The background of the cover is a detailed woodcut-style illustration of a seascape. In the foreground, there are several large, dark, billowing waves with intricate line work showing their texture and movement. In the middle ground, the sea is calmer, and in the far distance, a lighthouse is visible on a rocky outcrop, with a beam of light emanating from it. The overall style is classic and atmospheric.

Felix Dorer

**SPOOKS
AND HOW
TO EXORCISE
THEM**

SPOOKS AND HOW TO EXORCISE THEM

Practice-Based Research demonstrating the contemporary relevance and utility of Rico's 1983 Creative Writing technique: Clustering in a Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy

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CONTENT

“That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.”

– Bell Hooks

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Dedicated to Gabriele Rico
and to Basia, my sister

without you I would be a different me
without you my ideas would still be intangible bubbles,
drifting.

I wish we would have had more time.

INTRODUCTION

Haunted by this question.

Imagine yourself: In a group of people. Someone asks: Who would like to say something? You want to, but you don't speak up. Someone else says what you wanted to say. You weren't necessary.

Imagine yourself: In front of a piece of paper. With your pen in hand. What was it that you wanted to say? How will you say it? You want to, but the words don't come out. Maybe you're not the right one.

Maybe you're not made of the material that makes a person who can say things: someone who has something relevant to add. Or maybe you're afraid that what you will say won't hold up to the standards of what you hold yourself to. Or is it that for some inexplicable reason your tongue, your pen, your mind is hampered to a stillstand, crawling,

Where are your words? Where is your power? What is there holding you back?

What is this invisible force that blocks you from your own mind?

Before I began working on this thesis, I was still under the optimistic delusion, that I could use it to understand everything: How does a writer write, how does a writer think, where do their ideas come from and how can I make them even better, sharper, stronger?

I wanted to know what Creativity itself was, wanted to understand the filaments that form the very fabrics of thought. I wanted not just a slice of the cake, I wanted it all, in all its layered grandeur. I read mostly about psychology, research into teaching for excellence and popular theories defining creativity; until my fingers where itching for a test-run.

I myself learned to write poetry with the help of Gabriele Rico's Clustering technique, which was central to how I formulated ideas and has since become a central tool for my own teaching.

I made some connections with the local Art Academy, most prominently with Rolf Engelen, who gave me access to his students. These students, the very first to try out my new-found knowledge, changed my mind on many aspects of what I had believed.

My very first workshops of applied theory fell flat: the direct appliance of theory into practice didn't make any sense; experiences and especially results were far off from theoretical predictions and most importantly: not very helpful for the students.

It convinced me, that if I wanted to really help both these students and myself, then I would have to start learning from them, understand them and most importantly let go off ideas about universal creative teaching solutions.

It also showed me who I wanted to be: Someone who cares about the experience of the student first; someone who wants to have a meaningful impact on their lives.

So, I decided to keep my research practical and focused on these students in front of me; to find out how I could help them grow in their creative endeavours, understand what it was that motivated them and what they needed to succeed.

So that they wouldn't get stuck.

That shift in focus became part of the way that I conducted my research: I looked into the situations as they presented themselves, analysed what had occurred, compared it with the literature and reapplied what I had learned; after which the circle began anew.

Still, that was a lot of cake to have, a lot to investigate and understand and it made my research impossible. After many failed attempts at writing a research proposal, I was discouraged and stuck: Was what I wanted to do even worth it? Was I maybe not made of researcher material?

As I felt my own power dwindle, I realized that there were certain things I was missing. Therefore, there were certain things that were necessary for me to succeed. What were both these necessities and obstructions and how could I identify them? What did they look like in other writers? How could I keep students from falling into the same trappings and help those that already got stuck?

As Clustering is not only a pre-writing exercise that trains the writer's idea generating process, but also results in a visual of said process, I already had a valuable tool at hand.

As Sigmund Freud put it in his paper "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914), inhibitions or resistances are

overcome by first uncovering the “never uncovered resistance” and then by communicating to the patient what has been found.

Maybe the visual quality of Clustering could also be the key to uncovering these invisible resistances, these ungraspable spooks.

Therefore, my aim shifted from understanding how to support writers in their creative process generally to specifically asking: How can the pre-writing technique Clustering that had been so helpful in my own development both as a poet and teacher, be further developed to help understand writing inhibitions; and what pedagogical setting in turn is necessary to bolster the resulting insights?

AIM

The aim of this research was: to share the process-based, pre-writing technique Clustering and develop the technique further through practice-based research to make a significant contribution to Creative Writing Pedagogy.

POSITION

The research assimilated a Non-Hierarchical Learning approach for its cutting-edge ability to amalgamate an array of techniques from beyond the creative-writing field and embrace them in the light of contemporary psychology and pedagogical insight.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Across three discrete phases, working with art students new to Creative Writing, I performed over thirty workshops. As a basis of these workshops I used Rico’s 1983 Clustering technique; the unique aspect of the research was that I developed a way of teaching through reading the patterns created across the layers of Clusters each student produced in the workshop series. What I identified was that in this way it was possible to determine and confront inhibitors to the Creative Writing process. I tested and developed exercises to address these inhibitors. I was able to establish findings that help develop the writing process for students and the teaching of it for teachers.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

This thesis begins with an integrative literature review. I chose to perform an integrative review because, as the concepts are synthesised and considered, they form a piece of original research in themselves. The literature review serves the purpose to understand the larger field from where the research and I as practitioner sample ideas and approaches. It moves through the fields of Pedagogy and The Romantic Myth in Creative Writing into the terrain of Process-based Writing, Affect Theory, Felt Sense, Psychology, Motivators of Unobstructed Writing and the work of Gabriele Rico. After handling Gabriele Rico’s context for developing Clustering, I evaluate Rico’s contribution amongst the process-based techniques and contributions of Peter Elbow and Jürgen vom Scheidt. Eventually, I show the emblematic quality of Rico’s Clustering for Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy and

PROCESS-BASED WRITING.

