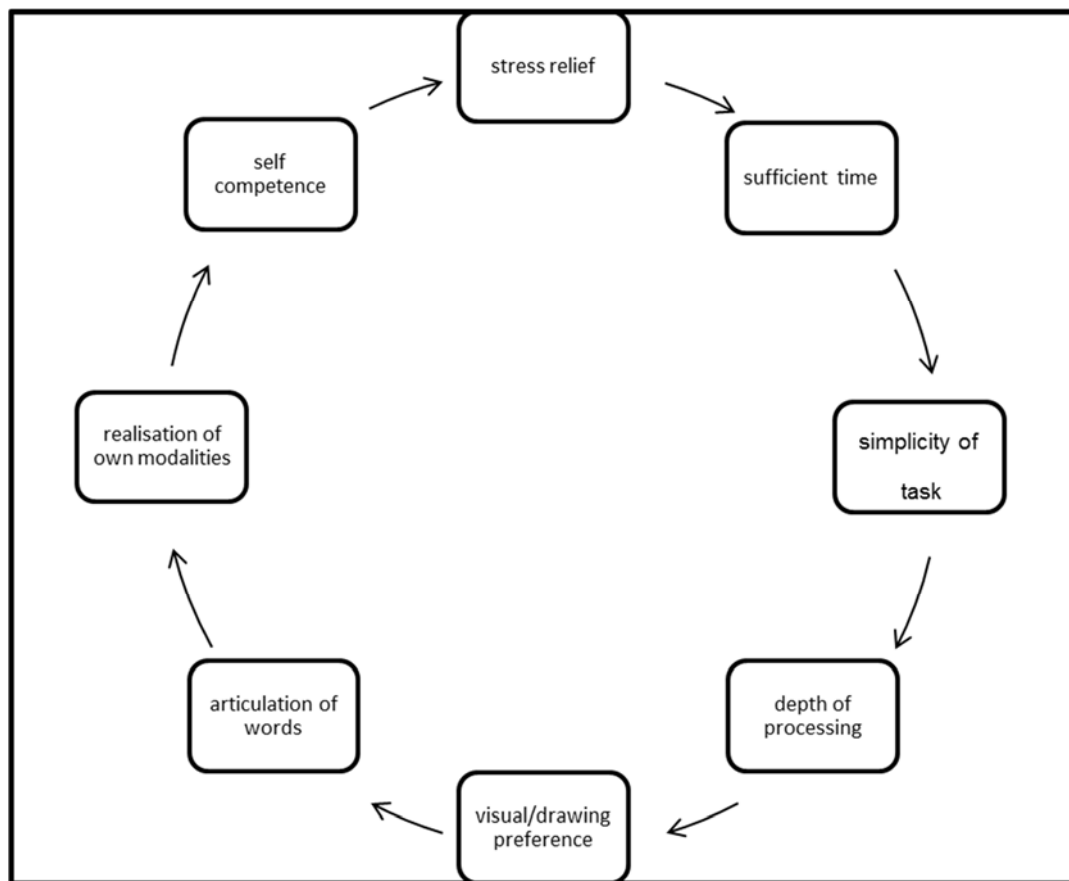


Figure 7.18 The themes emerging from the feedback

I have divided my participants' comments under eight category headings. Due to their interconnecting relationship, where separation would have reduced their full meaning, I have merged some categories together.

1). *Theme: Simplicity of task*

Sophie: 'I think this may have simplified the task a lot more as there are only two things to focus on... just to use the *Macro* to get to the point and finding the important smaller details through the *Micro*' (21.3. 2013).

Hollie: 'I found this method easier to organise myself with the text and understand what the overall meaning is, what the characters are saying and how the language is expressing this, as I can place it all on the page, rather than doing lots of different things at the same time' (21.3. 2013).

James: 'each drawing for the words or phrases that you do is like a little *Micro*, split up and then it all falls into place and then big *Macros* as well is working so much better for me' (19.3. 2013).

Elizabeth: 'I found this one of the most helpful exercises for me. It felt a lot simpler to understand and get my head round. I would have been able to act it out better with the *Macro* and *Micro* techniques' [her performance as Isabella] (4.4. 2013).

2). *Theme. Depth of processing, drawing and visual preference, articulation*

Sophie: ' I certainly found the *Macro* part helpful as it helped to reaffirm the overall meaning of the whole piece that can be hard to sum up, especially in Shakespeare, as there are so many double meanings. The *Micros* also helped. I realised that most of my PowerPoint slides are *Micros* - picking out iconic details from the text...helping me to grasp what is going on and finding overall and individual meaning' (ibid. 2013).

James: 'I was picking up on everything because you picture what the picture is, and then you sort of know the sentence that you have written with it, so it's about, kind of, 'okay this happens, which is that line', and you know the feeling behind it because it's in the picture and you have represented everything' (ibid. 2013).

James: 'If I do learn it with a comic book strip [his drawing] then I'm fine ...I've got the text down and I know the feeling behind it' (ibid.).

James: 'it wasn't until story-telling that I realised how really helpful the actual drawing was because I was able to pick up the long complicated words and the short little niggly words that I always miss' (ibid.).

James: 'I feel that the physical did help for me still exploring the text and being able to find the meaning behind it but I think it introduces habits, like certain movements and I don't feel it is right for me because I tend to just keep going back to the physicalisation ...I prefer the drawing and it works perfectly for me' (ibid.).

Hollie: 'I found the drawing much more useful than the tableaux...I found my own technique of drawing over the text and the drawing of *Micros* help me memorise and expression [her word choice] of the text, as these were the images I mostly recalled when performing the text' (21.3.2013).

Hollie: 'the words no longer remain two dimensional when speaking the text or visually on the page, but instead they evolved to become interactive, exciting and rich' (ibid.).

Hollie: 'It has also helped my articulation as you can envision the word, its textures, its colours, its shape; it helps create the word shapes in your mouth distinctly' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'I found this one of the most helpful exercises. It defiantly [her spelling] helped me to understand the text but also made me look deeper into the meanings and feelings of all the detail and individual lines. When learning the text I could also visualise the pictures I had drawn. This was the first time drawing really helped me and I enjoyed it' (4.4.2013).

Elizabeth: 'It forces you to look deeper and explore even the tiny bits of the text that may get lost otherwise' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'It took me by surprise as I found it helped a lot. I never liked drawing as I never thought I was any good, however doing it then, I forgot about that and just thought of the meaning' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'When learning my lines I could picture the drawings and automatically feel something and connect with it' (ibid.).

3).Theme. Realisation of own modalities and strategies

Sophie: 'I realised that most of my PowerPoint slides are *Micros* - picking out iconic details from the text...helping me to grasp what is going on and finding overall and individual meaning' (21.3.2013).

James: 'if you give ... a piece of music to a scene or a speech, and then you add the text into the lyrics of the music and then get the feeling from that, then

take away the music, take away the singing, I feel that becomes a lot more fluid and free' (ibid.).

James: ' I can hear a piece of music and in my mind there will be a certain picture – an image - music is one way I can really express myself ...to give it a sense of me' (ibid.).

Hollie: 'the encouragement of drawing has really helped me when understanding or reading texts, also helped me learn the qualities of myself that I am a visual learner' (ibid.).

Hollie: 'I think this is one of the exercises I will take with me throughout my acting career when exploring future texts. It really helped me get into the text and I loved discovering the sounds, textures, imagery and colours within the language' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'I have learnt a lot about myself in regards to my dyslexia. Looking deeper into it and having to really think about things. I have noticed that when learning lines or trying to understand a story I do most of it in my head. I have a very vivid imagination and I picture everything in my head better... I never really noticed this before' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'I feel I have gained so many more skills ([through] all the exercises that I know I will defiantly [her spelling] help me in the future and I will use forever' (ibid.).

4) Theme: Self-competence

Sophie: 'I have learnt so much about myself. I found that half the challenge is about self-confidence...I have learnt that it is better to take your time with the text rather than panicking and rushing over it and to make sure that I am understanding what I am saying...now I can pick up a text and understand most of the language and...if I think about it, can work out most of the double meanings. I never thought that dyslexia and Shakespeare could go together but now I could see myself performing Shakespeare with confidence which for me is an achievement' (ibid.).

James: 'I wrote all the ukulele music...it was going with what I wanted...I feel it worked really well' (ibid.).

Hollie does not refer to her confidence explicitly, but her report of how the work has assisted her in the other categories indicates a self-knowing and feelings of self - competency.

Elizabeth: 'I feel I have gained so many more skills ([through] all the exercises) that I know I will defiantly [her spelling] help me in the future and I will use forever' (ibid.).

5) Theme: Stress relief and sufficient time

Sophie: 'I think this would be helpful. I often panic when I know that I will be next to read a big chunk of text but if my mind was taken by this - by looking at the actions and meaning first it may be very helpful' (ibid.).

Sophie: 'I have learnt that it is better to take your time with the text rather than panicking and rushing over it' (ibid.).

James: 'I find it an extremely helpful process especially because of my dyslexia. I tend to find it easier to put stuff into pictures or actions or music in my case – it is so much easier to remember it like that' (ibid.).

Hollie: 'With this method I find it easier to organise myself with the text...rather than doing a lot of different things at the same time' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'It will really help people that struggle with reading as I feel it will take the pressure off in terms of reading and they can understand the text quicker using another method' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'I have learnt to stay calm, breathe and go a lot slower; this I think has improved my reading' (ibid.).

Elizabeth: 'I felt I could take my time with it as well' (ibid.).

7.9.1 Feedback from the critical friend

Having watched two performances of *Venus and Adonis*, Robertson verified that he had noted a heightened assurance in some of their performances (April

2013). Pointing out that he could comment only on the final outcome (the performance) as he had not observed the process (the rehearsals) Robertson likened their delivery of the performance as being in Csikszentmihalyi's state of *Flow* (1996) which Roland describes as an 'artist in peak performance' (1997).

According to Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow* is the condition for 'optimal experience', which is made possible by certain elements (1996: 110). Some of Csikszentmihalyi's elements are listed below, together with Robertson's linked critique:

1. *A clarity of goals: in flow we always know what needs to be done.*

Robertson: 'it was apparent that the participants were focused on their task-relevant objective, which was to communicate the story in their own creative manner, that they had specific goals to achieve in expressing their *Macro* and *Micros*, and they were given the freedom to express themselves however they wished'.

2. *A balance between challenges and skills: in flow we feel our abilities are well matched to the opportunities for action.*

Robertson: 'because of their prior intensive analysis of the text they appeared certain that they could communicate it adequately, and that they were armed with sufficient artistic and technical skills to do so'.

3. *There is no worry about failure: while in flow we are too involved to be concerned with failure.*

4. *Self - consciousness disappears: in flow we are too involved in what we are doing to care about protecting the ego.*

Robertson: 'the students were totally involved, and acted without self-consciousness or fear of failure. There was an enormous change in Elizabeth's work; she was working with ease and confidence, unlike her block with Stanislavski's actions'.

5. *The activity becomes autotelic: we begin to enjoy whatever it is that produces such an experience.*

Robertson: 'the participants were obviously relishing their performance, and confident in their accomplishments'.

It was only in James that Robertson noted a 'lack of focus', although re-iterating that he too achieved 'moments of being in flow with the other members of the group' (April 2013).

My comment: Although James retained a hesitancy in performance, both with speaking of the text and the procedure, I believe that his work was much more assured and developed than it would have been if we had not done this work. Nonetheless, it seems that some individuals, such as James, need even more teacher support, sensitivity and awareness about possible dyslexia hindrances to enable him to achieve his full potential.

7.10 Conclusion

By uniting acting methods with Kintsch's and Rawson's reading levels of comprehension (2003: 209) I have sought to create compensatory strategies, with which to undergird my participants' talents and learning styles, whilst circumventing deficiencies in reading, processing, comprehension, memorising, and the attendant vulnerabilities found in those with dyslexia. Kintsch and Rawson's *Text base* offers a framework in which metacognition is stimulated through deconstructing the text, analysing the pieces, and then re-assembling it into substantiated meaningfulness. The framework assists in establishing hierarchical levels of meaning and associations between the assorted pieces of information derived from the text.

7.10.1 The function of the Macro and Micro Elaboration Strategy viewed through the Indexical Hypothesis

Finally, the psychologist Arthur Glenberg's research centres on the theory of embodied cognition and how words can become meaningful to the reader. Glenberg's *Indexical Hypothesis* theory has an affinity with what my participants have been demonstrating, adding further insight into the workings

of the *Macro* and *Micro* Tableaux. Glenberg purports that those who find difficulty in making meaning derived directly from the symbols of written words can be assisted in comprehension by actually *doing in action* what is suggested in the words. In consonance with the actor's process, Glenberg states that understanding of the text is grounded in action. He explains this through the *simulation theory of language*, wherein it is proposed that when reading, the language is understood by the brain thinking into the equivalent perceptual, emotional and active states that the language describes, and is *simulated* in the brain as though in the real-life experience (Glenberg 2011:6). I liken this *simulation theory* to exactly how the actor responds when working from the text. When acting the text, this process, once simulated in the brain, is then externalised through the body in vocal and physical expression.

To further distinguish the components of language comprehension when reading, Glenberg's *Indexical Hypothesis* is configured into three stages. Firstly, when encountering the written words in a phrase, they must be mapped (*indexed*) to a referent in the environment, or imagination (possibly already encoded in memory, entailing aspects of emotion and action) thereby creating a mental model; at the second stage Glenberg uses the term *affordances*, which is when a consideration and realisation is formed about the manner in which the referent acts physically within the specific situation presented, to achieve the goal of the phrase or sentence. At the third stage (titled *meshing*) the action takes place, and the pieces of the mental model all integrate together. These three stages create a *simulation* of the event contained within the words, as experienced within the reader's mind (Kaschak & Glenberg 2000:510). So, through the process of the *Macro Gestus and Micro Grasp Strategy*, the written word is mapped, simulated in the mind and externalized through the body, supporting both working and long term memory.

I have trialled this procedure in class work and performance with my participants and have collected and analysed the resulting data. This data supports the view that this strategy is efficacious in assisting those individuals with dyslexia. It has become evident that this work is valuable because:

- It removes a confrontation with the text, approaching it in a shared, participatory manner.
- It allows for multi-perspectives and learning styles.
- It removes the demand for immediate response and 'correct' answer.
- It removes the fear of ridicule and humiliation.
- It eliminates overloading of memory and processing.
- It builds and enriches comprehension.
- It offers modalities in which to map meaning directly to word or idea.
- It supplies a singularity of purpose and clarity of goals.
- It enables creative thought and exploration.
- It stimulates the auditory feedback and kinaesthetic action in word formation.
- It promotes self-efficacy.
- It offers a vehicle for achievement of mixed abilities.
- It provides a framework through which to analyse the text.

In the next chapter, the findings of this study will be presented, with an attempt to demonstrate the strengths of the research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

8. Introduction

In this chapter I consolidate the findings of my research as I assemble together the various components that have underpinned my questions and I now define the emerging answers. This investigation has not sought to test the veracity of the diverse theories explaining dyslexia, nor to determine exactly which type of dyslexia my participants might present. Throughout this study, I have observed that dyslexia is indeed a slippery concept, involving an assortment of shifting characteristics, proving difficult to demarcate. In my attempt to assuage the various disabilities and to augment the attendant abilities, it has become evident that there is no convenient 'one size fits all' in intervention solutions that would achieve a predictable outcome for all of those with dyslexia difficulties.

In discussing its complexity, the reading scholar Maryanne Wolfe has labelled dyslexia as 'a mystery of the century' (2008:192). She accentuates that there is no one form of dyslexia, but a continuum of reading disabilities which reflect the many components involved in reading. Wolfe's attention is principally focused on reading ability. However, during this study of these twelve participants, I have perceived that there is a connecting relationship of characteristics running between them which extend beyond reading skills. I propose that some of these particularities can be facilitated by the teacher, if the specific needs are recognised, understood, and then further addressed through practice, driven by theory and accumulated knowledge.

What I have recognised accords with what psychologists James Smith-Spark & John E. Fisk assert, when they say: '[w]hat is without doubt is that dyslexia is a condition that impinges strongly upon cognitive functioning, affecting performance across a wide range of domains' (Smith-Spark & Fisk 2007: 34). It is re-iterated throughout much of the literature that those with dyslexia have problems with processing speed, working memory and automatising of skills (Fawcett & Nicolson 2008, Reid: 2009:38, McLoughlin & Leather 2013). These

contiguous problem areas have become especially prominent throughout this study. It is on these areas that much of my research has come to focus, and where I have arrived at some understanding of the causes, effects and facilitation of the participants' difficulties and efforts.

To assist in making sense of my own interpretations, I have drawn from the findings of others when they appeared to bear a relationship with my own. Working from the context-specific experience of my participants, I have lifted these theories from the situation in which they were originally presented, stripped them down to their basic components, examined them for their accounts, and through associative links, made connections with my own work.