Armed with my research question:

To what extent can practice-based research demonstrate the contemporary relevance and utility of Rico's 1983 Creative Writing technique: Clustering in Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy?

The thesis then positions the practical Education Project methodologically, in practice-based research and defines the methods of the Non-Hierarchical Learning position. After, I present the Education Project in a detailed description of design, participants, procedure, equipment and ethical considerations. I establish how measurement has been tackled: subjectively, approximately, objectively.

The thesis then presents the results of the Education Project in a table form. There is a description of some of the exercises we developed and used. I then interpret the results of the Education Project, before listing the findings of the research. These findings are then interpreted and inserted back into the critical literature context established in the first half of this thesis.

I conclude by summing up the contribution of the research and ideas for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“We can’t expect future secondary teachers fortunate enough to sit in a workshop to have learned everything necessary to teach Creative Writing. They need to understand not only why it’s taught that way, but also how it can be taught in a variety of other ways.”

— Chris Dew

PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

An important part of pedagogy is the way that an educator conducts themselves in a learning space. Pedagogical research is the academic, and in this case also practice-based, endeavour to better understand the event of education, the positioning of the teacher, the student, and where education is supposed to happen.

Critical pedagogies raise a specific question: rhetorically asking about the embodiment and enactment of power dynamics in the space between student and teacher and within the learning space.

Radical Pedagogies are a branch of critical pedagogies as far as it looks towards the power relations between the student and teacher and also between the institution and the individuals. Further, Radical Pedagogies are also the daring appliance of the newest techniques and ideas that are aimed towards the root cause of a problem or a possibility.

THE ROMANTIC MYTH

“We laymen have always been intensely curious to know (...) from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable. Our interest is only heightened the more by the fact that, if we ask him, the writer himself gives us no explanation, or none that is satisfactory; and it is not at all weakened by our knowledge that not even the clearest insight into the determinants of his choice of material and into the nature of the art of creating imaginative form will ever help us to make creative writers of us.”

— Sigmund Freud

There is an undeniable spiritual or romantic undertone in all this, although it is not an uncommon notion for writers and other creatives. In fact, there are a great many writers who revere the creative process, so much that they are scared of ever trying to dissect it.

“Everyone knows that poets are born and not made in school... Something that is essential cannot be taught; it can only be given or earned or formulated in a manner too mysterious to be picked apart and redesigned for the next person.”

— Oliver, 1994 p. 1

Critics of this notion, such as composition scholar Tim Mayers, call this the “romantic myth” (Peary and Hunley, 2015, p. 7): The idea that the creative process of a person needs to

be kept unscrutinised by the prying eyes of researchers. The fear is, that if it was to be picked apart, it would lose its power because what was formerly done intuitively would then be tried to be done consciously. People would assume that there is one correct path to creativity and flock to the bookstores to buy their very own copy of “Creativity for Dummies”. The creative process would become an ineffective, bland recipe.

These claims have been the greatest roadblock for those who want to apply Process Pedagogies in Creative Writing: “The first step towards making composition process theory and pedagogy applicable to Creative Writing would be to reject the twin notions that on the one hand writers processes are too mysterious to describe and on the other hand, that the attempt to describe and analyse writers processes is harmful or destructive to those processes.” (Mayers, 2015, p. 43)

This thesis and research took-up the position that: in the face of the Romantic Myth, Radical Pedagogies and Non-hierarchical Learning in particular are daring and open enough to look into the creative process.

PROCESS-BASED WRITING

In 2015, 16 writing teachers from the United States published the book “Creative Writing Pedagogies for the Twenty-First Century” and presented their findings in front of the ‘Association of Writers & Writing Programs’ (AWP). In it they addressed the problem of a lack of pedagogies and a lack of change in the way Creative Writing has been taught in the last decades. Each writer gave another view on possible futures for the field.

Tim Mayer used the book to shine a light on the history of Creative Writing and its academic counterpart Composition Studies. He explained how Composition Studies, formerly a field of study aimed at teaching students the very basic principles of writing in the English language, underwent a radical change: From having students learn the rules of the English language from a compiled catalogue, into the study of writing as a process.

He explains it as such: Writing can be about the product, the written word, which can be read and analysed; or Writing can mean the action of writing, the process of getting inspired, collecting ideas and outlining storylines. Creative Writing concerned itself mostly with the former, the product, while Composition worked with the process.

Mayers himself is a staunch advocate of “process-based” writing pedagogies. He proposes to learn from writing not by only analysing the finished “product”, but rather from the “process” or act of writing; Mayers is calling for an integration of process- and product-based pedagogies.

Mayer proposes in his part of the book that the divided disciplines, all since with their own scholars and theories, need to find a way to grow together again. Essential to this call for integration, he emphasizes the importance of Process Pedagogies within Creative Writing to move the discipline forward.

AFFECT THEORY

In the classroom an *Affectio* can be a smile exchanged between students, it can be the heat of a summer classroom or it can be the calm voice of a teacher.

In the classroom an *Affectus* can be the influence that a strict teacher can have on a student: the student gets sweaty palms, lowers their eyes and feels a hurdle before they try to speak.

“In Spinoza’s principal book, ... the Ethics ... which is written in Latin, one finds two words: AFFECTIO and AFFECTUS.” Deleuze points out that these two words are often translated as the same concept, affection. But, there is a distinct difference between them:

Affectio, or Affection is “... a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body.” A body in this regard is not necessarily a physical body but a source to which the felt reaction can be attributed. The example Deleuze gives is that of the feeling of a ray of sun on our skin; Not the sun is the affect, but the effect of the body of the sun on the body of the person.

An *Affectus* or Affect is “the continuous variation of the power of acting.” It means, when a body affects another body, it can gain or lose “power to act”.

Deleuze explains this by imagining meeting two different people: Paul and Pierre. “The idea of something has an affect within the body; example: Hello Paul (‘I like Paul’). Hello Pierre

(‘I don’t like Pierre’.) Our idea of these two people has their own physical affect on us.

“When I pass from the idea of Pierre to the idea of Paul, I say that my power of acting is increased; when I pass from the idea of Paul to the idea of Pierre, I say that my power of acting is diminished. Which comes down to saying that when I see Pierre, I am affected with sadness; when I see Paul, I am affected with joy.”

Empowering the students in the classroom therefore means to affect students positively to increase their power to act.

FELT SENSE

When we look closely at what an affect is then there is another very important aspect to it:

An affect is not an idea. Nor is it an emotion. It is a physical reaction to the effect of something on your body.

Which makes it a little difficult to describe. The feeling of sunlight on your skin, the warmth, how it somehow makes you move your shoulders back slightly, raises the corner of your mouth and your lower eyelids; there is not one simple word that describes this.

As Deleuze states, an idea is the representation of something identifiable, but an affect is an “idea which doesn’t represent anything.” (Deleuze, 2007)

It is something that is felt but does not yet exist in a verbalized state.

Meaning, according to philosopher Eugene Gendlin, is not only found in the mind, but also felt in the connection of body and mind:

“the soft underbelly of thought ... a kind of bodily awareness that... can be used as a tool... a bodily awareness that ... encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time ... It is felt in the body, yet it has meanings. It is body and mind before they are split apart.”

— Gendlin cited in Perl, 1980 p.365

Training to listen to this sense that defies description can let the writer become stronger at identifying, what is truly important to them, according to composition scholar Peter Elbow.

Elbow writes that Felt Sense is the “internal buzzer”, feeling whether something is worth saying or not. “The buzzer finally goes off with a positive sound: these words give us a palpable bodily feeling of ‘Yes! I’ve written exactly what I wanted to say – but it’s something I’ve never been able to say before.’” (Elbow cited in Perl, 2014, p.8)

In this definition we can differentiate between Affect, as Affectus; the fluctuation of power to act that comes with different emotional states (influenced by other bodies) and Felt Sense as the Sense with which we can feel the “something”, the “murky zone” underneath our emotion and “conditioning.”

If we listen well to our Felt Sense, in the presence of Affectus we have indications of where, as writers, we should invest.

With contributors such as Perl and Elbow, Felt Sense has come to be consistently included as a way to approach Creative Writing in process-based pedagogies. Felt sense in Creative Writing is critical to non-hierarchical pedagogies. Non-hierarchical Learning requires students to be co-creators of knowledge, and felt sense is something that has to be experienced in themselves, it cannot be taught “top-down” (teacher to student), students have to be able to listen to themselves and not just a teacher. Students learning to recognise that what they hear inside themselves is just as important, perhaps even more important, than what they hear outside of themselves.

PSYCHOLOGY

Composition scholars, in order to gain insight into writing processes, have made use of evolving psychological and neuropsychological research, since the late 1980's. This fits in with a radical pedagogical belief that new findings, cutting edge technologies and insights from beyond Creative Writing and education studies should be integrated into learning paradigms.

As pedagogical innovation seeks to distil how what is happening in the mind influences the learning process, the creative process, writing pedagogies take support and stability from the overlap between art pedagogies and biological and social psychology research. For example, the Psychologist Jürgen vom Scheidt is a pioneer in process based writing in Germany

and founder of the writing school: The Institute of Applied Creative Psychology (d: Institut für Angewandte Kreativitätspsychologie).

“Two themes have dominated psychological theories about the cognitive processes involved in writing since their inception in the early eighties. The first is the basic insight that writing is not simply a matter of translating preconceived ideas into text, but also involves creating content and tailoring the way this is presented to the reader. Writing is as much a matter of discovering or inventing the thought to be expressed in the text as it is a matter of expressing it in an appropriate and convincing way (Flower & Hayes, 1980). The second is that, because writing involves a complex interaction between a wide range of different processes, it places extremely high demands on the limited capacity of working memory.”

— Galbraith, 2009, p.7

An example for how social roles and the assumptions thereof can decrease the creative resources we can draw from can be found in psychologist Marc Runco's collected research on creativity:

Runco noted, that children who grow up more independent from a gender role are more likely to develop high levels of creativity. If learning takes place inside of borders and assumptions, that are not talked about, that are not visible, we subsequently limit the possibilities of what we can learn, what we can teach and the extent to which we can interpret this exchange. “The androgynous individual may have more options available when solving problems, rather than just options that are stereotypically masculine or feminine, and

he or she may be more flexible than the stereotyped male or female.” (Runco, 2004, p.669)

Similarly, a person that does not need to ask: “But does my idea fit into who I am supposed to be?” gives them more choices in the terms of how they want to express themselves and solve problems.

They have more resources at hand, while someone who is afraid, that they will be found out to be incapable of fulfilling the requirements they perceive, gets negatively affected by their own frightening conception.

A student who is surrounded by poets and feels that they cannot match their level and therefore never qualify for the role of poet, gets stuck.

The same goes for a student who identifies as a painter and, as soon as they face adversity in the writing classroom, chooses to go back to painting, declaring, that they lack the innate skill they presume in the role of the writer.

Another Psychologist prominent in Art Education, Csikszentmihalyi states that in order “...to face the fears and problems of today, people have to be independent from the social environment, so that they stop thinking only in punishment and reward.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, p.34)

This research sought to mobilise contemporary Psychology insight from a ‘Runconian’ perspective, seeking to understand that which inhibits and blocks the creative process, and the teaching of it. Crucially, in parallel to Rico, it sought to

address inhibitions in students from a bottom-up (student-led) rather than top-down (teacher-led) approach. This sits with Non-Hierarchical Learning, if the teacher holds all the power to which the student has limited access, the Romantic Myth comes true, not for the reasons suggested by Freud, but because we have learnt to have limited access to our own thoughts, ideas and Felt Sense.

Social inhibitors

In the classroom, a student can be motivated by trying to get a good grade or trying to be appreciated by their classmates or their teachers (extrinsic motivation). Or they can follow their need to express themselves, look for their own individual goals and questions (intrinsic motivation).