The narrative diachronicity presented in this study, or as John Bruner describes it, 'the story that changes over time' (Bruner in Thomas 2011: 185) allows the reader an insight into the unfolding of the work with the progression of the participants. As with many case studies and participatory action research, the distinctiveness of the individuals in this study and the context specificity of my data was important (Gillham 2000:11, Thomas 2011:19). Rather than gathering data from a disparate range of settings (thereby taking a less particularised view of the individual within the specialised circumstances) the narrow focus of this study has ensured an in - depth and intricate examination of the participants, their problems and the directions and effects of my teaching. Action research philosophers Tony Cotton & Morwenna Griffiths have argued that the articulation of 'little stories' can foster an understanding of individual worlds and personal truths, stimulating questions about how those worlds might be changed, including in educational settings (Cotton & Griffiths 2007: 548). They emphasise how the telling of these 'little stories' can challenge existing structures, assumptions and working practices. By asserting my own critical voice and in conveying the participants' views and journeys throughout the narrative descriptions, I believe I have fulfilled the four conditions that the teaching and learning educationalist Renuka Vithal has declared essential within the use of 'vignettes of crucial descriptions' (Vithal in *ibid.* 459). As set out by Vithal, the four conditions which should be present are that of: *transparency*, which enables the reader to see through the language of description into the context to stimulate critique; *transformacy*, which has

the capacity to provoke transformation in the reader by stimulating thought and action; *generativity*, where the descriptions engender theory which can influence practice, and finally *exemplarity*, where the description connects the complexity of the content with the complexity of theory.

Simons maintains that those who conduct case study research have an obligation to demonstrate how their findings might have usability and transferability to other situations (2009:164). Winter opines that action research findings can be helpful for ‘... interested colleagues in other institutions, or in other areas of the same institution, for whom the underlying structure of the work presented may be similar to situations in which they work’ (Winter in Zuber-Skerrit 1996:26). By imparting the account of my study and the participants’ progress, testing the theories, offering ideas about why things might work or not in the case of those with dyslexia, I have set about transforming and advancing the established teaching methods of the status quo within the existing situation. The scant accounts of shared practice or research concerning dyslexia in actor training, other than my report of my own work (Whitfield 2009) and those of Leveroy (2012, 2013) supports the premise that a dissemination of my research will contribute valuable knowledge and potential applicability within a wide range of actor training, especially where the written text is a central focus from which to work..

While a case study methodology allowed me to gain a familiarity with the living experience of the participants, action research offered the opportunity to contribute my own response, enhancing my learning through taking considered action, shaped by a reflection-on-practice and reflexivity-in-practice, arriving at an Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*; that is, an ethical wisdom about what should be done in practical situations (Neelands in Ackroyd 2006:19-25). The implementation and findings of the four action research cycles (continually underpinned by the study of each participant) has been discussed separately at each stage in the previous chapters. Below is an overview of the spiral of cycles, each one evolving from the other.

- Cycle One: trial of an auditory introduction of Shakespeare’s text in progressive stages. The words and phrases were captured through a

visual medium, whilst the text was spoken aloud, utilising the phonological and visuospatial sketch pad.

- Cycle Two: trial of entering and comprehending Shakespeare's text using Stanislavski's Units and Action sequence. The content of the stages was adjusted and further trialled, and the act of drawing was intersected into the sequence.
- Cycle Three: trial of the use of gesture choice and identification, with recognition of their referent and denotation in the text.
- Cycle Four: trial of the *Gestus and Grasp Elaboration Strategy*, and a participant- led performance.

I will now restate my original questions which were posed at the beginning of this study, and offer my overall findings. I will proceed by focusing on each question, coupled with its associated finding.

8.1. The Questions Of The Research Project

My key research question

1. Does the use of visual constructs facilitate acting students with dyslexia in the reading and acting of Shakespeare?

My sub-questions

2. Can the imprecise articulation of some acting students with dyslexia be assisted by the drawing or physicalisation of concept symbols to represent the sounds in speech?
3. Does the viewing of images made by others, have as much impact on the acting student with dyslexia, as images made by themselves?
4. How might I change my pedagogical practice in the teaching of Shakespeare to support the visual learning strengths of some acting students with dyslexia?

8.2 My Overall Findings

1. Weak working memory and processing difficulties can severely affect the processes and outcomes of the participants' work, having as much detrimental impact on class work and performance, as the reading difficulties connected to dyslexia. Teaching strategies, therefore, when working on Shakespeare's text, must consciously support the faculty of memory, and reduce processing demands.
2. When reading Shakespeare's text, internal mental models of information arising from the text are created through the medium of mental images. For those with dyslexia difficulties, the transmutation of these internal mental images into external models (interpreted through the body or onto a surface) can provide stable, concrete representations of individual schema structures, or simulations, which are constructed and mapped from the text. These external representations support both memory weaknesses and difficulties with reading, overcoming the need to engage with the text through a re-reading of the words. This apparently automatic default used by some individuals with dyslexia, can be further developed into methodologies of practice in voice and acting exercises.
3. The exploitation of *Interpretive Mnemonics* can aid the individual's comprehension, utterances, memory and performance of Shakespeare. This representational and transformational mnemonic approach to the text can also serve as a revelatory acting method, not only as an aid to thinking, but also in unlocking creative forms of exposition.
4. When working on the text, the content should be organised into small units of focus in order to reduce cognitive overload, and then processed through structured frameworks which guide the recognition of the hierarchical significance of the word and meaning.

5. There is a need for the acting and voice teacher to possess not only a deep knowledge of their specialised subject, including a broad knowledge of pedagogical theory in practice, but crucially, an informed knowledge about the concept of dyslexia, and its multifarious manifestations. Pedagogical provision and support can be significantly improved if the teacher has studied the theories about dyslexia, drawing from a personally experienced knowledge through action, rather than from received generalised information only.

6. Humanistic approaches of pedagogy, which emphasise a nurturing of the individual and their differences, an empathetic understanding for their experience, and a fostering of their distinctive strengths are necessary, in order to adequately enable, develop and promote the potential of those with dyslexia, and accompanying features.

8.3 Answering The Key Question: does the use of visual constructs facilitate acting students with dyslexia in the reading and acting of Shakespeare?

8.3.1 Memory weakness

Reference to Appendices: A collection of participant references concerning their memory weaknesses, taken from their interviews, are placed in Volume Two, Appendix Four, pages 368-369).

The explanation below relates to Finding One: Facility of memory has to be supported.

I have found that memory aids were instrumental in assisting the participants in processing and performing Shakespeare's text. Throughout this study, in each chapter, I have continually referred back to memory weakness, and problems with processing. Although having noted the recurrence of the subject of memory weakness, (both working and long term) arising in the literature on dyslexia (Mortimore 2008, Thomson 2009, Morgan & Klein 2000, Reid 2009, Gathercole & Packiam Alloway 2008, Grant 2010, Nicolson & Fawcett 2010,

McLoughlin et al 1994) and the participants' own references to their weak memory, it was not until my third action cycle work with the participants on naming gesture described in Chapter Six, that I came to fully understand the huge impact of poor memory, and the complications around the processing of information, for the participants in their acting, when connecting to the text.

To further my understanding of memory deficit in my participants, I returned to my initial interviews, searching for references which involved the subject of memory. By concentrating on this area in my data coding, the exposure of memory problems as a major feature was revealed. The majority of the participants referred explicitly to their problems with memory, or highlighted their problem with blanking out, or experiencing a jumbled cognition.

Smith - Spark *et al* (2004) set out to gauge how adult university students with dyslexia were affected, using a self-reporting measure (*The Cognitive Failures Questionnaire*). In accordance with my own findings, the dyslexics rated themselves as experiencing problems associated with memory, attention, organisation, and word finding difficulties (Smith-Spark & Fisk 2007:51).

Smith- Spark *et al* also carried out several trials that investigated memory weaknesses that might accompany dyslexia in adult university students (2007, 2004, 2003). One trial showed that those with dyslexia not only have difficulties with verbal working memory tasks, but when the task becomes highly demanding, visuospatial memory is also affected. They found that dyslexia goes beyond phonological difficulties with reading words, and emphasised problems with storing information in working memory, and processing that information (Smith-Spark & Fisk 2007:34).

Having established through my own observational work and that of the literature, that memory weakness can be a major factor in the working progress of the participants, I will now explain my theories about how this debilitating factor may be addressed.

8.3.2. Employment of mnemonic aids

The explanation below relates to Finding Two and Three: The transference of inner mental models to external models.

My data collected during this study has demonstrated that the participants relied very heavily on creating a parallel configuration of the words and content of the text, using a visually processed bias. This parallel text often replaces the original text as the primary base of reference, and is formed through the use of physical gesture, or by creating a visual representation onto a surface. Throughout this study, I have found that the function of this dual text works as a:

- a) Mnemonic tool. The function of memory facilitation is primary.
- b) Hermeneutic tool. This has a cognitive purpose, to enable a thinking-through, analysing, comprehending, simulation of and construction of meanings.
- c) Artistic tool. It can function as ‘...a lever to lift you onto a plane of imaginary life’ (Stanislavski1980: 128). It can enhance aesthetic ideas for performance, language prosody, and can serve as a space for expression of feelings and perspectives.
- d) Organisational tool. It offers a space in which to sort information into orders, and linear sequences.
- e) Acting tool. Here, the psychological, emotional states and physical actions extrapolated from the text can be subjectively developed through embodied sensory modes.
- f) Communicative tool. The realisation, formulation of concepts, and articulation of the structure of the words can be broken down, re-constructed, and rehearsed. This re-construction of interpretation and re-iteration of articulation is further communicated through the differing mediums of performance.

I acknowledge that some other individuals assessed as dyslexic, who were not involved in this study, might find alternative methods helpful. However, my work throughout the study with my participants, and my development of theories drawing from a range of subject areas, suggests that I can answer my primary research question in the affirmative. I believe, in the case of these particular participants, the pedagogical strategies involving methods which

entailed the building of visual constructs vigorously enabled them in the reading and acting of Shakespeare.

8.4 Answering Sub - Question One: can the imprecise articulation of some acting students with dyslexia, be assisted by the drawing or physicalisation of concept symbols?

The explanation below relates to Finding Two and Three: the use of exterior models and mnemonics to assist speech difficulties related to the language.

I have already explored much of these areas in the prior chapters, so I will be brief in my summarised perspectives.

Amongst many theories presented in the study, the theories which support this supposition are: the *Lexical Retrieval theory* (Krauss *et al* in McNeill 2000) wherein the kinaesthetic motor system, phonological encoder, articulator and auditory monitor are all connected in a simultaneous action in producing the word (featured in Chapter Seven) and Craik and Lockhart's idea of deep elaboration, to assist in automatisisation of skills and memory, offered as explanation by Nicolson in Chapter Six, pages 233 – 234).

8.5 Answering Sub - Question Two: does the viewing of images made by others, have as much impact on the acting student with dyslexia, as images made by themselves?

The explanantion below relates to Finding Two and Three: (as stated above).

Sophie and Ashley have demonstrated that they re-construct others' images into their own subjective versions of denotations and connotations. The ideas underlying their choices of these images carry as much influence as those that are personally drawn, with an indexing of referents to the words, simulated through the action of the picture, as in the *Indexical Hypothesis* (Kaschack & Glenberg 2000) featured in Chapter Seven. A powerful example of this is given in this illustration below, through the use of embodied images.



Figure 8.1 A clip from Sophie's PowerPoint Image Storyboard: *'I am frantic mad with evermore unrest'* (Sonnet 147).

8.6 Answering Sub - Question Three: how might I change my pedagogical practice in the teaching of Shakespeare, to support the visual learning strengths of some acting students with dyslexia?

The explanation below relates to Finding Four, Five and Six: breaking the text down into units of cognitive focus, the necessity for substantial teacher content knowledge, and the nurturing of the individual's possibilities.

8.6.1 Towards an emancipatory praxis

Reference to Appendices: see participant contextual interviews in Appendix Three, pages 353 – 366.

Before I began this study, I was not fully aware of the level of vulnerability surrounding those individuals with dyslexic difficulties. The pain experienced throughout their education is referred to several times in the initial interviews with the participants.

Initially, my methods of teaching Shakespeare replicated the procedures of those who had taught me, and whose books I had read. As Carr & Kemmis

point out, ‘...much teacher action is the product of custom, habit ...which constrain action in ways that the teachers themselves do not recognise...’ (1986:189). The teacher operates from their subjective background of habitus, (Bourdieu 1977) involving upbringing, class, culture and life - experiences. Guided by habitual instincts, the teachers’ field of education is ‘both structured by habitus and also structuring or shaping, habitus’ (Neelands in Ackroyd 2006:28). I presumed that the more assiduously I duplicated the methods of those with an expertise in Shakespeare, the better teacher I would be. Using a teacher- centred system, each student was expected to fit into a system that served the able majority. In a behaviourist environment of utilising a stimulus to provoke the expected response, the student would be awarded a judgment of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ for the outcome. Although understanding that acting is always constructivist (an imaginative creation of worlds, expressive genre and views) my attitude to teaching veered towards what Paulo Freire has labelled as the ‘banking’ concept. The learners are viewed as empty receptacles waiting to be filled with the knowledge that can be ‘deposited’ into them (Freire in Crotty 1998: 153). I had little conception about how I might adjust my practice and assumptions, based on an accommodation of, and knowledge about learning differences, pedagogical theory, or that other ways of working might also have cogency. I had little understanding about dyslexia.

My action research activities have forced me to reflect on my actions and their effect, and to probe rigorously into the subject material so that I have come to know it deeply. Adopting a dialogical relationship with my participants, I have developed a *conscientisation*; an increase in critical consciousness and perception, which filters into my teaching awareness and behaviour (Freire in Crotty 1998:148). Through the process of writing about all that was involved in this study, I have begun to make my pedagogical practice and theories explicit, thereby developing a scholarship in teaching, as recommended by Shulman (2004), Rogers, (1983) and Prior (2012).

My teaching approach has fundamentally transformed in several ways beyond the singular aim of ‘supporting the visual learning strengths’, as posed in my original question. I now have a deeper understanding about how the visual dominance and reliance can act as both an indicator and facilitator of several

conditions associated with dyslexia, and how, why and where this visually-led approach can be utilised and exploited in my teaching content.

In arriving at the end of this circle of hermeneutic understanding, which originated with Dave and his customised visually presented signs, I can now apprehend how Dave 'actualised himself' in his transaction with the text, so as '...to fulfil a set of needs and wants generated wholly within the reader ... their own meanings will be realised in some peculiar way uniquely their own' (Bogdan & Straw 1990:3 -4). Dave performed his extracted and constructed meanings, and the function of his signs worked as *Micro Grasps*, placed within the mental memory palace of the ancient system of *mnemotechnics* (Yates 1966).

My teaching has adapted to become more empathetic, humanistic and constructivist in nature to accommodate and emancipate the individual who stands outside the dominant majority group. A humanistic approach emphasises the development of the unique potential of the person (Carr & Kemmis 1986:24) and my teaching now includes an acute observation of and flexibility towards each individual with dyslexic difficulties.

When devising strategies for teaching, the literacy educationalist Janice F. Almasi specifies that an underpinning awareness of three distinct types of knowledge will reinforce pedagogical rigour (Almasi 2003: 6). The knowledge types she includes as evidence of a good strategy user are: *procedural knowledge*, which is a knowing how, *declarative knowledge*, which is a knowing about and knowing that, and *conditional knowledge*, which is a knowing when and why. Through this study, I have developed a robust *procedural*, *declarative* and *conditional knowledge* about the processes, sequences and rationale underpinning my practical exercises in relation to my participants with dyslexia. In utilising a *declarative knowledge* (knowing about and that) and *conditional knowledge* (knowing when and why) I have come to recognise that, in my role of the 'knowing guide', I need to dissect and distinguish (especially for those with dyslexia) the available layers of meaning-making within Shakespeare's text.

Additionally, I have realised that the teacher must themselves possess an acuity about the possible meanings and interpretations inherent in the text, and strategic knowledge about when, why and how to enable those with textual difficulties to perceive that information, or build their own interpretations. As Lev Vygotsky argued (1987: 146):

The sense of a word ...is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole which has several zones of unequal stability...the dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense.

Lev Vygotsky (1987: 146)

Through using *procedural knowledge* in teaching strategies to explore these areas, I can also demonstrate my *declarative knowledge* by itemising the particular areas to segregate, explore, and then to re-integrate, as follows:

- I. The story line of the narrative; the overall summary of what is happening, the ideas arising from this, the context.
- II. The psychological and emotional stance of the characters/or speaker arising from the pressure of the context. This can stimulate the physical actions evoked to experience the situation.
- III. The semantics of individual words and phrases; de-coding, comprehension and retrieval of individual words from memory.
- IV. The images that are formed through literary devices such as personification, metaphor, simile, antitheses, assonance and onomatopoeia; the voiced sounding of the text, in aural and physically experienced resonance, pitch range and articulation.