“There is evidence to suggest that while extrinsic motivation is important in learning situations, intrinsic motivation and self-direction are in fact more powerful” (McLeod, 1991, p.100)

Being independent from the idea that we need to write for a set of external goals, frees us to feel, with our Felt Sense, what it is we really want and what shape that might take. This idea is also coherent with social theory in process pedagogy, that attributes writing inhibition to doubt based on “external constraints.” (Galbraith and Rijlaarsdam, 1999, p.100)

Cognitive inhibitors

Another theory that is prevalent in process pedagogy in regards to inhibitors is cognitive theory.

Cognitive theory traces writing inhibitions back to cognitive overload:

Cognitive overload is a state in which the consciousness is flooded with too many information to consciously process. Our “attention budget is limited” (Kahneman, 2011) and therefore, when activities cost a lot of effort and attention, then it won’t be possible to do them at the same time.

Trying to juggle several different writing tasks at once is hard, especially to novice writers who lack strategies to overcome obstacles. But even expert writers can and will sometimes get stuck in writers’ block.

A Socio-Cognitive Approach

Rather than slipping into unhelpful dichotomies of either/or, in this research I have chosen to adopt a socio-cognitive perspective which fully acknowledges the dynamic interactionism of the “intrinsic” and the “extrinsic”.

A cognitive inhibitor is a social inhibitor and vice-versa, if there are too many things at the same time, crowding in or out of the working memory, we cannot focus our attention to our individual needs, feelings or ideas. We lose a sense of our “self”, we struggle to hear the clarity and tone of our “voice”, conditions under which learning or performing Creative Writing is exceedingly difficult. Particularly, because we are not consciously aware of all of these inhibitors, we experience frustration that is often linked by students to their own inability or apathy.

In adopting a socio-cognitive approach, the research was able to effectively identify motivators that prevent overloading on the individual or group: trust, humour and affect.

MOTIVATORS

In order to teach anything to a student, teachers must get their attention. Or rather, make it possible for students to feel they can use their full attention on the topic at hand. If a student is occupied with a negative affect then their power to act, to use their attention toward their own intrinsic motivation is diminished. Motivators can be brought into the learning space. Importantly, motivators come alive inside a Non-Hierarchical Learning environment because they are intrinsically co-created.

Humour

Humour works in a socio-cognitive approach to writing inhibitors: The cognitive theory sees cognitive overload as the main problem for writers; the social theory thinks that doubt based on expectations towards “external constraints” is what gets writers stuck. (Galbraith and Rijlaarsdam, 1999, p.100)

Humour in the classroom can help reduce fears and stress and improve “mental sharpness”, all of which are useful in creating an uninhibited learning space. (Garner, 2015)

The way humour physiologically influences the brain is, that it lets us think in more fast, associative steps and less logical. It

is, for example, impossible to solve a difficult math equation when smiling. (Kahneman, 2011) The same goes for a writer who gets stuck because they try, while writing an intricate dialogue scene, to already figure out how this scene will connect to the unwritten ending they are envisioning and what has to happen in between.

Laughter

When doubt comes from asking, whether what I'm creating fits into the expectations of others, then the mind is both overloaded and also loses track of what it could want for itself. Laughter acts like an inhibitor to the conscious mind, it lets us de-focus from overly concentrating and from doubting. Being affected by laughter lowers our defences, it becomes harder to doubt and easier to synthesize information. (Garner, 2015).

Laughter, gives us a “refreshing pause” (Glenn, 2002, p.2), a moment to re-adjust attention and thereby our goals.

Trust

Trust can be brought into the learning space as a motivator. Trust increases a sense of freedom. Being free to trust that all the information we need is with us means that we don't need to overly focus, holding onto every detail, we can trust in ourselves and our body to bring up relevant information, when we need it.

“Memories, thoughts and feelings are shaped by the way we use our attention. We have this energy under control, we can bend it to our will completely. That's why attention is the most useful tool of how we can improve the quality of our experience.”

— Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, p.56

Giving up perceived external goals frees us to act, to ask ourselves what we could want for ourselves, free to listen to what we actually need.

Mood

Mood, may look like an inhibitor to the creative process, but the writer can overcome and even use it as a catalyst by working through it.

The current research found that through overcoming challenges, these challenges can affect us and raise our power to act; which means that our perceptiveness is raised nevertheless and we are able to write with greater determination. Therefore, as a teacher we need to create a space in which being vulnerable and being open to the murky space of Felt Sense is possible.

As such, we have to also carefully examine how much space humour and laughter should get in the writing classroom. The Felt Sense is as Gendlin puts it “not all joyous, not all happy, not all okay”. In order to get “beyond (our) conditioning”, beyond what mood is and into the “murky zone”, the teacher needs to show that vulnerability, being emotional, irrational and sincere are qualities a student should be allowed

to aim for. Then mood can become the very motor that drives us to write with purpose.

UNOBSTRUCTED WRITING

Unobstructed writing is a type of writing in which no inhibitors inhibit the flow of writing, it is a form that relies on trust and one's associative abilities. Elbow is used here to describe obstructed writing:

“People often lack any voice at all in their act of writing a sentence and worry and change their minds about which words to use. They have none of the natural breath in their writing that they have in speaking. ... We have so little practice in writing, but so much more time to stop and fiddle as we write each sentence.” (Elbow in Rico, 2000, p. 3)

Unobstructed writing therefore is a type of writing that follows a natural flow of thought. In this thesis I have looked into three Process-based Writing scholars that have worked specifically with this type of writing and invented methods to address it: Dr. Jürgen vom Scheidt with his Four-Column Method (4-Spalten Methode), Peter Elbow's Freewriting and most prominently: Gabriele Rico with Clustering.

GABRIELE RICO

Rico was a former English teacher who wrote her book “Writing the Natural Way” in response to the challenges she watched her students face in the prescriptive way English and Creative Writing in particular was being taught in school

and made use of the cutting-edge psychological theories of the 1980's to create methods to overcome these challenges. Specifically, the book addressed how while writing tasks in the English lessons addressed the technical aspects of writing but did not help her students improve their ideas.