- V. The *form of the text*, structure of the line, syntax, punctuation, metre, rhyming scheme, relevance of caesura placement, enjambment, use of monosyllables and so on.
- VI. Recognition of the triad of *transaction* in building an authorship of the text, between the author, the text and the reader. This is perceived through a realisation of the *efferent* (the information) and the *aesthetic* (the sensory experience) which is further interpreted into an original authorship (Rosenblatt 2005).

Following the assertion that a subjective judgement can play an important role in evaluation (Altrichter *et al* 1993:162) and the need for an explanation of the declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge associated with a strategy (Almasi 2003:59) I have sought to identify the differential ways that the *Gestus and Grasp Elaboration Strategy* might be effective, and how it can solve some of the problems that I have encountered during this study. To do this, Almasi's categories of knowledge have assisted in making overt the *declarative* and *conditional* functions that underpin the process, rationale and outcomes of this approach, while the *procedure* has already been described in this study. My analysis is informed by collected data, a shared and subjective judgement with my participants and critical friend, and my knowledge of the context.

The analysis is presented in Table 8.1 in the Framework on the following three pages.

Table 8.1 Reflecting-on-action. The *Macro Gestus and Micro Grasp Elaboration Strategy*. (The suggested types of memory utilised are taken from Baddeley 1996, Thomson 2009, and Nicolson & Fawcett 2010).

<p><u>Declarative Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing That</u></p> <p>It gives adequate time to:</p>	<p><u>Conditional Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing Why</u></p> <p>It integrates into:</p>	<p><u>Conditional Knowledge; Knowing Why and When; the Rationale</u></p> <p>The outcomes are:</p>
<p>1) Build subjective and shared meanings</p>	<p>Long - term memory via the episodic buffer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifestation of expressive denotation in performance within the ensemble (E.g. through aural image such as music, visual imagery, physicality)
<p>2) Explore interpretations</p>	<p>Episodic memory Semantic memory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing creative output • Remembering the episodes of physical actions and drawing of visuospatial patterns related to different meanings, narrations, embedded into chunks of information
<p>3) Recognise and separate the pieces and synthesise the whole</p>	<p>Procedural memory Semantic memory Long - term memory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of stability in literacy, fluency of reading and communication of word. • Comprehension of the text's content. • Understanding and remembering the procedures; making actions and sequences automatic
<p>4) Rehearse the articulation and pronunciation of words 5) Activate the phonological loop and auditory feedback</p>	<p>Semantic memory Procedural memory Working memory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment of stability in communication modes, remembering word meanings, pronunciations, prosody and intonations Remembering muscular movement of articulators, linked to mental image of meaning, automaticity of word segments

Table 8.1 (continued). Reflecting – on – action. The *Macro Gestus and Micro Grasp Elaboration Strategy*

<u>Declarative Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing That</u> It gives adequate time to:	<u>Conditional Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing Why</u> It integrates into:	<u>Conditional Knowledge; Knowing Why and When; the Rationale</u> The outcomes are:
6) Internalise the external	Procedural memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded technical, physical skills expressed through body and voice. • Embodied mental maps perceived through kinaesthetic muscle –memory •
7) Explore emotional, physical and psychological intuitions	Working memory Long - term memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmation of self-efficacy and self –belief. • Reinforcement of learnt practice and development of ideas through continual rehearsal
8) Develop artistic expressions	Working memory Long - term memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation and discovery
9) Integrate prior knowledge with the new 10) Retrieve, activate and enhance schema	Long - term memory Schema network Knowledge structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compounded meta-cognitive strategies

Table 8.1 (continued). Reflecting – on – action. The *Macro Gestus and Micro Grasp Elaboration Strategy*

<u>Declarative Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing That</u> It gives adequate time to:	<u>Conditional Knowledge;</u> <u>Knowing Why</u> It integrates into:	<u>Conditional Knowledge; Knowing Why and When; the Rationale</u> The outcomes are:
11) Process through auditory working memory (phonological loop) and visual -spatial coding (the visuospatial- sketch-pad and episodic buffer)	Working memory Episodic buffer Central executive Long - term memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of attention, understanding and knowledge of words, articulation of language, retrieval of words, listening skills and performance skills

In Baddeley’s model of working memory, the episodic buffer is responsible for binding information across informational domains and memory systems, into ‘coherent episodes’ (Baddeley 2007:148). Elliot and Grigorenko have drawn attention to the fact that there appears to be no published research concerning the episodic buffer in relation to learning disabilities (2014: 58). The work in the *Gestus and Grasp Elaboration Strategy* processes information by crossing modalities, and is therefore likely to involve the episodic buffer, as posited by psychologists Alan Baddeley (personal communication 2009) and David Pearson (personal communication 2012) having read descriptions of my research.

In explanation of the terminology I have used in the graph, episodic memory involves remembering incidents, semantic memory involves remembering facts and meaning of words, while procedural memory is about remembering how to do things, such as skills and habits.

8.7 The Outcomes Of The Participant Experience Generated From The Changes Developed In My Teaching Approach

Through making these student-led changes in my teaching, I believe that the participants have undergone several powerful transformative developments. Through my observation of their processes and the outcomes in their practice and reported responses, I believe it has been demonstrated that:

- I. They have found a confidence in themselves and their (dis)abilities. Their working methods in connecting to and understanding the words of the text have significantly evolved, and have been substantiated through trial, practice and performance.
- II. They have gained an ownership of their methods, in which they have cultivated their ideas, which have been further developed by me, in conjunction with them.
- III. Their idiosyncratic work methods have become embedded into their practice, and they have asserted that they will continue to use them in the future on Shakespeare texts, and on other texts.
- IV. They have gained a deeper understanding of themselves; their disabilities, abilities, and have developed several meta-cognitive strategies to facilitate future practice.
- V. They have acquired a self-confidence in their practice, in their discourse with me as their teacher, and with their fellow student/actors, (those with dyslexia and those without). They have become aware that they are not alone in their difficulties and that they exist within a community of individuals who might share some of their problems, whilst also possessing challenges of their own.
- VI. When working on Shakespeare's text, there is a personal language that they can use, a way of working, pertinent to them, from which they can

create. Their methods, in serving their strengths, are as valid as any others' process. They have realised that, despite their challenges from dyslexia, they are capable of contributing dynamically to the reading and acting of Shakespeare. I interpret this discovery as a *self - actualization*. As the psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed: 'self-actualization ...is to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming' (Maslow 1943: 382).

8.7.1 Participant validation of the work

Reference to Appendices: there is a collection of the participant evaluative comments in Volume Two, Appendix Six, pages 383 – 385.

In interpretive research, Carr and Kemmis purport that assumptions made about certain situations require an affirmation from those who were the actors within the situation described, as to intention and meanings (1986:91 - 92). Simons contends that in case study research, internal validation can be gained through the participants' agreement with the researcher's telling and meanings (2009:132). To serve the purpose of a validation, I have identified and isolated aspects of the participants' responses to the action research and emerging methods in their interviews, which directly address an evaluative factor.

8.8. Limitations Of The Research Study

This research is based on a small sample of twelve participants assessed as dyslexic. Another sample, comprising of different individuals, or a larger sample, might produce additional, or dissimilar findings.

This individual-led work is time consuming, requiring intense focus, planning and reflection from the teacher, which might be challenging to implement in inflexible teaching situations. When teaching the Shakespeare unit and its accompanying voice classes, my attention was demanded by the whole cohort of second year students, alongside my research with my participants. Observing individuals with and without dyslexia might have been useful for making comparisons of behaviour and abilities, but it meant that occasionally my attention could not be given fully to the participants. Consequently, at times

throughout the study, my focus was forced to be spread thinly amongst the cohort.

This work did not concentrate on improving the participants' ability to sight-read. However, to counter the confrontation of cold reading, it does present alternative methods of engaging with the text, which deliberately offers less pressurised, gentler methods to approach the reading of the printed word.

At the completion of the Shakespeare unit every year, my participants moved on to another subject of their degree syllabus. My intensive research progression with each individual was therefore cut at this point, (although I continued the research with specially arranged workshops or interviews). The following year, I began again with a new set of participants. This moving on of the participants had both strengths and weaknesses in its effect on my research advancement. As a weakness, it meant that I could not continue my study of the individual over a prolonged, concentrated period, or extend the focus beyond Shakespeare. On the other hand, a continual cycle of fresh participants arriving at the start of the unit could be deemed as a strength in my research, as my experience of the similarities, and the variances between each individual provided me with a broader scope of the examples of dyslexia.

Comments made by two of the participants in interview stand out as unresolved. Sophie remarked that, 'I still find it very difficult to remember lines and am not sure about any new strategies as of yet for this other than my PowerPoint and lots of practice' (21.3.2013). Elizabeth stated that, 'there are still aspects to my dyslexia that I don't understand or know how things happen and I still find it very hard to explain myself or remember simple things' (4.5.2013). In answering a question about how to teach those with dyslexia, Nicolson and Fawcett (2010: 17) underline their objective:

Finding a principled linkage between diagnosis and support is, in our view, the second (and currently unresolved) applied issue. Even modest progress toward this goal would transform the opportunities available for the next generation of dyslexic children.

8.9. Outstanding Issues For Future Research

8.9.1 Questions surrounding the assessment of those with dyslexia, and professional employment

Colleagues who have assessed the participants' work have used comments such as: 'scattiness', 'trying too hard', 'lazy' and 'not trying' (teacher assessment 2013). It has become apparent to me, through my observations of the evaluative comments given by other teachers, but also in my own work with those who have dyslexic characteristics, that it is sometimes problematic for a teacher to identify correctly whether the 'scattiness', or 'not trying' is due to the disabling aspects of dyslexia, or because the individual is not making an effort. With dyslexia, the multifaceted layers of disability are often camouflaged, which is why some have labelled it, 'the hidden disability' (Riddick 1996:202). Because of this, there are questions around how to fairly assess those who might not be able to readily produce what the general expectations of the acting student are, because their learning disabilities are interfering with their abilities. There is a danger of assessing the disability rather than the ability. Therefore, how to manage a just and egalitarian assessment of the individual's work, who is disadvantaged by the various features attending dyslexia (for which both the teacher and the student might possess inadequate understanding) remains a significant and unanswered question. When working within the acting profession, these problems do not disappear, but can remain a major stumbling block to success. Sean Aita (a theatre director who is also a teaching colleague at the Arts University) has shared with me his experience of working with an individual with dyslexia:

I have recently directed a young dyslexic actor who had a lot of trouble remembering the blocking and other stage business which he had been given in a production. Observing him in the rehearsal room he sometimes seemed to 'zone out' or not be concentrating properly... he managed to pull everything together by opening night, but it was a disturbing experience. I was not sure if he would be able to remember anything at all... The inability to

remember lines or blocking is also a major problem for the other actors in the company who cannot rehearse effectively with a colleague who is unable to feed them back the lines or to follow the stage blocking relatively quickly, and to perform with fluidity and with consistency for much of the rehearsal period. It inevitably puts them under pressure.

(Aita December 2013)

My principal findings have emphasised that the problem with dyslexia and the acting of the text frequently centres on memory weakness and process, in conjunction with reading ability. Aita's comments underline the necessity for more research on how to assist the talented actor who is encumbered by these disabilities, and the need for a wide dissemination of the findings, both in the areas of higher education and the acting profession.

8.9.2 Further exploration of research and strategies which might extend beyond visual preferences

When teaching the Shakespeare unit this year (2013) an individual assessed as dyslexic had struggled with the coherent speaking and reading of the text in her role as Cleopatra. In an attempt to assist her to find an ease with the language, I suggested she use her native Nigerian accent. When speaking Cleopatra's words in her Nigerian accent, her ability to communicate the text with understanding and without stumbling on the words was transformed. Her proficiency in using the language grew strikingly over the rehearsal time. Reflecting on her progress in her written evaluation of her work, she said (2013):

My difficulties with sight-reading has been an issue and, with the language on top of my dyslexia, I really struggled to grasp the wordswhen Petronilla suggested trying the scene with a Nigerian accent it ...was a big turning point, because I had freedom and I used it to the best of my ability. My doubts disappeared as I started to embrace my strengths, and using it to my advantage to exaggerate the fact that Shakespeare's language is always there to help me, not scare me, and the minute I realised this I blossomed and embraced the language.

One can surmise that her improvement was because the native accent lent a self- assurance and familiarity. However, because the change in her dexterity with the speaking of the language was significant, I question if the accent might have diminished some of her dyslexic blocks because it provided a parallel text in auditory images embedded in her memory? This is an area that requires further investigative study with participants in the future.

8.10 Claims Of Contributions To New Knowledge

- I have contributed to the scholarship of teaching, learning and actor training by producing an in-depth nest of case studies about the work of twelve individuals assessed as dyslexic, in a subject area where few records exist. I have recorded their voiced experiences in detail, through written descriptions, illustrations, photographs and film. I have documented my own struggles and breakthroughs in teaching them and the progression of my learning is evidenced through the descriptions of my action research with the participants. I have made explicit my rationale for compensatory strategies, and newly constructed theories, whilst amalgamating acting and teaching methodologies underpinned by the perspectives of educational philosophers such as Lev Vgotsky, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers, Lee Shulman, Jean Piaget, Ernst von Glasersfeld and Abraham Maslow.
- I have contributed to the teaching methods for the reading and acting of Shakespeare, particularly aimed towards the facilitation of those with dyslexia. This has produced further discussion surrounding the debate about the value of using Stanislavski's units and actions methods for acting and analysing Shakespeare's text, and whether it has particular cogency in supporting individuals with dyslexia. My investigations have led to an uncommon comparison of the function of Berry's actions (inspired by the language itself) with Stanislavski's actions method (which generally responds to the context and subtext) involving a focus on gesture signification, (specifically with the view of understanding the difficulties of the acting student with dyslexia).

- I have formulated a new approach to working on text and performance that enables textual comprehension, anchoring of words, construction of meaning, acting process and creative output. This approach is effective as a teaching strategy particularly for those with dyslexia, but can also be helpful for those that are not dyslexic. My adaptation of Kintsch and Rawson's levels of textual processing in the *Text base* (2005:209) using the concepts of the *Macrostructure* and the *Microstructure*, which I have linked with Brecht's *Gestus* and Stanislavski's concept of *Grasp* and *Actions*, communicated through spoken word, physical tableaux, drawing, and image montage, establishes the interrelationships between several dimensions within the text, underpinned by Kaschak & Glenberg's *Indexical Hypothesis* (2000) working as a simulator of meaning. All of these components are assimilated into a method that amplifies aspects of reading, reader-response theory and the speaking of the text into creative performance.
- I have developed the methodology of *Interpretive Mnemonics* as a way of entering, comprehending, perceiving, mapping and creatively performing the text – in particular Shakespeare's text. I have recognised and made explicit the cognitive processing links between Stanislavski's *Actions* and *Active Analysis*, and Michael Chekov's *Psychological Gesture*, linked with the individuals' system of producing physical and image based external storyboards.
- I have contributed to the research on inclusive practice for those with specific learning differences (dyslexia) in actor training. I have generated new theories in teaching methods underpinned by a student-centred agenda; by amalgamating diverse fields of knowledge and disciplines such as: acting, linguistics, reading and comprehension theory, psychology, art, pedagogy, disability and specific learning differences and English literature.

8.11 A Final Thought: William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 24*

As I reach the conclusion of this study I give a salute to William Shakespeare in appreciation of the rich cornucopia of images layered throughout his writing. Calling attention to *Sonnet 24*, it can be observed that Shakespeare understood that painting may be utilised as a tool in order to perceive, and that perception is experienced through the body. Re-iterating some of the word phrases Shakespeare uses in *Sonnet 24*, I can affirm that through the reading, speaking, scrutinising and teaching of his works, I do have Shakespeare's 'beauty's form' 'stelled in the table of my heart'. Having immersed themselves in the work recorded in this study, I believe that Shakespeare's words are also 'stelled' in my participants' hearts. 'Through play[ing] the painter', 'best painters' art' and through our 'bodies' frames' we have 'gazed in' on Shakespeare, his 'perspectives', 'shapes' and 'skills'.

Excerpt from *Sonnet 24*

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath stelled

Thy beauty's form in table of my heart.

My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,

And perspective it is best painter's art,

For through the painter must you see his skill

To find where your true image pictur'd lies,

Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,

That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.

Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done.

Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me

Are windows to my breast, wherethrough the sun

Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee.

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**Towards accessing Shakespeare's text for those
with SpLD (dyslexia): an investigation into the
rationale for building visual constructs**

Volume Two of Two Volumes

by

Petronilla Whitfield

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Arts Education

University of Warwick, Centre for Education Studies

January 2015

Volume Two

Preface for Appendices

These Appendices provide examples of evidential and illustrative material which are referred to throughout the chapters of the thesis in Volume One. To assist the reader, an overall summary of the contents with page numbers is placed at the beginning of the Appendices. Within the body of the Appendices, at the beginning of each different section, a more detailed breakdown of the content of each subject area is given. This material includes examples of interview transcripts, processes of work and methodology, the pilot study, a conference presentation, evaluations from the participants and peers, and evidential examples relating to the findings of the study. On the back cover of the Appendices there are placed three DVDs and one CD. Directly related to the content of the chapters, these filmed clips provide further evidential examples of the practical work and participant interviews, and also the computer programme created for the pilot study.

APPENDICES

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Participant evaluation

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(Relates to Chapter Four)

Example of letter from actress Susan Hampshire

Appendix Eight

3 DVDs placed in the back of Appendices

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DVD 1: The Background Context and Problem

(Relates to Chapter One & Four)

DVD 2: Examples of the Action Research Work, (Cycle One & Two)

(Relates to Chapter Four & Five)

DVD 3: Cycle Four – The Venus and Adonis performance

(Relates to Chapter Seven)

Appendix One

Contents

- 1. Example of the Consent Form: Part One, Two and Three**
Pages 324 - 331

Petronilla Whitfield Information and Consent Form One for Participation in PhD Study

Title: ‘Mine eye hath played the painter, to find where your true image pictured lies: my body is the frame in which it is held’: the building of visual constructs towards accessing Shakespeare’s text for those with SpLD (dyslexia).

Dear

This letter is an invitation to participate in my research study. As a part-time PhD student at The Institute of Education at Warwick University, I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Professor Jonothan Neelands. I am also a senior lecturer in Voice and Acting on the Acting degree course, BA (Hons) at the Arts University at Bournemouth.

Study Overview.

I intend, through my research, to find some answers to these questions:

My Key Research Question.

1. Does the use of visual constructs facilitate acting students with dyslexia in the reading and acting of Shakespeare?

My Sub-questions.

2. How might I change my pedagogical practice in the teaching of Shakespeare and voice, to support the visual learning strengths of some acting students with dyslexia?
3. Can the imprecise articulation of some acting students with dyslexia, be assisted by the drawing or physicalisation of concept symbols to represent the sounds in speech?

4. Does the viewing of images made by others, have as much as impact on the acting student with dyslexia, as images made by themselves?

This study is likely to include:

- Exploration of practical exercises
- Creation and trial of teaching and learning tools
- Investigation of reading theories, cognition and acting processes
- Issues of self-esteem and confidence in performance
- Examination of dyslexia
- Examination of fluency and coping strategies of professionals in the acting world who have dyslexia
- Exploration of visual modalities and verbal modalities

The methodology of this work will be case study and research- in – action, carried out in naturalistic surroundings. It will be conducted within the acting and voice degree syllabus work in the studio environment, in rehearsal, performance, private tutorials, individual and group interviews, discussion, and logged notes. It might also include the filming and recording of students' performances, work demonstrations and interviews.

Yours sincerely,

Petronilla Whitfield.

PhD student at the Institute of Education Warwick University.

Senior lecturer in Voice and Acting at the Arts University Bournemouth.

- I agree to the use of anonymous quotations or descriptions of my work in any thesis or publication.

Yes No

- I agree to the possibility that materials produced from my work might be shown in public presentations, published articles or printed in the thesis.

Yes No

- I agree to the use of direct quotations or descriptions of work attributed to me, only with my approval.

Yes No

- I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the researcher.

Yes No

- I have read the description of the research and this consent form.

Yes No.

Participant Name: (Please print)

Address:

Telephone Number:

Signature:

Date:

Signature of researcher:

Consent Form Part Two for Participation in Petronilla Whitfield's PhD Study

Dear

This letter is part two of an invitation to participate in my research study as a part time PhD student at the Institute of Education at Warwick University. You have already signed Part One.

Consent Form (Part Two)

- I agree to photographs of myself being included in the PhD dissertation, when illustrating examples of the research work that I have contributed to.

Yes

No

- I agree to the possibility that my photograph is included in further publications, such as published articles, or public presentations as examples of the work that I have contributed to.

Yes

No

- I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the researcher.

Yes

No

- I have read the description of the research and this Consent Form.

Yes

No

Signature of participant:

Participant Name: (Please print)

Address:

Telephone Number:

Signature:

Date:

Signature of researcher:

Consent Form Part Three for Participation in Petronilla Whitfield's PhD Study

Dear

I have asked you whether you consent to my using of your first name only in the description of your work and my action research for my PhD dissertation, and any other possible publications or conferences. Please could you affirm your consent below.

1. I understand that you are using my first name only in the description of my work, and your action research regarding actor training, Shakespeare and dyslexia. As part of these descriptions, I give my consent for my first name to be used rather than a pseudonym.

Signed:

Date:

Address:

Telephone:

Researchers name:

Signature:

Telephone:

Appendix Two

Contents

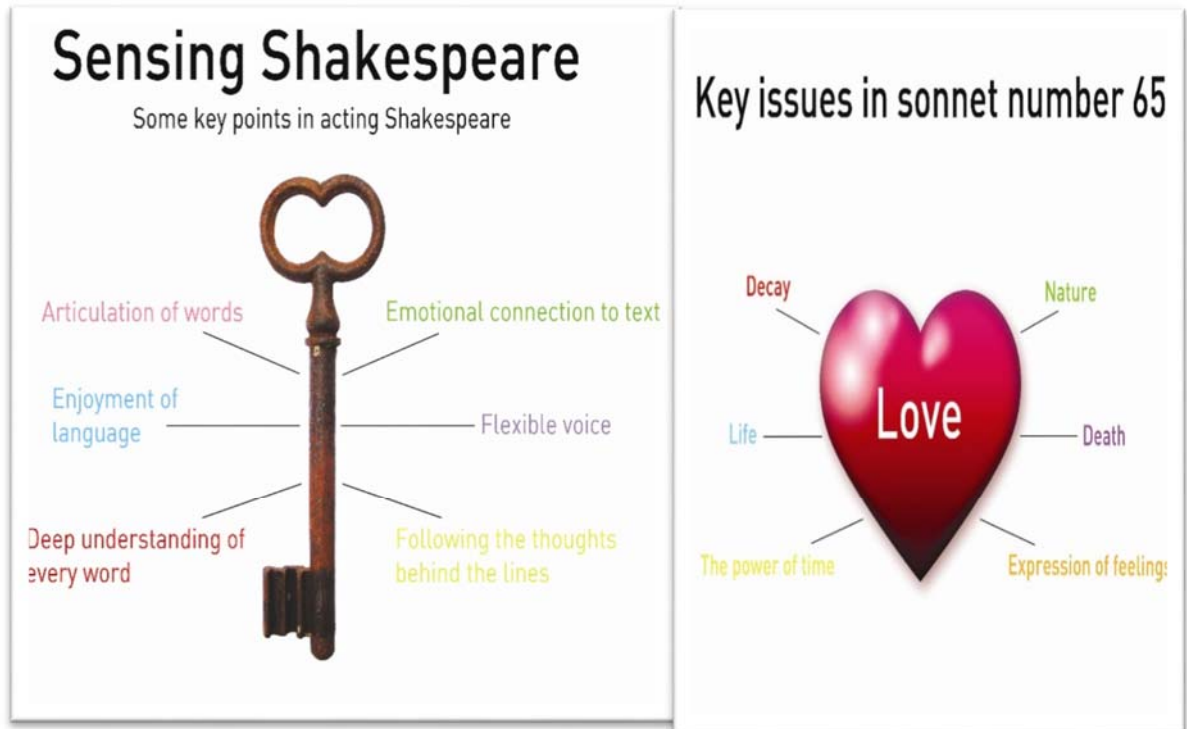
The Pilot Study: *Sensing Shakespeare*

- 1 A CD Rom of the computer programme tool, *Sensing Shakespeare* is placed in the pocket attached to the back cover of the dissertation**
- 2. Example of some of the exercises in *Sensing Shakespeare*
Pages 333-344**
- 3. Reference list for *Sensing Shakespeare* - pages 345 - 348**
- 4. Example of participant feedback for the *Sensing Shakespeare* programme
Pages 349 - 350**
- 5. Information about my presentation of *Sensing Shakespeare* given at the British Shakespeare Association Conference
Shakespeare: Sources and Adaptation at Cambridge University
September 2011
Pages 351**

Sensing Shakespeare exercise examples

Advanced organiser mind maps

(Art work by Nick Franklin)



Rationale mapped to acting and pedagogy

The first mind map introduces some of the vocal technical and emotional requirements for acting Shakespeare. These can be extremely testing, even for the most experienced Shakespearean actor.

The second mind map guides the actor as to the subject matter. It is impossible to act or recite a sonnet effectively, without comprehending what you are saying.

In a future version, a third mind map could present Shakespeare's structure and form.

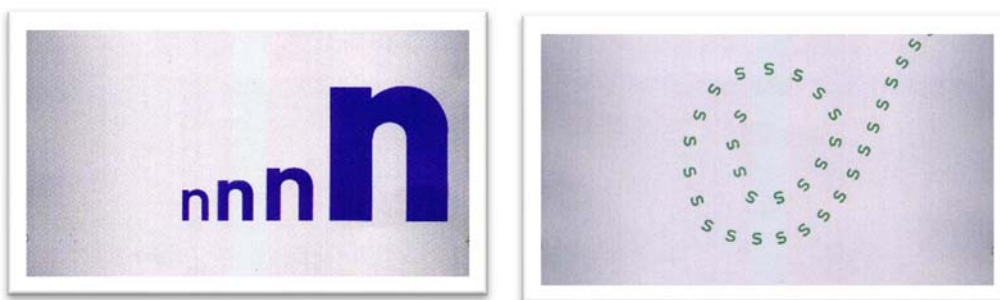
Rationale mapped to dyslexia

Although the use of mind maps have become commonplace in teaching, their use at the beginning of this programme is pedagogically significant for those with dyslexia. A mind map works as a visuo - spatial model on the page. It can give a whole overview, communicating copious amounts of information in an image, without the need for substantial written description. This can assist working memory, appeals to the visual and spatial learner and neatly breaks facts into digestible chunks.

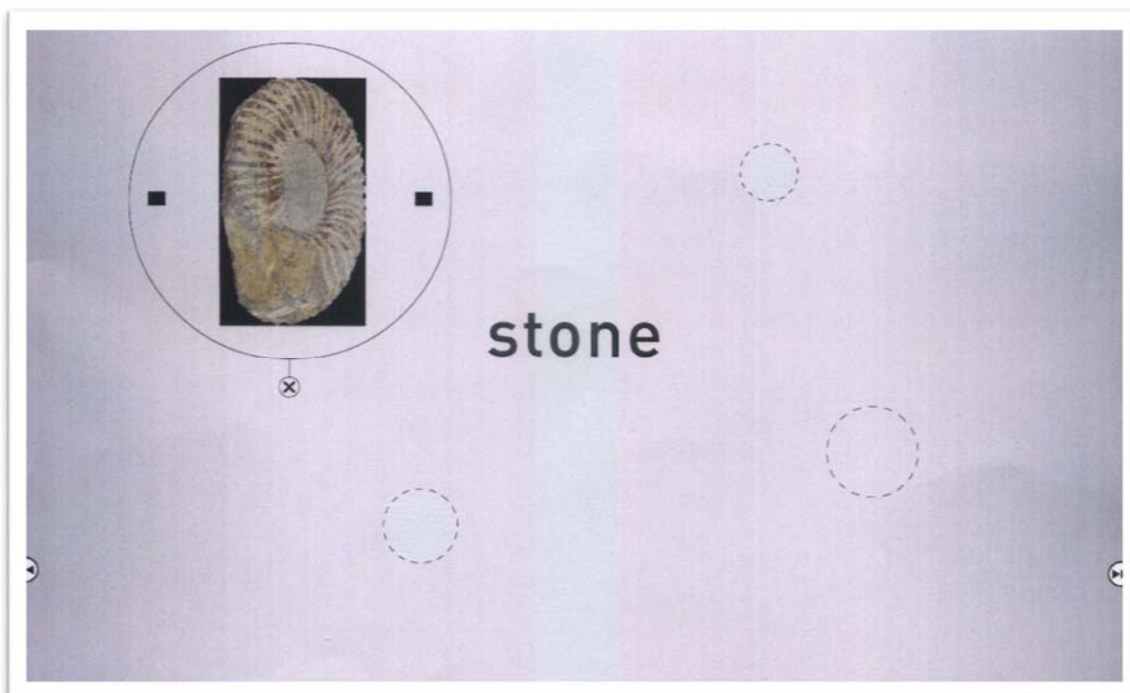
Mind maps, (also known as concept maps, advanced or graphic organisers), are routinely employed and recommended by education experts, especially for the dyslexic or slower learner. See Mayer (2003:351-357), Mortimore (2008: 152161), Harrison (2004:91), Prichard (2005:89 – 90), Reid (2007: 207-7), Buzan (2006).

I have included no audio narrative with the mind map's written text, as I am observing Mayer's multi- media design *Coherence Principle*; that is that people learn better when extraneous words, pictures and sounds are excluded (Mayer 2009:267).

Exercise Two. Word Association Exercises



(Interactive design by James Ramsay)



Exercise description

Key words from the sonnet are broken down into single vowels and consonants and presented in coloured motion graphics in various shapes, images and movements across the screen. These are supported by audio rendition of the letters. These units of phonemes gradually build into forming the whole word orthographically, and acoustically. The participant is encouraged to join the supporting audio in articulating the phonemes. Once the whole word is presented, with an accompanying image of the word, several questions about that word are asked, with sound and image examples appearing on the screen. The words are examined from several perceptions of experience.

Rationale mapped to acting and pedagogy

Articulation exercises are necessary to practise the muscular motor movements required in forming words, activating the auditory, phonological and kinaesthetic loop and to acquire a precision in pronunciation. By gradually building up the substance of the word, its elements are examined to arrive at

a full realisation of its sound and meaning. To create a firm foundation and connection with the text, an actor needs to find associations, repetitions, an automaticity - until it is thoroughly embodied and embedded (Berry 1993:143, Carey & Clark Carey 2008:162, Rodenburg 2002:5)

Rationale mapped to dyslexia

The cognitive process of isolating the vowels and consonants and their related phonological sounds, then gradually forming them into a complete word, might strengthen an awareness of the phonological make-up of that word and pronunciation of the sounds. This has a focus on the *Phonological deficit* (Hulme & Snowling 1991, Snowling, 2000, Hatcher 1994, Stanovitch 1988, Goswami 2003, Adams cited in Mayer 2003:46, Fawcett & Nicolson 1995). The muscular definition in forming the phonemes puts attention on to the *Articulatory deficit* (Griffiths & Frith 2002, Fawcett & Nicolson 2002) and the repetition of these sounds and movements, mapped to the orthography, supported by an audio pronunciation may assist the *Automaticity deficit* (Fawcett and Nicolson 1990).

Exercise Three. Music and emotion painting graphs



(Interactive design by Neil Leonard)

Exercise description

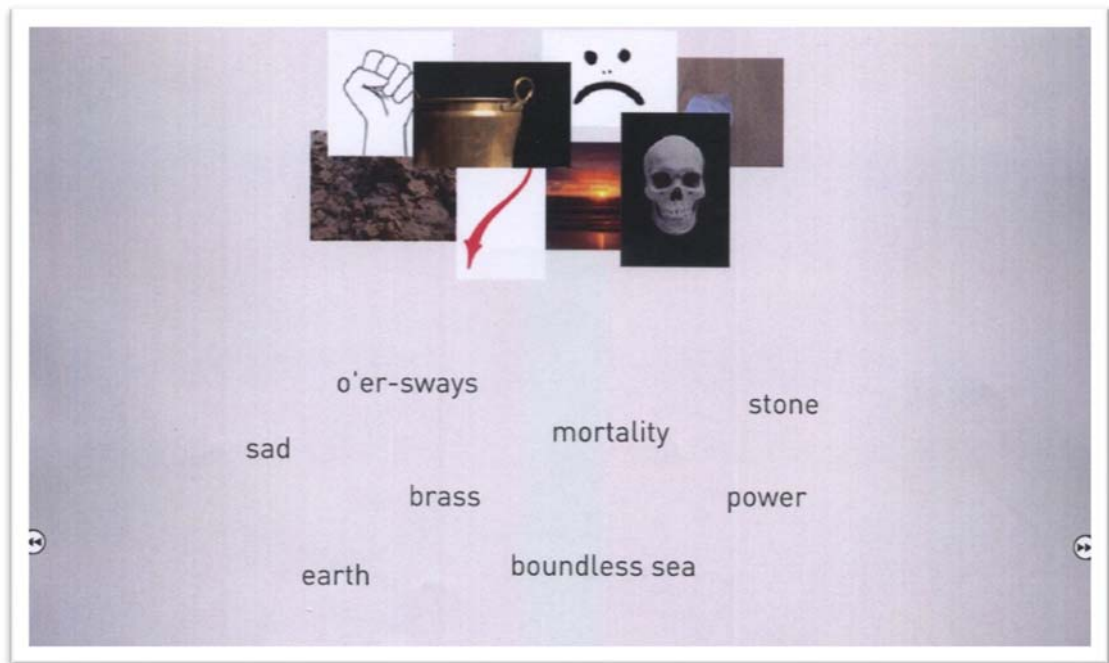
Key phrases from the sonnet are presented on the screen accompanied with a large drawing pad and a selection of buttons with recorded music and colour selections to choose. The participant is required to speak the phrases out loud and notice the internal feelings activated with the meaning of the words; to then select some music to play that helps amplify the feeling of the word as they speak it, and to pick some colours with which to draw an expression of their response to the words and music on the drawing pad. This exercise is not about artistic ability but expressing the internal realisation of the words.