Rico traced this back to the way school taught students to find the one correct answer to a question by implementing the strategy that was taught to them. This could give the students the idea that in fact there was only one way to tackle a problem and the better they were at following the steps, the greater was the rewards they would reap. On the other side, failure to comply would be punished with bad grades. (Rico, 1984, p.8)

Therefore, the older the students became, the more they struggled with tasks that asked them to explore and investigate on their own, something that young children typically still are very capable of. (Rico, 2000, p.41-43)

The writing process, according to Rico's theory has two distinct functions with which it assesses information: The “sign” and the “design” mind. (Rico, 2000, p.3-5)

THE SIGN MIND AND DESIGN MIND

The sign mind is the function that evaluates what place something has in the reality we were taught to perceive. It analyses, contextualizes and defines what we see or think. It is logical and specific recognition, our inner “critic”. It can also be called the “conscious aspect” of writing. (Rico, 2000, p.4)

The design mind on the other hand is the function that looks for a pattern outside of its specific representation. It “thinks in complex images” and relations and rather than defining what it perceives can give an undefined “feel” of what it means. It is the “unconscious aspect” of writing. (Rico, 2000, p.4)

Rico gives an example: a person walks down the beach and picks up a piece of driftwood “because it looked ... like a leaping impala or a troll” (Rico, 2000, p.5) This is the doing of the design mind, that relates an aspect of what it perceives (in this case the form) to something it is reminded of. The sign mind though, would then quickly establish, that the driftwood is in fact neither an impala nor a troll, but nothing but a useless piece of wood.

The students in her class struggled, because they were taught to mostly work with their sign mind and therefore lacked the depth that the writing function of the design mind can reach. They were oriented to find the relevant answers to the questions in front of them, so they looked at whatever information was presented to them from a viewpoint of ‘what am I supposed to use’?

Humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow defined creativity as a certain perceptiveness inherent in children (Maslow, 1986). His favourite example stems from the fairy-tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes”. The story is about an emperor who gets tricked by two weavers into believing he is wearing clothes that are invisible to stupid people, when in fact he is wearing nothing at all. When he presents himself to his subjects in nothing but underwear, all believe that they must be stupid and therefore see nothing. The only one, who speaks out is a

little child, yelling out the fact, that the emperor is naked. The child in the story does not comply to what it is supposed to perceive, it sees what it sees without filters.

Rico’s belief, paralleled here with the child in Maslow’s 1986 interpretation of “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, is that if the student does not comply solely with the sign-mind, they can use the design-mind and see and create without unhelpful filters.

CLUSTERING

In order to train her students in thinking with their design mind, Rico invented a technique she called Clustering. Clustering is a pre-writing, free association exercise, that circumvents the sign minds judgement and hierarchical ordering of thoughts:

A word is written in the middle of an empty piece of paper and then, everything one can think of is written down, connected with a line to the word from where the association stems. Words are not ordered in any other way, neither topically nor structurally and most of the time the exercise is done with time restrictions that don’t allow dwelling on them. The most important rule is that one is not supposed to censor themselves, no matter how personal, ridiculous or inappropriate an association is, it needs to be on the paper.

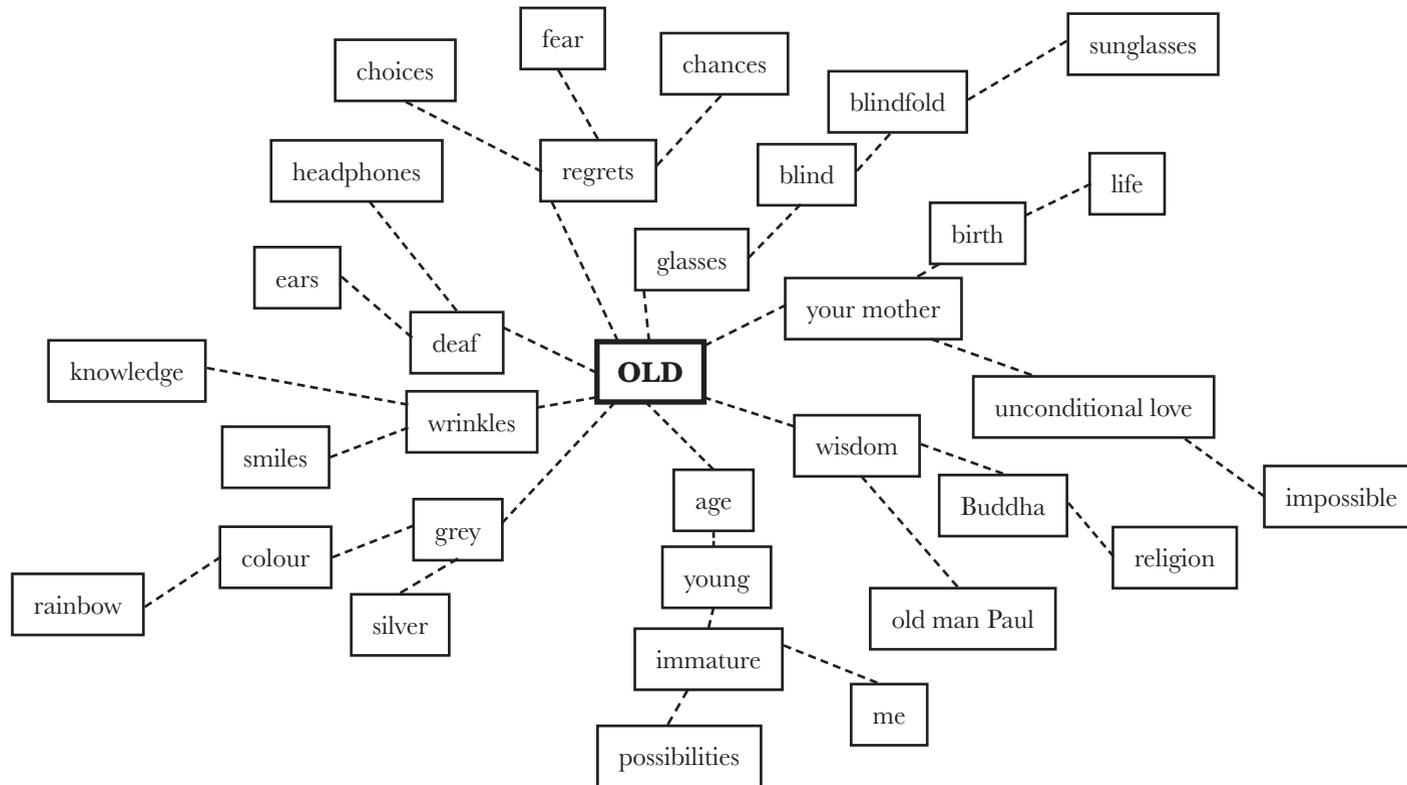
Writers add to the cluster until a point is reached where an idea starts to materialize. This is the moment in which the Cluster is put to the side and a text is produced.