Rationale mapped to acting and pedagogy

Drama and art therapists use drawing to reach the unconscious and to discover the hidden emotions within us. Kandinsky likens the process of abstract painting to Socrates' advice, 'Know thy self', because the non-representational is produced from an internal structure (1949:39). He also speaks about the artist having an inner necessity to express (ibid. 52).

In this *Music and Emotion Painting* exercise it is hoped that this expression of spirit released in the participant's drawing, will link with what Rodenburg calls 'the need for words' in the speaking of Shakespeare's text (Rodenburg 2001.173).

Exercise Five. Image sonnet



(Interactive design by Martin Cannings, photographs by Dave Powell, art work by Nick Franklin)

Exercise description

The key words from the lines of the sonnet appear on the screen with matching images randomly placed above them. The images created are both literal and metaphoric, mirroring Shakespeare's allegorical description. For example, 'stone' is represented by a simple picture of a stone, whilst 'summer's honey breath' is a metaphoric illustration of an evocative personification of a woman breathing out, her invisible breath represented in a scattering of summer flowers. Another pictorial metaphor is depicted within two pictures, encapsulating the phrase: '*...hold out against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days*'. The participant is asked to place the matching image with the words.

The images then disappear and the words only are presented with missing letters. The participant has to fill the spaces in the word with the missing letters and read the words aloud. The words of the four lines then move into forming the stanza of the sonnet and the participant is asked to read the lines aloud, with feeling and meaning, retaining the images for the words in the imagination.



This picture depicts a visual metaphor for the phrase ‘...hold out against the wrackful siege of batt’ring days’. (Art work by Nick Franklin, photography by Dave Powell).

Rationale mapped to acting and pedagogy

Shakespeare uses a cornucopia of imagistic metaphors (Spurgeon 1935). To speak with impactful weight, an actor must share their understanding of Shakespeare’s abundant similes and metaphors by making them their own within their imagination. The more precisely formed and deeply rooted the

images are, the more effectual their spoken expression of them will be (Berry 1992:110, Berry 2001: 231, 232, Noble 2010:36, 37, Linklater 1994: 30 -44).

Although there are warnings that an overly decorative picture can distract from meaning and learning rather than enhance it (Harp & Mayer cited in Reed 2010:78) Reed also states that evocative illustrations can enable a cognitive and emotional effect (ibid. 76). I have tried to capture and mirror the quality of Shakespeare's language to excite the performer's inner resources.

Rationale mapped to dyslexia

There are many books that recommend the use of pictures and story boards to assist those with dyslexia to access and memorise a text by replacing the words with pictures (Broomfield & Combley 2003:41, Borwick in Townend & Turner 1999:41, Fletcher & Cogan in ibid. 226, Mortimore 2009:209).

Mayer reports that for low skilled readers the use of a pictorial storyboard heightens textual comprehension. When given the task of building a storyboard with pictures representing the narrative, it helped those weaker readers to absorb the content and details within the text (Mayer 2003:105).

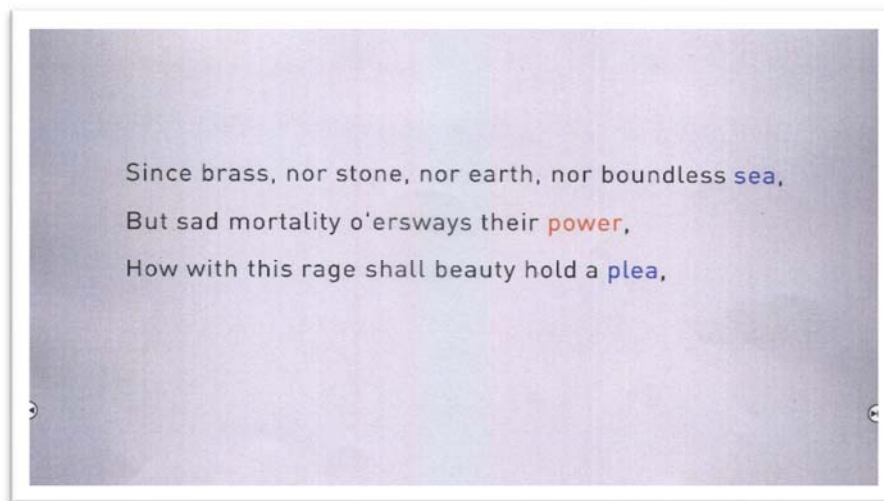
West is an artist assessed as dyslexic. He has devised a system for essay planning, note taking, comprehension and reading, through the drawing of pictures (West 2008). West reports that he cannot understand the words properly if he does not visualise an accompanying image that fits with the word (ibid. 4).

Bell maintains that to effectively understand words and meaning we need to have a visual image in our minds to adhere to the word, and the meaning of the whole. Bell has constructed a sequential process of attaching images from individual word - to sentence - to paragraph - to the whole idea arising within the text. This apparently produces improvements in language comprehension (Bell 1986). Bell states:

With specific attention to the integration of imagery and verbalization, it is possible to develop an imaged gestalt from which interpretation and reasoning can be processed

The exercise of removing letters from words and asking the participant to fill in the missing letters is called *Cloze Procedure* (Thomson & Watkins 1999: 118). Sometimes it is used for comprehension of text, but in this case, I mean to encourage a sight vocabulary with automatic knowledge of the word spelling.

Exercise Six. Layering Exercise



(Interface design by Chris Walters)

Exercise description

The whole sonnet gradually appears for the first time in the programme. The words slowly build up on the screen to each punctuation mark, then go back to the beginning of the text and repeat on to the next punctuation mark and so on, for every four lines of the sonnet, and then the final two. The participant is asked to read aloud as the words appear so there is a continued repetition of the lines. Every four lines a question is posed or some information about the sonnet is given, replicating practical class work. The line endings and rhyming patterns are marked in different colours.

Rationale mapped to acting and pedagogy

Working in a circle, a company of actors will work on a text reading around the circle, punctuation to punctuation mark – or walking, changing direction at the punctuation marks. It is a method utilised to notice what the punctuation is doing and how that can affect the meaning of the text or emotional psychology of the speaker (Berry 2001:119, 1993:149, Houseman 2008:136-9).

Rationale mapped to dyslexia

The repetition in the layering exercise is enabling for those with weak working memories, ensuring that the participant will have ample time to take in the word, and discover its meaning in tandem with accompanying mental images. Activating the phonological loop ensures a deep osmosis of the text, whilst alleviating stress by removing an expectation of an immediate performance. The phonological loop (Baddeley 2007) through the scaffolded repetition of the text is activated, addressing the *Automaticity deficit* (Nicolson 1990).

Marking the ends of the lines and rhyming pattern in differing colours assists with making the shape of the text very clear. This helps to act as a map through the text and can help to alleviate the blurred effect of words on the page that some with dyslexia report.

Exercise Eight. Storyboard

Exercise description

A pictorial story board is presented with an accompanying actress's voice speaking the sonnet. The computer coding is timed so that each picture or word arrives on the screen at the same time as the spoken audio version.

Rationale mapped to acting and dyslexia

As part of his research with Paivio on *The Dual Code Theory*, Sadoski has been investigating the power of spontaneously occurring mental imagery roused by textual reading. He elaborates on the fact that imagery helps us to remember and ignites a more insightful comprehension and enjoyment of the text (1998:1). The image will be retained in the brain for a longer time than the words (ibid: 2) and work as 'meaningful mental pegs' (Sadoski 2002:4). Discovering that some weak readers have no mental imagery, Bell and Lindamood have initiated concept imagery to stimulate reading prowess (Lindamood & Bell in Hulme & Snowling 1997).

Critically, this theory is backed up by Davis, but he accentuates that the pictures should be created by the *individual themselves* to have value for the

grasp of meaning (Davis 1997:68). Conscious of this, I mean this exercise with images provided to serve as an example and as a comprehension story board.

The Visual Storyboard of Sonnet 65 follows below




































This visual storyboard version runs as a moving screen presentation with a concurrently spoken audio version of the sonnet.

All images are devised by consultation with my acting students with dyslexia difficulties. All narrators in the programme, (other than myself), are my acting students who have self –identified, or have been assessed as dyslexic.

There is also a pack of postcard sized cards made of each piece of the visual storyboard, which are used in class activities, such as in writing, reading and speaking the sonnet through arranging the pictures into their sequence.

The Visual Story Board

Sensing Shakespeare Sonnet 65

Since		nor		nor		nor	
But				their			
How	with	this		shall			
Whose		is			than	a	
O	how	shall		hold	out		
Against							
When		are					
Nor		so		but			
O		where					
Shall		from					
Or	what		can				
Or	who	his		can			
O		unless	this	miracle	have	might	
That	in						

Sonnet 65

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
 But sad mortality o'ertwears their power,
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
 O how shall summer's honey breath hold out,
 Against the rackful siege of batt'ring days,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
 O fearful meditation! Where, alack,
 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his owl foot back,
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

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Sensing Shakespeare CD review.

By Sophie

In exercise one, I found that I reacted to the colours on the screen. My mouth felt the words with the warmth of the colour and became more breathy with the more cold blue colours. In exercise two, I really liked how the letters moved across the screen as it helped me imagine the path in which they were flowing out of my mouth.

The interactive tools in the Brass exercise encouraged me to click on the different circles around the word in whatever order I liked. It connected to all my senses which helped keep me focused and engaged, helping me imagine what it sounds/feels/looks like. As I thought about these influences, it added weight to the word 'brass' and made it seem more real by giving it more meaning. It helped that you couldn't see what you were clicking on until you did as it made it more intriguing like a lift the flap book, keeping me focused.

I enjoyed the drawing exercise (3). By being able to choose the colours and music it made you think about the words in a different way and to paint the mood of the way you perceive the words. Being able to see the words clearly at the bottom helped as I could easily repeat them as I was drawing and listening. As the music built up, it influenced the way I said the word encouraging me to do lighter or harder, sharp or soft paint strokes.

Being able to click on the phonetics in the little word drama (ex 4) repeatedly helped me register them into my head. I was also able to test myself as I could learn from my own errors. By being able to view the phonetics above the words I found it easier to say the vowel sounds by looking at the phonetics rather than finding them in the words as it was broken down but it helped being able to view them at the same time. When I read the words as a dramatic poem I found myself stressing the vowels.

I found the picture association in exercise five really helpful. When I said the word, I had a perfect image of the picture in my head and it instantly added meaning to the words. I found that I delivered them more confidently especially with powerful words like 'mortality' I thought about the picture but also imagined the smells of death and the textures of dead flesh!

I was not very sure what I was meant to be getting from exercise six but it made me aware of the rhythm of the lines- de dum de dum de dum and the alternate rhyming. It did help too break down the words but it

still went a bit over my head as my eyes kept darting around the page back to the beginning and it still became a big block of text. Maybe it would have helped if it had broken down a line on each screen.

The example tool was useful to explain words. Personally it would help me if it had a voice reading it out when I click on it as I think it helps me to process information through my eyes and ears.


When I read the sonnet aloud in exercise seven, the flashes of the different pictures really helped me absorb it. I noticed that I paid more attention to the ways in which the vowels and consonants can be pronounced to change the perception of the word making it sound soft and floaty- (like in the music and drawing exercise) or strong and impacting. As I said words like 'Jewel' I felt my mouth shape changing as if it was more juicy and rich and I pictured all the sides of the crystal. When I said the word chest, I picked up on the double meaning of the treasure chest and my own chest and heart and the word sounded hollower. It made the sonnet a lot more enjoyable and less daunting to read and I found myself picturing the objects like 'black ink' spilling on the page and it took my mind off concentrating on trying to read the words, which made it flow more.

The flashing images in exercise eight were effective as they broke down the words and made me feel as if I was absorbing all the information without having to think about it too much.

Overall, I found the CD very helpful. I connected especially to the visual elements that stuck pictures and colours in my mind and helped my imagination. Being able to listen and read at the same time really helped me process things more. It really helped when chunks of text were broken down as they seemed much less daunting and it was most effective when I wasn't thinking about concentrating on getting through the text. I personally feel that I need a lot of repetition to absorb information so it would be quite good to have a repeat button when the beginning of each exercise is explained encase it spoke a bit too quickly or I didn't have time to process. The word glossary really helped to do this as it repeated the word and the meaning as many times as I needed. I really noticed what worked for me and I feel that I have picked up some good tips and different ways of approaching text that will really help me in the future.



5. Conference Presentation

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Option 2: Shakespearean initiatives with dyslexia; Shakespeare and service-learning in prisons; and a cautionary word on the use of performance in teaching Shakespeare

Petronilla Whitfield - 'Sensing Shakespeare' through technology, adaptation and visualization- supporting the dyslexic student in accessing text'. (Paper/workshop)

Abstract: In this presentation I will share with you my explorations to enable a textual autonomy for those acting students with dyslexia, when working on Shakespeare. In my role as Voice and Shakespeare acting teacher for acting degree students at the Arts University College at Bournemouth, and as part of my PhD enquiries with Warwick University, I am researching strategies to assist my students identified as dyslexic, in the reading, speaking and acting of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare can pose considerable challenges for those with difficulties with reading, pronouncing and processing words. Facing unfamiliar language, unusual word order, and complex meanings, can inhibit and restrict the potential of the dyslexic individual – especially within a learning and performance environment. Teachers of voice and acting face a pedagogic conundrum, when endeavouring to effectively support the student with dyslexia, especially within a large cohort of non-dyslexic students.

Some acting students with dyslexia have identified the building and processing of visual constructs as helpful in penetrating Shakespeare's text, describing Shakespeare's rich imagery as beneficial to their learning preferences.

- In this workshop, I will share some of my visual construct research ideas by giving a short demonstration of an experimental computer tool I have devised and had built. Using a Shakespearean sonnet as its foundation, it includes animation, motion graphics, original art work, photography and actors.*

Originating from practical acting work on Shakespeare's text in the studio, inspired by feedback from dyslexic students who emphasise their visual way of thinking, I have drawn on voice and acting practical exercises, underpinned with dyslexia theories, to create a sequence of highly visual, sensory, kinaesthetic exercises to 'open' Shakespeare's writing.

Presently, the tool is a small scale experiential research enquiry in which content is pedagogically and artistically led, rather than being cutting edge technological research.

- I will also discuss my observations of intuitive methods used by dyslexic actors, which utilise an interlingua between the written text and idiosyncratic pictorial/symbolic adaptations, and how these methods might be employed in the teaching of Shakespeare.*

Appendix Three

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1. Introduction Of The Participants For The Shakespeare Unit 2009/10

Participant one – Jimmy (interview 14th December 2009)

Jimmy's final school grades were: A Level Theatre Studies B, Geography B, Music Technology C. Eight GCSE's with good to high grades.

Jimmy was first assessed as dyslexic when he came to the Arts University by an educational psychologist in 2008. Jimmy describes his secondary school as a 'bad school with a lot of behavioural problems', so he learnt to deal with his dyslexia on his own. He recalls suffering anxiety and inwardly 'raging with frustration' if he had made 'embarrassing, silly spelling mistakes' when the teacher read his work.

As a child he hated the look of letters and thought them 'very unexciting'. When trying to read, the 'letters sort of jump around' and he will read an *h* instead of a *t*, and gets confused with the difference between *b* and *d*, *p* and *b*. Jimmy relates that he has trouble concentrating. If given a piece of text he gets confused. He cannot look at the word, and know straight away what it says and how it is pronounced. If reading aloud, he spends so much energy getting the words right, he loses the meaning of what he saying.

Jimmy believes anxiety is a contributory factor in why, when he looks at the text, all the small words like, *the*, *to*, and *when*, 'flood into his brain' and he misses out or inserts words that are not there. 'I have never really grasped how to flow while reading', Jimmy says, explaining that he has to think hard about what the punctuation might mean. When working on a text, Jimmy relates, 'sometimes I get words wrong for weeks before somebody tells me'.

Jimmy confesses that the look of words on a page scares him. However, his motivation for acting makes him 'pick up the text and face it'. He learns his words in advance, so that he will not be 'jumbling through a script'. He finds images more attractive than words, because, 'what you see is what you get'.

Participant two – Richard (interview 6th December 2010)

Richard's final school grades were: A level Theatre Studies B, Media Studies C, English Literature and Language D. Eight GCSE's with a range of marks from high to low.

Richard was first assessed as dyslexic at primary school. In interview, he states that he had difficulty reading and 'couldn't do the alphabet for years'. He says that his experience at primary school was traumatic as he was punished for not finishing work which he did not understand, and 'got yelled at a lot' by teachers. Because the primary school experience 'made him very ill', sometimes causing him to vomit with fear before going to school, he was withdrawn from attending school in Year five, and home schooled, 'for a while'.

He then attended a school specialising in Specific Learning Difficulties, where his education included art therapy, physical co-ordination exercises, and attention was given to his ocular focussing. When at secondary school he received 'lots of extra help'.

Richard says that '... art therapy gave me something '*ermenial* to do'. He meant to say *remedial*, which demonstrates his confusion with letter sequence. When he tries to say *remedial* again, his articulation of the word is unclear. Richard's tripping over syllables is highlighted several times during the examples of his work in this chapter.

He is still confused by left and right and, if having to fill out a form, sometimes is embarrassed because he can spell his own name wrongly, muddling up the syllables of his first and second name. When sight reading he can see words that are not there, or looks at the wrong line. If a word is not familiar to him, he will not be able to read it until he has 'got a picture of what that word looks like in my head'- but it will be '...a picture with no sound'.

Richard describes his dyslexia as, 'something is missing from my brain, or something doesn't work and it's never going to be mended. The only way to function normally is to find ways around it'.

Participant three – Ashley (interview 14th December 2009)

Ashley's final school grades were: A Level Media Studies B, Theatre Studies C. Eight GCSE's at satisfactory to low grades.

Ashley was first assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist when he came to the Arts University in 2008.

Ashley stresses that he had no support for his dyslexia at school, which he thinks is reflected in his exam results. At school, Ashley began to lose motivation to work for exams, accepting the likelihood that he would get low marks because he could not remember the information, despite revising. However, at school he did well in acting, 'because I can speak rather than write the words'.

He relates that he has a bad memory and can blank out, if not engaged with the subject. Ashley explained that he can read aloud quite quickly, but cannot always process the information. If a word is multi-syllabic, he will sometimes read the second syllable first, such as *gery* in the word *imagery*, or get confused with small words such as *the* or *they*. Ashley explains, 'I think ...when there's a lot of syllables in a word, that's what gets me the most. I think my biggest problem with sight reading is I try to say all the word syllables together' and 'I just ...make the strangest noise when I do that', (interview 17.5. 2010). He often tries to guess the word, rather than read it.

He admits that he has only recently sorted out what a vowel or a consonant is, therefore Berry's 'speak the vowels only' exercise, (Berry 2001: 167), is bewildering to him. When sight reading, he forgets what punctuation, such as colons, or commas mean, or how to respond to them.

Ashley thinks that his brain works differently to others. He states that, 'the frustration comes from people not seeing... that you have had to adapt. Sometimes I go to extreme measures in order to fit the bill. I have to try really hard' and '... learn everything in advance'.

When Ashley does read, he maintains that the information is illustrated in his mind and that his 'imagination overrides the text'. Being on his feet,

physicalizing the text, repeating the words and working with images, really assists him: 'it's building a real image, one that I've looked at and remembered'.

Participant four – Rose (interview 14th December 2009)

Rose's final school grades were: A level Drama Studies B, Media Studies B, Sociology C. Eight GCSE's with satisfactory to good grades.

Rose was not assessed as dyslexic until her second year at the Arts University in 2009. Rose said that all through her childhood it was suggested she was dyslexic, 'I was ... so slow, last in the class to spell and read...I had extra help... my parents got me tutors'.

Rose says that looking at the text 'instils fear' in her, and that she sees 'a big black hole'. When reading aloud, she misses spaces between words, jumbles the text up and panics. As she reads, she follows the text with her finger, and works through it in chunks of two lines. She cannot process larger amounts because of her memory. When reading aloud, if she reads a larger chunk in one go, she has to focus so much on getting the words out, trying not to miss the line, making sense of it, 'that I have used all my brain power on doing that', and cannot hold onto the information to remember what it was about. Rose has never read a complete book as it requires such an effort and 'it goes in one ear and out of the other'.

Rose described her dyslexia, 'as though something in my brain is a little loose and I can't get it to come out how it should...I can't get it out of my lips or fingertips...it's like the battle against my brain'.

She sees images in the text, 'which other people couldn't even imagine, even if I can't voice it, it's inside me ... in that way I'm quite gifted'.

2. Introduction Of The Participants For The Shakespeare Unit 2011

Participant five – Callum (interview 15th October 2011)

Callum's final grades on leaving school were: BTEC Performing Arts Distinction*. A level Media Studies B, Two AS levels with good grades, five GCSE with good grades and another BTEC Performing Arts Distinction*.

Callum was assessed as dyslexic while at primary and secondary school, and again with an educational psychologist when he came to the Arts University in 2010.

Callum remembers in primary school being behind everyone else in spelling, and reading. However, he reports that his assessors at the time said that he 'had a high grasp of image puzzle kind of tests, where parts of the images are missing, and also I had a good grasp of physical things, such as wooden puzzles that you had to put together'.

Callum explains that he can read aloud smoothly but will get to one word which will be a block. If he is told how to pronounce it he will not take it in, or forget it. Sometimes he will lose his place on the page and not be able to find it, or miss a large chunk of text out. Callum underlines that when he has lost his place, he looks for the shell of a word of the right length and the right letter beginning. Rather than reading the word, Callum looks for the visual shape of the word, so, 'I often get them mixed up as words can look the same; they are only letters after all'.

When talking about his experience of dyslexia, Callum begins to cry. He recalled a test at school when he wanted to write on the exam paper that he was dyslexic but could not remember how to spell it. He recounted:

I remember getting very emotional about not spelling the word dyslexia right because it's an impossible word, whoever made that word is cruel ...because it is impossible to spell it, it doesn't make physical sense in my mind.

Callum concludes, declaring, 'it's a brick wall thing and no matter how much I throw myself against it, I can't break it down and that's what annoys me because I do try hard'.

Participant six – Amelia (interview 15th October 2011)

Amelia's final school grades were: A Level Drama A, A Level Dance B, A level English Literature B. Nine GCSE's with high grades.

Amelia was assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist in her first year of 6th form college and again when she arrived at the Arts University in 2010.

In interview, Amelia says that she cannot sound a word that she does not know and, '...if I have to speak it and process everything and read I can't'. She also has trouble with spelling. She can never remember spelling rules like 'i before e', and has to write words out repeatedly to 'imprint them'. As a child, Amelia worked out a system where she looked at the shape of the word, the highs and lows of the letters to create an image of the word, so she could 'map it out'. Amelia did well in her exams at school earning top marks, by learning books off by heart 'like a script', using large coloured mind maps, or condensing all the information down onto small cards displaying a word, colour or image, which gave her the key to all the material.

Amelia describes her dyslexia in reading, saying:

when I'm reading it, [the text], my body and my head and my mouth don't connect because my brain says do this, do that, feel this, go there and because it's doing that, my mouth is going, ' I can't do this by myself'...I let myself panic and it all goes wrong. When I read I blank out on words I don't know and all the words jump out at me, ...it's like my subconscious will stumble for me, like when you read your eyes are ahead of what you are saying, it's as if I have to stop my head being in front of me and bring it back here so that they work together.

It is noticeable that Amelia speaks very fast, not even giving herself time to complete the whole word, or for the listener to take in all of what she has said.

Participant seven – Verity (interview 15th October 2011)

Verity's final school grades were: BTEC Performing Arts Distinction*. A Level Theatre Studies B, Geography C, Photography B. One AS level, eight GCSE's with good grades.

Verity was assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist when at primary school. This assessment was updated in 2008 by an accredited specialist teacher. Verity says that she has always found it 'difficult to pronounce the words on the page'.

Verity describes her dyslexia as though, 'my mouth cannot connect to my head...somehow it is like someone's snipped one of my wires and ...everything's just wrongly connected'. Amongst her fellows in class, Verity feels like she is 'constantly five steps behind everyone else' when reading aloud and analysing the text.

Verity relates that when reading she tends to guess unfamiliar words through the context. She cannot process a word, get the meaning and know the pronunciation at once. She explains, 'I have to do it in stages, if it is a big word or an unfamiliar word, I break it down into syllables, and take each letter one by one to work out the sounds'. This disjointed activity then makes her lose the whole meaning of the sentence.

In Shakespeare Verity has to go through it word by word, ('which takes a lot of time'), and when having found out the meaning and pronunciation of the words she has to re-read it and visualise it. She stipulates that it is important for her to visualise the words, 'so that each word is like a picture –seeing an image of what it means is a lot easier for me to understand and remember it, otherwise the words are just empty...If I must remember this word and what it means, I will mentally draw an image for it'.

Participant eight – Abigail (interview 15th October 2011).

Abigail's final school grades were: BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts Triple Distinction. A level Drama and Theatre Studies C, Media Communication and Production D, Photography E. Three AS levels with poor grades, six GCSEs with satisfactory grades.

Abigail was first assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist when she came to the Arts University in 2010. She states that throughout school she had judged herself 'as just thick' and having a 'lack of intelligence'. Abigail says that she was slow at learning and did not understand why. She relates

that her teachers often made her cry at school because her handwriting was not considered good enough. She recalls that in Year Four, when the children had to read in the library, she used to choose a book and pretend to read it, although she actually could not. No one ever checked if she could read it. Abigail says that at school she learnt to 'make herself invisible and to sit in the background'.

Abigail will hold back from contributing in acting class because 'her processes are quite slow'...and '...it's a giant mess in my head'. She finds it helpful to listen to someone else read, while she follows. When looking at a Shakespeare text, Abigail describes seeing only jumbled words. Abigail gives a convoluted explanation of her dyslexia reading experience, explaining:

It's big words I get stuck on...., the other day I read a word and it was a word I couldn't read, but I could remember that I read it before and knew what it said, but I couldn't remember what it said and I couldn't read it...I was looking at it and couldn't read it and I couldn't sound it out but I remembered that I know what it says from before and I couldn't read it now.

When looking at a page of print, her eyes meet in the middle of the block of text and, 'like a child'; she takes it carefully word by word, using a finger to follow each word. If she does not do this she cannot take it in, or the words are not in the right order or missed out. It takes Abigail a 'long, long time to read', and although she would like to read a book, her attention span goes awry and she gives up. The psychologist assessment revealed that her short term memory is 'really bad'.

3. Introduction Of Participants for the Shakespeare Unit 2012 And Storytelling 2013

Participant Nine - Sophie (Interview 8th October 2012)

Sophie's final school grades were: AS level Sociology A*, Photography A, Performing Arts BTEC Distinction, Drama and Theatre Studies B. Ten GCSE exams with grades ranging from A to B.

Sophie was assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist at Sixth Form College. At primary school she remembers struggling with Maths and English, and her handwriting and spelling were a 'huge factor', (8.10.2012)

In secondary school she had trouble taking information in and would always have to re-ask how to do things when other people could do it easily. Sophie says she found this embarrassing and degrading. However, she remained in high sets for English although she had problems with spelling, grammar and punctuation. Sophie thinks she is imaginative and clever, but because of her dyslexia, she can give the impression of being stupid or not caring.

In her teens, Sophie states that the more the teachers tried to help her the more she wanted to cry and 'I just dismissed it because I did not want to face it'. She remembers feeling worthless; 'I felt I couldn't do anything- I didn't have anything to be proud about'. She had been predicted D's for her GCSE's and so, to prove everybody wrong she worked very hard and achieved two A*'s, four A's and four B's. (As Sophie tells me this, she begins to cry with heavy sobs).

At Sixth Form College Sophie did Photography, Performing Arts and Theatre Studies. She loves photography and states:

I think images they ... speak out to me a lot more than words... If I was to look at text or then a picture, I just think that a picture tells me a lot more, a lot quicker. I can read the picture easier that I could understand a lot of text, if it was saying what was happening in the picture and then I was looking at the picture I could probably process it quicker and take in more.

Sophie says that she has problems with attention. She stresses that her memory is weak and although she can remember things from a long time ago, her short term and working memory are poor.

When working on Shakespeare in the voice classes Sophie says that she finds it helpful if she can listen to someone else read and follow the text with her finger, but if she is reading she cannot take the information in as she is just trying to get through reading the words. She has to write things down, and underline them, to process and remember, so she can re-read it later.

Sophie describes thinking about a Shakespeare sonnet by seeing its textual shape on the page as an image:

I imagine it wrapping round the page and going down –a snake of words – a visual picture. I can't see what any of the words say, but it's just text in a square...it's sort of flowing blurred lines just going round.

Sophie is still emotionally affected by her dyslexia. She confides that it embarrasses her when she gets words wrong when reading. She gives an example of mis- reading the timetable, thinking *lecture room* said *leisure room*. She reports:

I get laughed at quite a lot and find myself going bright red...and I want to cry. I think this is because I used to get very angry, but now, when I get frustrated, instead of having a fit of rage, I normally just cry my frustration out, which I guess is healthy as it's a release.

Participant ten: James (interview 8th October 2012).

James's final school grades were: BTEC in Acting: Double Distinction and Merit. 7 GCSE's ranging from B – C.

James was assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist just before he came to the Arts University.

James recalls that he had been offended when his drama teacher at secondary school had suggested that he might be dyslexic, as it was seen as a shameful thing at his school. He relates that the people who were dyslexic 'were socially awkward...the sort of people who would sit in the library at lunch breaks and not talk to anybody and, kind of, be on their own'. His drama teacher had said she suspected that he might be dyslexic because, James explains, he did not absorb information. He would hear some of it and then stop listening, 'zone out' and miss half of the instructions, and therefore, not know what he was supposed to be doing.

To assess his dyslexia, when he was sixteen, the school gave him a test on the sounds of the alphabet, which he says he found easy. He describes feeling 'a bit of a third class person as apparently people with dyslexia in a comprehensive school can't even do the alphabet, which was a bit of a blow in the head for me'. James stated that his confidence was affected. He became demotivated and did not want to do any work in case it revealed his weaknesses.

James says that he was good at science, chemistry, physics, biology, and electronics because the subjects used diagrams and pictures instead of talking. The diagrams stuck in his head.

James finds writing bothersome as it takes him so long to do he tunes out and then forgets what he is writing. He then has to re-read what he has written in order to recall what it is about.

Although James professed, 'I am fine with reading', he went on to identify that he gets words the wrong way round, misses out punctuation, and can take some time to work out vowel sounds and how the word is orally shaped.

James stresses that he needs extra time to do things which affects his ability to do exams. 'I feel like I have to rush because I'll do a page and then realise that a quarter of my time is gone and I am nowhere near where I need to be...It all becomes a big blur and a big mess because I am not doing what I have been told because I don't have the time'.

He did well with his BTEC in Acting because, he relates, he worked very hard, and did not have to undergo written exams.

James labels his poor memory as the most frustrating aspect of his dyslexia. He always has to write things down to remember them. Recounting his memory challenges, James articulates:

If I'm getting stuff ready in my bag to go to uni, I'll go upstairs and I'll get my coat and I'll come back down and I'm like, 'oh my shoes are upstairs', so I have to go upstairs to get them as well and it is so frustrating because I literally can't go upstairs and think of everything that I need and bring it down, I'm just constantly remembering stuff like, 'oh yes I need this, I need this', it always happens when I'm downstairs, rather than when I'm there [upstairs] and so that is frustrating but I have to live with it.

Participant eleven - Hollie (interview 8th October 2012)

Hollies' final school grades were: A Levels: Psychology A. Theatre Studies A. Media Studies A. AS levels: History B. 11 GCSE's - all passing at A-C grade

Hollie was assessed as dyslexic by an educational psychologist in her first year at the Arts University.

Hollie was born with only fifty per cent hearing as her ear canals were too small. She had an operation to widen them when she was about three, and she states that consequently her hearing 'is fine'. She was a late speaker and had to go to speech therapy because she had difficulty forming words properly. She could not understand the sounds of letters and how they related to words. 'I couldn't understand that those symbols would mean that kind of word and the fact there is the same symbol in a different word'. Not only could Hollie not relate the letter symbols to the sounds, she relates that 'I just couldn't form the words properly'.