This for example is an early cluster produced by one of my students on the word "old".

Clustering works as a simulation of two processes that also happen while writing: generating associations that can give surprising new perspectives and evaluating these associations for how valuable or relevant they are according to the aim and motivation of the text. It also, thereby trains the

writer in identifying what it is that is important to them and how to synthesize valuable associations into ideas.

The focus of the exercise lies in strengthening the design minds associativity, but also to connect it to the sign minds evaluative function: Freely associating does not immediately produce words, it produces undefined thoughts that then have to be put into words.



That means that the sign mind is, even in the beginning stages of clustering, already involved in the process; albeit in a supporting role. This role, this search for specific meaning becomes greater, the further the writer associates: The more unevaluated patterns are being generated, the more the need grows to contextualize them in a specific context. But the more patterns are uncovered, the bigger the leap is that this contextualization needs to make to connect them.

Sarnoff Mednick defined this leap, the “remote association” as the very definition for creativity: The more unlikely the association of different concepts is, the more creative it is. (Kahneman, 2011)

The connection though is only made when the writer can find a reason, a motivation to connect them. That means the writer has to have a question or a need for expression in which they can find a reason to hold onto a specific association to which they relate other thoughts to formulate an idea. In the case of this cluster, this might for example be the concept of unconditional love or the question whether the choices we make in life are worth it, as they both evoke emotions and opinions the writer relates to.

Also, in order for great leaps to be made, associations must be accessible and not shut down. When our sign mind makes us discard of our leaping impala before it gets a chance to evoke new and surprising ideas, then we lose a valuable resource.

Conclusively, despite Rico’s initial inaccurate interpretations of Psychologist Sperry, creating her method based on it to later developed the theory in its own right because the

findings were not what she had assumed they would be; this transformation was brought on by her practice. By contemporary standards, Rico’s theoretical evolution was determined by her practice, defining her practice-based research through reflection, Rico is the reflexive practitioner.

EVALUATION OF RICO’S CLUSTERING

As mentioned earlier, Clustering is of course not the only technique that works directly with the writing process and its obstructions. Two other techniques used here for a critical evaluation of Rico’s clustering are Peter Elbow’s “Freewriting” and Dr. Jürgen vom Scheidt and Ruth Zenhäusern’s “4-Column-Method”.

Elbow explains his technique as such: “The idea is to write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don’t stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can’t think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write “I can’t think what to say, I can’t think what to say” as many times as you want; or repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop.” (Elbow, 1973, p.1) Freewriting, according to Elbow, is supposed to be done as an exercise about 3 times a week.

The 4-Column-Method is not an exercise but a method that can be applied to the writing process. It works by dividing the paper on which we write into 4 columns, by folding or drawing lines on it. Each column has it’s own function:

The first column is there for spontaneous ideas and thoughts that don't directly connect to the text, but also to give the writer time to bethink their situation: How do I feel? What is it that I want to write? How do I feel about writing this? In the second column we write the actual text; in it's raw, unedited form.

The third column is for additions and corrections. If we write something that is not yet well formulated, or that we'd like to change because it is a cliché, then instead of correcting it, we take note in the third column.

In the fourth column, we collect all ideas that don't quite fit into what the text is supposed to become. Any new impulses and vague connections, however interesting, find their place here to maybe be picked up again later, or disappear.

What we can see, all of these techniques follow a similar idea: Slowing down or stopping to correct and question is to be avoided. Obstructions are trained to either overcome before (Clustering) or bypassed during the writing (4-Column-Method and Freewriting). Resources are kept open, there is room for the unspecific and not yet defined.

RESOURCES

In order to generate ideas for our writing, we need resources. Working with the written product instead of the process may make the choices the writer made seem straightforward, but if we look at the process of how they came to be, we can see the many different directions an idea could have taken.

This becomes most transparent, when we compare a cluster

that we wrote to the text it produced: Some associations are chosen to write with and can be found in the resulting text, others are discarded. But mostly and especially after some practice, concepts, emotions and yet undefined aspects are taken and developed further during the writing process.

Clustering, Freewriting and 4-Column Writing all train students how to facilitate their writing with self-generated resources.

As a way to illustrate the workings of creative resources, let's imagine the idea-generating process as building a toy house: We have a multitude of toy-bricks, our resources, in different forms, sizes and colours. They are lying in the middle of a pile, some of them clearly visible, some hidden and inaccessible.

What Clustering does is, first of all, generate resources. It also, before we start building, guides our attention through all the different bricks we have. After a while, our mind starts to be able to imagine, what could be built from them and sorts them according to their usefulness, sparking an initial idea. As soon as we start building, we can rely on knowing what options we have, since we have seen all bricks in our mind and it reassures us that our resources are accessible.

What Freewriting does, is train us to adapt: It gets us to learn to start building quickly and be on the constant lookout for new possibilities. By building the first wall, without even thinking about it, we look at the way the bricks are being connected and accept what that means for the rest of the building. It, just like any improvisation exercise, teaches the writer to keep their eyes open for the unfiltered and surprising turns their mind can take.