Her parents were worried about Hollie's progress at the school she was attending, so she applied to go to a private secondary school. At the private

secondary school, Hollie said she was given one to one time with the teachers, which helped her. In the sixth form Hollie gained confidence because of her success in achieving three A grades for her A levels. She therefore concluded that she could not be dyslexic.

The Arts University initial screen test picked up that Hollie might be dyslexic, but as her A level results were so good, they were unsure whether to put her forward for the educational psychologist's assessment. Hollie explained she was having trouble reading aloud in classes. 'I panic – I literally feel sick at the thought of reading...I'd stumble completely on whatever word was next'. She was put forward for an educational psychologist test and then Hollie was officially assessed as dyslexic. Hollie reveals that her dyslexia test said her working memory was not good and that she could not process fast enough.

Hollie struggles with focussing on things straight away. She says she knows she is dyslexic when she cannot explain herself even though she has all the information in her head:

I'll have all these images of what's happened and if I'm talking about the Globe, [theatre], and what the Globe looks like, I'll picture the Globe and I'll have all the zodiac signs and the groundlings and I'll picture everything that's there – everything is there, but I just can't get it out. I wish I could just give you the picture and say, look I do understand it – it's all there, I just can't say it. Dyslexia is just a little bit of a ball and chain to get through life.

Participant twelve - Elizabeth (interview 8th October 2012)

Elizabeth's final school grades were: BTEC National Diploma Acting: Triple Distinction. Nine GCSEs grades ranging from A – D.

Elizabeth was officially assessed as dyslexic when she came to the Arts University.

In primary school nobody had remarked on Elizabeth having any difficulties, but when she went to secondary school, the teachers told her she was dyslexic. She began to get extra tuition with one to one classes; 'I had a lot of

help with spelling and my memory –retaining things’. Elizabeth identifies that her short term and working memory weakness present a ‘big problem’. She relates, ‘I find it hard to remember ...my mum noticed it as well. She would tell me ‘can you go upstairs and get the washing? And I’d go upstairs, and I’d have to shout back down and she’d have to repeat it again to me’.

Elizabeth recalls being called stupid at school. The teachers told her she was going nowhere. She became disruptive because she did not understand; ‘I was sat there in this world of my own, not knowing’. Elizabeth says that she was good at English and liked the imaginative part of it, but was not good at the technical side of writing. She does not understand grammar, punctuation and spelling. At school she also was tested for *petit mal* (mini epileptic fits), as sometimes she would be listening to someone talking and then she would ‘wake-up a minute later’ and she would not know what had been said. However, Elizabeth did reasonably well in her GCSE’s and then did a BTEC in Acting.

When she came to the Arts University, she relates that , ‘ I nearly had a breakdown following our first lecture – Performance Studies - because I could not deal with it at all – ... all the information and I couldn’t write it down – I can’t write and listen – I read my notes back and I couldn’t understand any of it. I then had the educational psychologist assessment’. Elizabeth states she has to read something four or five times until she can take in what the words mean. She sometimes can understand complicated instructions but finds it hard to process smaller tasks and information, ‘like an essay question – it will take me a week or two, I need to prepare myself to let it sink in and then I’ll approach it’.

Elizabeth finds the most frustrating thing about her dyslexia is:

In my head I can do it – I know what it means and what the word says but I can’t vocally express it...sometimes I just can’t, it won’t - the sentence won’t work out properly and it’s sometimes the same when I’m trying to understand what someone has said to me.

Appendix Four

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- 1. Examples of some of the participants' references to their memory and processing difficulties**
Pages 368 - 369

Ashley: I definitely have a very bad memory. I don't always take everything in. I often forget to do things. If someone explains something to me, I'll say 'yes', and I'll be remembering it and then I'll walk away and then I'll think what time was that?', 'If it has just been spoken to me I wouldn't remember', 'Sometimes I just blank off....I will switch off...', (14th December 2009). '....I start to forget things or forget how I wanted to perform things...' (16th May 2011).

Jimmy: 'Another reason for my problems is the fact that I have trouble concentrating...I don't think back and remember how a word looks - it doesn't work like that for my brain' (14th December 2009).

Rose: '...it's mainly my dyslexia, my memory and my processing – if I read a page, I can't tell you a thing about what I've just read...my processing and my memory' (14th October 2009). 'I rely a lot on muscle memory because my memory is shocking, I think everything is a memory test for me ...my memory shamefully, ...I think it has affected my attention span as, if I don't grasp the topic, I switch off' (15th June 2011).

Richard: '...my brain tends to wander off' (16th May 2011). 'Often I forget spelling, I get confused when reading', '...it's very easy to tune out, I always had a problem with daydreaming, I have to really control it' (6th Dec 2010).

Verity: '...for me to remember hearing the words and understand them, they just go in one ear and out the other' (15th October 2011).

Amelia: '...techniques like 'i over e', I could never remember those things ...if there was a certain word that I couldn't remember I used to make up a little story to help me remember the word' (15th October 2011).

Callum: 'I personally [Ily] have problems remembering large chunks [chunks] of text' (12th March 2012). 'Yesterday in class there was one word, oh yes, 'perilously' and every time you said it, I was going 'perilously' over and over again, I'd better remember this for next time round, and next time it came round I could not remember the word or say it properly', '...once it is said to me I can normally process it for a couple of minutes before I forget it again...yes, I would

often forget it, twenty minutes later it will be gone. I wouldn't have any idea of what I had said' (15th October 2011).

Abigail: '... my short term memory is really bad' (15th October 2011).

Sophie: 'I've got quite a short attention span', 'my memory is awful, I feel like it's getting worse, I just can't remember' (8th October 2012).

Elizabeth: 'I find it hard to remember - my memory is quite a big problem', '...sometimes someone will be talking to me and I'll look like I'm listening but I wake up a minute later and I don't know what you've said' (8th October 2012).

James: 'I would just zone out and then we'd get to the end and I'd be like, oh we've got to do something now and I've not heard half of the instructions', '... [my memory] is not too great. I usually have to write stuff down to remember it'. 'It all becomes a big blur and a big mess' (8th October 2012).

Hollie: '... they said my working memory wasn't as good as I thought', 'I'll get into a muddled chaos when it should be linear and it all goes into this massive pile and I ...just can't get it back out' (8th Oct 2012).

Appendix Five

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- 1. Explanation of one of my methods of analysis of data
Pages 371**

- 2. Examples of my annotated participant interviews and
reports, showing developing themes
Pages – 372 - 381**
 - i. Extract from interview with Ashley Pages 372 - 375**
 - ii. Extract from interview with Verity Pages 376 - 378**
 - iii. Report from Richard Pages 379**
 - iv. Report from Jimmy Pages 380 - 381**

1. Explanation of Method

Colour key used for identifying emerging themes:

Blue colour for memory issues

Pink colour for visual image approaches

Yellow colour for processing/dyslexia difficulties

Orange colour for physical/kinaesthetic approaches

Green colour for incorrect spelling or unusual word use

Red colour for negative emotional feelings

Rationale

The use of colour on the page to delineate the areas I was looking out for assisted in highlighting and defining the emerging themes. The repetition of key areas, such as memory and image (and sometimes physicality) the interconnecting relationship between them, and their support for the weaknesses in processing, was revealed through the visible presence of the colours on the page - sometimes separate but often overlapping with each other. The patchwork of coloured themes on the pages revealed the interconnectedness of each area within the whole. The occasional red colour glimpsed throughout showed the presence of an underlying fear of reading, and insecure sense of self-efficacy.

Initially, as part of my method of analysis, my intention was to count up the number of times each of the areas were mentioned throughout the participants' interviews and reports, thereby assessing the prominence of each feature through a numerical hierarchical sequence. However, when attempting to extract each subject from its context, giving it a distinct classification, I realised that the themes were context bound, and frequently interrelating, and that therefore, attempting a figure count would prove meaningless. In order to perceive and understand the situation, the repetition of certain colours demonstrated not only the presence, and dominance of key themes, but also revealed the blurred boundaries within each area.

1. Annotated Participant Interviews

Audio recorded interview with Ashley in the Acting Studio on 16th May 2011

Ashley: The first step in finding my sonnet - this is Sonnet 80 - the first thing is to get the script and then find out exactly what it means. So that's the first step - get the sonnet and start to read it. However this is where we start to encounter a few difficulties because I start to forget things or forget how I wanted to perform things and I never really get it up to the level which I would be hoping to perform it at by just reading it

memory

Petronilla: What do you forget?

Ashley: I forget certain words, I forget the order of the lines and sometimes I'll put a line from a later one earlier in because I know the text, but it's about the order and the structure of it and when I've learnt it, I'll go back and I'll flip it about - but you see part of dyslexia is that when you're reading you switch lines, which is where the difficulty of learning things comes from.

memory

process

Petronilla: You can read it and you can learn it but it all gets a bit mixed up?

Ashley: Yes - when you come away from the text or even when you are reading the text, you jump the words around and that's why it becomes difficult to actually know what's going on.

process

Petronilla: The words jump around a bit therefore you lose the meaning?

Ashley: Yeah - It's harder to actually grasp what the structured sentence is - how it's meant to read. But in my way of working, after first reading the sonnet, then I'll break out the sentences and I'll take the first one and I'll say, "Oh, how I faint when I of you do write" and then I'll want to illustrate that, to give myself a better chance of remembering it with images. I like to work with images and music and things like that, but obviously images is the most accessible thing because you can always have it, you don't need anything electronic or things like that once you've got your images printed off - I get these images and re - jig them all up and then try to remember the sonnet just through the images, because then I find I'm remembering it in more ways than one. I'm remembering it actually as written text and I'm remembering it as a visual sort of stimulation and that gives me a lot more to work with on stage when I'm performing ... because it's almost like emotional memory, it's like a pictorial memory

memory

image

Image!

of images you have seen and how you associate the whole thing and how it affects the word and your emotions and your intention and everything like that and for me I've always found it really helped - pictures and things that I can pull out of my mind because I think you associate quicker with images. Well, a picture says a thousand words as the old saying goes! So once I've got all of my images sorted, I have taken them from the sonnet and I've laid them out, so here I've got a big 'oh', (as he gets a large red written 'oh' out from a collection of images he has bought with him) because it's quite strong, it's big and it's 'oh' and I know when I start. I feel that one should always start strong, so feel that by putting a nice big image at the start of it - you go: "oh; that's a big image - a red 'oh' and I'll put a lot of energy into it." So I'll put that there if I was doing a normal story board and I'll put that there and then layer along as I go. (Ashley starts to stick the OH symbol on the white board to demonstrate how he lays the symbols out).

Petronilla: Do you do a word per image?

Ashley: It's not an exact science, because for 'how' - it's quite hard to find one for that - I do have one because there is one I always use for 'how', (he searches through his examples of images that he has bought) - if I can find it - yes, that's 'how', that to me says 'how' - a lot of connotations coming through that image (as he is showing us the image) I've used this one for 'how' in other sonnets.

Petronilla: So the images are personal to you - others might not understand that it was 'how', but you know immediately.

Ashley: Yes - a lot of my images are quite childish and cartoon like. I just think that's ease - or it's however your mind works. Some people might want a beautifully drawn out - the whole thing, but I start to panic. I just like to grab what I can and I think that's part of it. If you do start using images that are too complicated, that you found in some dark corner of the earth, you'll never be able to really access something like that again, so I think it's bad to delve too deep into the images, they just have to represent it quickly, so you don't have to analyse because if you go: (affects intense voice) "...oh there's this lovely picture, with a robe at the end ..." (back to his own voice) - but it's not a piece of art, it's just about an image that quickly associates with a word in your mind, whether that's an orange for an apple or an apple for an orange, it's just how your mind works. So I lay these out as I go and then I get to the end of the sonnet....

Panic
*

Panic!
← (Sean)

internal
& external images!

Interview continued....

Petronilla: Using images that you have got from the internet, do you use any other methods towards working on Shakespeare?

literal & imaginary!

Ashley: I use images that I have from my life as anybody does when they think about a certain thing but I really try and visualise every single word in my mind in an exact image that I can build. I sort of half create in my mind images from past experiences how I have come to define in a sort of photographic sense.

Petronilla: So they are strong in your head?

cemented wth
external images

Ashley: Yes, - they are descriptive, colourful. It gives you an opportunity to let you explore so much of your past experiences, so many emotions and brings in so much of your life experiences but other than that I use... I'd love to do my own images but I am a terrible drawer and I have such little confidence in my drawing that I don't think I'd be able to remember whatever I was trying to draw. I can sometimes hardly read my own writing let alone analysing an image I'd drawn!

lack
of confidence
memory

Petronilla: What would it be like if someone gave you the images and they had already done the story board for you?

Ashley: I don't think that would work just because it's just not mine. If it's not yours, you haven't found it - you haven't spent three minutes or so researching around for it. It's not going to be the way you wanted it to be ...

In terms of a teaching tool if I'd had this when I was at school in drama or even in English when learning Shakespeare and we'd say: "it's rubbish - what's he going about?" - If we had worked in this way it might be the way forward, who knows?

Petronilla: If you didn't have this visual way of working how would you work?

Ashley: If I can't work in this way... I read it lots and lots of times out loud. That's the most important thing for me. Whenever I read something in my head, the second I open my mouth it's gone, ..., if I think I'm remembering it, no I can't remember - and I have to read it aloud. With modern texts I write it out as I go but because my writings not very good, it can be unintelligible, but I break it up punctuation to punctuation and if it was an 'oh', I'd scribble it and dig half way through the book trying to write the

memory

Kinesthetic
action

* the physical igniting memory.

emotions into the letters and make it as illustrative as I can or remember if I'm really tense and I say 'I hate', I'll try and write that in a scornful way to evoke an emotional memory. So that's a kinaesthetic thing through the body, but also you are imprinting it on the page heavy or thick...

↓ through the body
→ to imprint! - to remember -
(but also the image)

Filmed Interview with Verity in the Movement Room 12th December 2011

Petronilla: Verity, why might doing the text using physical actions be helpful to you?

Verity: Because using the actions, within the different sections in the script, whenever a thought changes or a different section, helps me to understand the meanings of the words, whereas before they would be more empty when I read them. Having the imagery of the action and the physicalisation of the action helps me to remember when – after you've gone through to the final stage when you are performing the lines, in the physicalisation, you remember how the physical actions helped you to remember what you were feeling with your body, what the words meant.

Petronilla: You explained to me earlier on that when you found a strong image or a physical movement for a particular word or phrase or feeling that you are talking about in the Shakespeare text - that you can find a physical action that matches that imagery and the physical action is creating for you in your mind a picture - an image that helps you access the meaning of the word and also helps you remember it and feel and think it - is that right?

Verity: Yes - because the physical – physically doing an image will help you remember the context of the word and by remembering the context of the word you know what the character will be feeling, and by remembering – it's like a train of thoughts that all link together, so by physicalisation and remembering the physicalisation reminds you of the meaning of the word and by then realising the meaning of the word you remember what the character will be feeling at that point, or what you interpret the character to be feeling at that point, so then the feeling will come as another picture because otherwise the feeling will never be, although the feeling is a feeling and you can't draw it – I do - because otherwise it's just empty – it will just be air.

Petronilla: Can you explain to me what you mean by saying that you draw feelings?

Verity: I personally imagine it like a painting. I don't mean that if it's sad that it will be a face crying. It will be - It's to do with the imagery of how you are when you are painting that feeling, so anger would be a scribble and as you scribble on the page,

Kinesthetic feedback!

your arm is tense and I can imagine I might not be holding the paint brush correctly - rather I might be holding the paintbrush in a tense mode so that the action of scribbling it reminds me of the tension the anger and the power and then also having it on paper - the image in my mind it's almost literally a drawing almost - it's always on a sheet of paper and the paper will be white or a pale colour - so it will be a blank page with a very clear image that I have in my mind of a painting or a drawing or splattered or depending on what the emotion is

Petronilla: Yes - so are you saying then that as you act - when speaking or reading these words that there's a visual?

Verity: It's literally a bit like a strobe light in my head with different pictures, like a film that flips through with everything that's happening in the film - like per words - there's a flash of each image - either of what the word means if it's a difficult word that I don't really understand or the feeling - the changing each word - images are changing yes ... it's like watching a film in my head - it's like the images flowing through.

Petronilla: Have you found that the images happens with any text or Shakespeare particularly?

Verity: Yes - if it was Psychological Realism there would be more of a slow picture moving across like that, (she demonstrates a slow action across her face), until the next one comes along but because Shakespeare is so powerful with his words and imagery and they are always there and even if the speech is a long emotional slow - it doesn't have to be an angry speech for it to be flashing in my mind because there is much interest in the smaller section it will always be a constant movement of feelings and emotions and meanings related to these images in the text all bound together

Petronilla: Do you think those images might get in the way of your reading? They might distract from the reading of the actual words?

Verity: Yes - I think they probably do a bit - now just looking at this and I'm thinking - as soon as I move a line I get - in the back of my mind an image so it takes over a bit with this especially how descriptive it is . It will always be an image rather than a word.

Stanislavski -
moving images.

image!
↳

Stanislavski
moving film!

image!
↳

image!
↳

Petronilla: Is that particularly in Shakespeare or any reading of words that you are led by images rather than simply the word on the page or looking at the letters?

Verity: I think particularly with Shakespeare because I find the language more difficult to understand but then in general in life I will put an image to a word. It will be the words that I understand in life or in Shakespeare everything that I don't understand I'll always put an image to it.

Petronilla: How can you put an image to it if you don't understand it?

Verity: Because I'll find out.

Petronilla: Oh I see, so once you have found out what it means you then put a strong image that goes with that – why?

Verity: It's more to anchor it because when I was younger if there was a word that I didn't understand I didn't bother with it. I just thought I don't understand it, I just won't use it, it's fine I've got enough words in my English language to communicate myself, but now, as I've got older I've realised 'no I want to be able to expand my vocabulary' and when people talk to me I want to be able to understand what they are saying and not have to stop them mid-sentence and say 'I'm sorry but what do you mean by that' and so I will always ask or find out even when I'm generally talking to someone about in a conversation and they say something I don't understand and I always feel a bit stupid when I do but I will stop them and I'll say 'I'm sorry but what does that word mean?' and then as soon as they say what it means, instantly I'll draw a picture.

Petronilla: Do you do that consciously or subconsciously?

Verity: Um, consciously because, I will think, especially if I think 'oh that's a really good word to have', I will consciously think 'I must remember this word – what it means' and I'll mentally draw an image for it, because otherwise the word – someone will say it again or in a piece of reading and I'll think 'oh I do know what that word means but I can't get it' and sometimes that will happen because it's not like I've got a big library in my mind, but I will flip through it and it takes a while but it will come to me because it is in my mind. I will try as much as I can to learn words that I don't understand so in Shakespeare's language it's majority of it is imagery and pictures that I will put to it every time I read for the first time because the majority of it I won't

Image
←

stupid

use of
Image!
←

memory
& image!
←

*

note spelling! strange how use! ✱

Written Report from Richard. 17th August 2011

remember!

I have always learnt visually, be that looking at pictures or at text. For example, I will often jot down important information as I find it easier to remember when I can see it physically written down. I have used this way of approaching texts for many years and have found it key to success. Though my methods were not logical and I did not have an affective way of learning lines or braking down text. Working with you in class on story boarding etc gave me a way of efficiently learning in a visual fashion and allowed me to collaborate my past methods. In essence working with your in class has significantly helped me work on texts, especially Shakespeare.

The 'doodles' I draw while working on a text are not set in stone. I find my imagination very hard to control and so I try to find a simple task that can allow me to focus my thoughts. Drawing is one way of doing this. Though it has other uses as I can sketch the images in my head and later physicalise them. Also, I usually have not idea what I am going to draw when I first put pen to paper. This is true for both story boarding and the other images you have seen.

Words are not frightening to me, I love to read novels and plays as a way to relax. I sometimes find reading allowed frightening because of past experiences, which I have already discussed and the risk of embarrassment. Also it's not a choice to learn text as imagines, it's the only way I can learn them. For whatever reason I find it hard to learn words in the normal way and so remember them as pictures. Hence why I find handwriting or italics difficult to understand.

As I have already mentioned the work we have done together has helped me formulate a concrete mothered I can now use on any text. Using some of my techniques and combining them with what you have shown me. It has also shown me that this is an efficient way of approaching a text and given me confidence to use it regularly.

Other than this, there is very little I can mention that has not already been covered at some point. You seem to have already come to the same conclusions as I have, no two people with Dyslexia are alike and you can't simply teach a Dyslexic person in a normal way, you have to find way around it.

✱
Fear!
Memory

CONFIDENCE

concentration /
memory?

??

Reading

Jimmy

I think another reason for my troubles is the fact that I have trouble concentrating. I think it is really important that I understand what I am looking at. For example, if I am in class and then I am suddenly plunged into reading a large chunk of text, I am often confused and I get lost. However, if I am informed of what the text is about and I have a rough idea of what I am reading I am able to process what is going on in a much better way.

means processing?

I think that for me, it has not always been about simply learning and possessing the words and punctuation. I think that to say that I can now read just because I am able to read a sequence of words and punctuation would be a lie. I now spend so much time and energy getting the words right I lose the meaning of what I am saying. This is why I find the idea of images more attractive. What you see is what you get.

memory!

Trying to explain exactly what happens when I look at words is hard because I do not have any other form of reference. I have only ever looked through my eyes. What I can say is that what I do see has always been a challenge. When I become nervous I find that letters often jump about. Whether this is my mind or eyes playing tricks on me I am not sure but the more nervous I become, the more it happens. I have found however, that deep and steady breathing does calm me down and the problem becomes less erratic. I also become confused with tricky letters. For example I often confuse P with B, C with K and I often read d as b simply because they look alike.

whether

I don't really understand how people seem to read

with such ease. I have never really grasped how to flow while reading. For instance, when I come to a full stop while reading, I have to think really hard about what it means to include a full stop in a sentence. I struggle to adjust to the demand that this particular piece of punctuation requires of me. I then panic about if I am giving the right tone and intension to the line.

Although I am fully capable of reading now, I still feel that there is vital ground work that I need to cover. When my problems were more severe as a child I failed to grasp many important grammatical and punctual methods. I feel that I still need to learn these simple things before I can really progress any further in my reading.

What I have learnt about my reading is that the only real way I have got better is practice. I try to make sure I read most nights (if I am not going out) and if I am on my own I try to read out loud. I have found that the quality of what I am reading often affects the way in which I read it. I find it much easier to read descriptive, pictures writing as opposed to a list of meaningless facts. If the writing is descriptive, I have finally become able to build up a picture in my head and this helps me to understand the text throughout the piece of writing.

Panic!



not in memory
lack of automaticity

memory?

lack of automaticity

punctuation



Appendix Six

Contents

Evaluation of Study

- 1. Some participants' evaluative remarks about the research work, drawn from the data**

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- 2 Examples of peer evaluation:**

- i. Val Greathead, Head of the School of Performance at the Arts University Bournemouth**

Pages 386 - 387

- ii. Katharine Piercey, senior lecturer in Acting and Singing at the Arts University Bournemouth**

Pages 387

1. *Participants' evaluation: the creation of shared understandings*

Jimmy: I think the work I have done with you has been the most helpful thing I have done in terms of my disability. You have uncovered and unearthed many methods that I will now take further on into life. I think it was a great help that you were also on a journey to understand my condition, because in turn that lead to me constantly reevaluation [re-evaluate], and rethink about my disability, (personal communication 27.8.2011).

Ashley: The creation of a 'visual pathway' through the chosen text is a method which Petronilla and I developed over around a two year period,...Using the methods I developed with Petronilla ...I now feel extremely confident when approaching any of Shakespeare's plays, sonnets or poems, (personal communication 13.10.2011).

Rose: Through all the work Petronilla and myself have done together I have found, most valuably, that I am proud to have a different learning style to others... I found the more work I did with Petronilla the more I became aware of what strategies I was using and explaining them to another person helped me to fine tune what was helping me and what was taking time and not actually being effective towards my progression. All of this work with Petronilla has been invaluable; I have taken away confidence, pride and understanding of what I have more problems with and how I can help myself through different methods we have collaborated together to structure, (personal communication 18.8.2011).

Richard: Working with you in class on storyboarding etc, gave me a way of efficiently learning in a visual fashion and allowed me to collaborate [integrate?] my past methods. In essence working with your [you] in class has significantly helped me work on texts, especially Shakespeare. The work that we have done together has helped me formulate a concrete mothered [method] I can now use on any text. Using some of my techniques and combining them with what you have shown me. It has also shown me that it is an efficient way of approaching a text and given me confidence to use it regularly, (personal communication 17.8.2011).

Development of participants' meta - awareness of their own learning processes and understanding through the research methods

Jimmy: Before starting the course, I found it hard to read, write and generally felt unconfident when it came to things like these. I also had no methods in dealing with these problems. The methods worked for me because I was able to get a much firmer grasp on my disability. I honestly feel that a lot of the time, some of the revelations I made were as new to me as they were to you, (personal communication 27. 8. 2011).

Ashley: In terms of a teaching tool, if I'd had this when I was at school in drama or even in English when learning Shakespeare and we'd say, 'it's rubbish – what's he going on about?' – if we'd worked in this way it might be the way forward...', (16.5.2011)

Ashley: I found that relating individual words of a sonnet to individual images which I had chosen and deemed suitable helped me to cement the words of the chosen sonnet more concretely in my mind. This method in its final form developed into an entire story board of the text, which forced me to learn it twice; first in the traditional 'learning words way' and then visually so that every word in the text had an associated image to go with it. Having this visual bank to refer to gave me comfort when performing sonnets or texts as I had more than one place to go to find the words in my head, (personal communication 13.10. 2011).

Rose: Prior to working with Petronilla I found that most of my workings and strategies were unfocussed and vaguely structured. I constantly felt as ease and comfortable to share my working methods which is very important because they are so personal to me. In fact up to the point of working with Petronilla I had never shared my working methods or any feelings I had related to me being dyslexic. Now I have clarified methods with Petronilla I feel I can work faster in working through a text, saving me time and allowing me more time preparing the piece for performance rather than preparing it for me to be able to read and understand it. I now use these methods constantly, (personal communication 18. 8. 2011).

Verity: The benefits of this work are huge. It broadened my understanding of what I perceived to be a daunting subject matter, something that I always tried to avoid as I saw it as an impossible challenge. I already use this system in everyday life when I don't understand the meaning of a word. However I never drew physically on paper, it was always an image created in my mind. I will always use this system when I am struggling with understanding words, (personal communication 18.3.2012).

Callum: I have never really focussed on my dyslexia and had the chance to explore how it effects [affects] me so having the chance to work on a one to one basis is great... the tools that I have used to battle against the dyslexia have evolved naturally and are never thought about and planed [planned]; they are often just happened upon. The drawing defiantly [definitely] helped me to understand the words better...I would defiantly [definitely] use it on my next Shakespeare text...as it helped break the language down', (personal communication 12.3.2012).

Sophie: I have learnt so much, especially about myself.... I have noticed that my brain really does work very differently to those that don't have dyslexia and tasks that others find quite straight forward seem very daunting and muddled in my mind. Similarly after showing others my PowerPoint who don't have dyslexia I don't think it is as helpful to them as it is to me, they often brush over all my small details, (personal communication 21.3.2013.)

Elizabeth: I have learnt a lot about myself in regards to my dyslexia. Looking deeper into it and having to really think about things... However, I feel I have gained so many more skills (all the exercises above mostly) that I know I will defiantly [definitely] help me in the future and I will use forever, (4.4.2013).

1. Peer Evaluation

- i. Val Greathead, Head of the School of Performance, Arts University Bournemouth June 2013

I am familiar with Petronilla's PhD study idea and have had the pleasure to witness her teaching and development over a period of almost seven years.

Most recently I have observed a presentation of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* - an action research part of Petronilla's PhD study.

The *Venus and Adonis* presentation exemplified the critical examination of the proposition that for some acting students identified as dyslexic, a visual construct approach may greatly assist them in accessing the content of the text and pronouncing the words within the text. Feedback from the participating students confirmed that they believed this to be the case also. The students I observed were able to speak with a released, unblocked voice and free physical response unhampered by inherent difficulties with engaging with the text due to dyslexia. The performances were expressive, physical and confident. I noted the students' use of drawing specifically enriched the performance and added a further dimension and exemplifies their double exceptionality (Montgomery 2003). The experience for the audience is enriched through the creation of a multi-faceted aural and visual performance.

Since I have been privileged to witness Petronilla's development as a teacher, I would judge that her own pedagogical approach has been transformed through her research as has the experience for the learners. Petronilla developed the initial survival strategies noted from Dave's way of speaking the Shakespeare Sonnet, through to an initial, computer tool, then worked with the students, involving them throughout, on drawing the text-key words and their meaning within the text-to create both pictorial and physical storyboards of the text.

I can say that through observation of her teaching and the resulting performances achieved by students with dyslexia, Petronilla is making a real

difference to the learning and achievement of these students and thus contributing to new educational practices and educational thinking.

- ii. Katharine Piercey, senior lecturer in Singing and Acting at the Arts University Bournemouth. Observation of the *Venus and Adonis* performance on the 25th February 2013.

From the performance I saw of *Venus and Adonis* it was evident that the researcher had developed the idea of the macro and micro idea, by encouraging the students to explore the images they had found in the investigative stage, in creative and imaginative ways for inclusion in their final performance. It is apparent that the researcher had used a constructivist teaching approach in that she allowed students to create the performance from their own meaning and interpretation of the poem, making it a student centred approach. The result was a visually rich and vibrant interpretation of the poem that included expressive voice, music, painting, and individual and ensemble physical use. By allowing the students to use these different creative avenues it was apparent through their performance that they had a fuller and deeper understanding of the text they were speaking.

The methods the researcher has used has allowed the student to investigate this heightened and complex text imaginatively, creatively, psychologically and physically – all fundamental aspects of actor training. It is evident that she has looked at the overall pedagogy of the training the students have undertaken and made clear links between it and the study she is undertaking. Therefore this would suggest that whilst the researcher's focus has been on the dyslexics' experience of understanding Shakespeare's text, the methods and techniques the researcher has been developing for this specific study would also be of huge benefit to all students actors, dyslexic or not. From what I have witnessed it is apparent that this rich and visually stimulating approach to Shakespeare can only enhance a student's experience of understanding the text, and would be an innovative way of teaching this subject to all acting students.

Appendix Seven

Contents

1. The actress Susan Hampshire's letter to me regarding her use of visual symbols

Susan Hampshire has identified herself as dyslexic, and written about her difficulties with dyslexia, and techniques when working in the profession, (Hampshire 1990)

Pages 389 - 391

SUSAN HAMPSHIRE

15/5/11

Dear Petronilla Whitefield

I have give pretty
rough answers to
your questions but
my days of being articulate

on the subject are
fast fading - So I
hope this is of some
use - In great
haste All best wishes
Susan Hampshire

②

⑤ I always use
pictures & colours
 when working on a
 script (including Shakespeare)

⑤ Yes, my symbols are
 more extensive — but
 each person must have
 developed their own symbols, and
 pictures, otherwise they (the symbols)
 won't connect to their
 emotions / brain / memory
 & so on. & thus will seem like more
WORDS

Pour Memoire when reading a $\frac{1}{2}$ leont ^{scrip}
 ① If I see the colour blue it would be
 for me to ^{use} a spiritual tone
 for instance
Red = joyful

& so on (choose your own
 connect to your emotions
 colours!) which
 May green ^{is for} a lyrical or
 descriptive passage

These colours
~~then~~ are to jog the memory of
 what the text is about
before I get to it - other
 wise I see one word at a
time & then it is too late
 to interpretate them

Appendix Eight

Contents

Three DVD's to be found at the back of the Appendices in the DVD pockets.

1. DVD Two. Contents:

The Background Context and Problem

Participants Ashley, Jimmy and Rose in interview describe their difficulties with dyslexia, and reading of Shakespeare

2. DVD Three. Contents:

Examples of the Action Research Work

Chapter Five

- i. *Participant Amelia*
- ii. *Amelia's physical storyboard for Medea*
- iii. *Amelia sight-reading a Shakespeare sonnet*
- iv. *Participant Callum*
- v. *Callum's physical storyboard for Medea*
- vi. *Callum's explanation about his physical storyboard for Medea*
- vii. *Cycle Two. Examples of the Six Stages of Stanislavski and Berry - influenced Units and Action work*

(With participants Amelia, Abigail & Verity)

Examples of:

- Stage One – movement only
- Stage Two – movement and sound
- Stage Three – movement and improvised words
- Stage Five - actions whilst listening to someone else reading the lines
- Stage Six - reading and actions (influenced by Berry's physicalisation of the images and the word)

- **Note: Stage Five and Six show some of my research discovery moments when certain key words and their meanings are missed or mis-represented**

viii. Participant Verity

Examples of

- Verity attempts to 'paint the words through her body'
- Verity describes the significance of her drawing

Chapter Four

ix. Participant Jimmy

x. Jimmy describes how he works on and customises the text.

xi. Jimmy sight- reading a Shakespeare sonnet

xii. Cycle One. Sonnet 57

Examples of Jimmy:

- Stage One - drawing the key word
- Stage Two- drawing the phrase
- Stage Three - reading the pictures
- Stage Four - reading the text

xiii. Participant Rose

Examples of Rose:

- Rationale for drawing
- Explanation of symbols
- Reading the drawing

3. DVD Four. Cycle Four – The Venus and Adonis performance

(With participants Sophie, Elizabeth, James and Hollie in performance)