The 4 Column Method gives us a chance to look at our faults and recognize them, without the need to immediately rectify what happened. So: We have put a red brick in this blue and green wall, knowing it wouldn't be the best aesthetically, but it was what we had at hand, so now we take note, that this should be changed. Later, because we can't stop now. Also, we had that great idea of how to build a flat roof, but it doesn't fit with our current design, so again, we take note and move on. It keeps us in a productive flow by keeping the doubtful, slowing thoughts of the sign mind at bay.

All these techniques aim to keep our minds off the obstructions of doubtful critique and build trust in our ability to recall and facilitate resources and formulate stronger ideas.

In comparison to Elbow and vom Scheidt whose techniques evaluated here relate to the middle and later stages of the writing process, Rico's clustering is a window into the pre-writing process which is the thought process that determines the writing, clustering creates an approximate visual of the students process and therefore it creates new learning material that both the student and the teacher can access

A cornerstone of non-hierarchical learning as explored in 2018 by Bury and Masuzawa is that students need to be seen as individuals within the learning group and that the materials presented should "engage them as individuals within a group". (Bury & Masuzawa, 2018, p.32).

Furthermore, a core belief of non-hierarchical learning is the assertion that the student brings to their own learning equally with the teacher, Clustering it is argued here is an emblem for non-hierarchical learning in that it radically transforms the

available shared resources in the space between teacher and student, within the learning space.



“I don’t want to be thinking about this. This is beneath me. This is too difficult. This is ridiculous. I am an artist, I should think of something brilliant and fresh and new.”

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

“For me the initial delight is in the surprise of remembering something I didn’t know I knew”

— Robert Frost

Rico’s ability to work as a practice-based reflexive researcher and address students’ inhibitions with self-directed visual aids and reflexive teaching has been, and continues to be, a great source of personal information.

Across this Integrative Literature Review, Clustering has been argued to be an excellent pre-writing process-based writing technique, emblematic of Non-hierarchical Learning Pedagogy.

The current research responds to Donnelly’s, 2011 demand to reconsider what is possible in the writing space. Further emboldened by Mayers, 2015 call to arms:

“And perhaps rather than arguing about whether or not writing processes can be taught, we would do well to shift the focus to another question: Is it possible in the classroom, to create the conditions whereby students experience the diverse and dynamic activities and actions that constitute so much of Creative Writing? I believe the answer to that question is an emphatic yes.”

— Mayer, 2015)

I wanted to establish how observing and measuring the patterns formed across performing multiple Clusters across a workshop series could benefit the student as a writing tool and the teacher as a teaching aid.

The current research also wanted to explore Clustering in the contemporary classroom, in the unique and avant-garde spaces of Non-hierarchical Learning.

Therefore, I ask the primary research question:

To what extent can practice-based research demonstrate the contemporary relevance and utility of Rico's 1983 Creative Writing technique: Clustering in Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy?

And the further sub-questions:

- To what extent can these insights be used to remedy or prevent unhelpful inhibitions to the creative process of Creative Writing students?*
- To what extent can these insights be used to empower the teacher in a Non-Hierarchical Learning space?*

METHODOLOGY

“I deal with writer’s block by lowering my expectations. I think the trouble starts when you sit down to write and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent—and when you don’t, panic sets in. The solution is never to sit down and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent. I write a little bit, almost every day, and if it results in two or three or (on a good day) four good paragraphs, I consider myself a lucky man. Never try to be the hare. All hail the tortoise.”

— Malcolm Gladwell

The Education Project, is philosophically grounded in Practice Based Research. Barbara Bolt, in her 2010 chapter ‘The Magic is in Handling’ states the following about this relatively emerging philosophical paradigm that is Practice-Led Research:

“Martin Heidegger terms the kind of “sight”, through which we come to know how to draw, to paint, to dance, or to write, circumspection. For Heidegger, it is through circumspection that the “new” emerges. In this way artists gain access to the world, in what Emmanuel Levinas terms, an ‘original and an originary way’ (Levinas 1996:19). “Originary” is a term rarely used, but one that seems particularly pertinent to practice-led research. It is a way of understanding that derives from, or originates in and of the thing in question. In case, the “thing” in question is practice. It is understanding that originates in and through practice.”

— Bolt, 2010, p., 30

Art Theorist Griselda Pollock champions practice-as-method; writing in 2006, that contemporary research is poised at philosophical-aesthetic and analytic-artistic interfaces that invite the ‘poietic, ethical and aesthetic as a means of knowing, if only indirectly – as a way to thought’ (Pollock, 2006, p.23).

The experience of conducting this practice-based research was that it has an immediacy effect: the real-time application of theory into practice and contextualizing practice in theory encourages a constant shift into the realities the research is

handling. The impact of this is that the research is applied and tangible, rather than aloof and abstract and there is a dynamic re-positioning of the self as both theorist and practitioner. Inside of the Non-Hierarchical Learning Methods that the research used, this directly translated into the opening of a classroom-based space for student to also transform and reposition themselves within.

Furthermore, in the creation of interventions and theories based on my observations a practice-based methodology facilitated the testing and practical development and application as part of the continuing research. This increases the value of the theoretical contribution my research is attempting to make in that the theories have already undergone a degree of evaluation. This value is important to pedagogical research and professional pedagogics.

Specifically, Pedagogical Practice-Based Research is important as it allows the practitioner to fulfill their ethical and professional duty as a pedagogue, to deliver the best learning experience available; rather than improve theoretically and be forced to wait to apply the improvements into the learning space. Students and Pedagogical practice-based researchers can both reap the benefits of theoretical and practical innovation immediately. This was particularly important in relation to the Non-hierarchical Learning methods used by the research which designate prioritizing of the student as an individual within a collaboration and the deliverance of cutting-edge technologies into the learning space.

METHODS

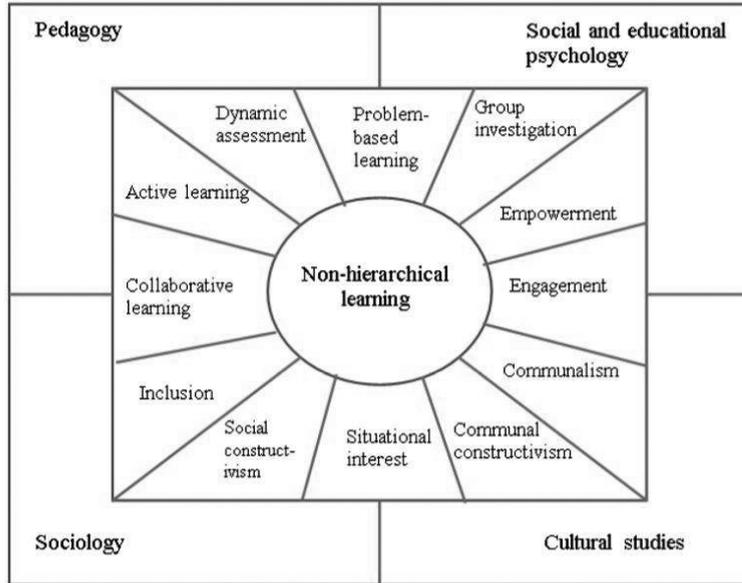
“The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What an educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.”

— Paulo Freire

The methods of Non-Hierarchical learning have been used inside the methodological framework of practice-based research because they operationalise the core beliefs of myself as the primary researcher and radical pedagogies. Non-hierarchical learning builds on the core belief that every student with their own individual learning strategies will be able to succeed at learning. Therefore, the pedagogical methods employed are such that include the students and their approaches to creating knowledge, as well as respecting their individual differences.

The central components of Non-hierarchical Learning are shown here and two components are considered more specifically: Dynamic Assessment and Active Collaborative Learning.

Diagram for the key components of Non-Hierarchical Learning (Bury & Masuzawa, 2018)



DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

As pointed out by Bury and Masuzawa, dynamic assessment can reveal “invaluable secrets about individual students and their abilities.” (Ukrainetz et al. 2000 in Bury & Masuzawa, 2018; p.36)

Table listing the differences between Static and Dynamic Assessment (Bury & Masuzawa, 2018)

Static
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive participants • Examiner observes • Identify deficits • Standardized
Dynamic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participants • Examiner participates • Describe modifiability • Fluid, responsive

In this case, Dynamic Assessment, is used to assess the participants individual potential at writing through Rico’s Clustering method and the individual inhibitions and obstacles they face.

“Obstacles to more effective learning and performance are identified and ways of overcoming those obstacles on subsequent learning and performance effectiveness are developed.”

—Haywood & Lidz, 2007; in Bury & Masuzawa, 2018, p.35

ACTIVE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Active and collaborative learning involves students in both learning activities and the reflection thereof. It means to create individual knowledge, bringing it back into the group through discussions and applying the co-created knowledge to the individual process.

Researching the experiences of students within a process-based writing workshop requires to engage the student to actively produce material; but in order to analyse and contextualize their experiences it is necessary to open up discussions about what that entails. These discussions then feed back into the practical appliance of what has been learned.

Table listing the differences between Passive and Active Learning (Stanger-Hall, 2012)

Active Learning

Passive, surface learning	Active, deep learning
I came to class	I wrote my own study questions and answers
I wrote some notes	I compared and contrasted
I reviewed my notes	I closed my notes and tested how much I remembered
I read the text	I asked myself "How does this impact my life?"

(Weimer, 2012; Stanger-Hall, 2012)



“I am not the right person to do this. Others are so much better at this than me. What could I possibly add to this? I am no researcher, I am no academic, I should stick to what I am good at and leave this alone.”

THE EDUCATION PROJECT REPORT

“The feeling of power comes and goes. It feeds on triggers. It’s the engine of how I work. If I feel powerless, I will not even lift a pen. There will be nothing. It is the engine, which makes things.”

— Aventurin (participant)

This part of the thesis will handle my practice-based research which spanned three years. Walking through the design, participants, procedures, equipment and ethics, I will highlight the reproducibility and validity of the research. After I will clarify how I took measurements: what it means to measure a cluster and what that looks like. This is followed by a results section that will describe the outcomes of the practice-based intervention whilst not yet interpreting the findings. These findings then are examined and interpreted in light of the critical context established in the Literature Review in the next section of this thesis, the discussion.

DESIGN

The research design was as follows: Practice-based research using Non-Hierarchical Learning methods; conducted across three years across three discrete phases. Each phase had a different set of participants. I met with participants on a weekly basis, during term time to conduct Creative Writing workshops. Each phase had on average 10 sessions, each lasting on average 2 hours. The workshop followed the same procedure as described below. I measured the material created in these workshops by the students and interpreted them alongside the reflection and student evaluations.

PARTICIPANTS

Each of the three phases of the intervention had on average five participants, all of which were students of Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam. Participants had diverse genders, orientations, and cultural backgrounds. Participants were aged between 19 and 27. The study sought to recruit students who were new to writing as I wanted to introduce Arts students to Creative Writing as a possible new form of expression. The participants received no financial or credit compensation for their attendance. I conducted this intervention as an employed freelancer to the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam.

PROCEDURE

Central to the procedure was the performing of non-hierarchical learning methods; the weekly looping quality of what had been produced: the “product” being revised before a new “process” was engaged with, which in turn created the “product” for the next week. As the teacher in this workshop I also participated in all aspects of the workshop.

The core procedure remained the same across all three phases. Students were welcomed to a designated, calm, clean work space; the Creative Writing text produced in the previous session were read through by the group; I led a discussion that utilized “Dynamic Assessment” of those texts; based on the discussion of the texts, the group were led through exercises in an “Active and Collaborative Learning Method”; then students were given 20 minutes (with an additional 5 minute buffer when suitable) to perform a Cluster and begin

to write a text in response to the Cluster made from a single word given to them by me (Rico’s 1983 Clustering technique is considered at length in the Literature Review); after each student was given the opportunity to share the text they had just written without further judgement or criticism, the session was concluded.

Elements of the procedure evolved across the phases; most notably we always performed a warm-up exercise in the beginning of the workshop in Phase 1 while in Phase 2 this happened before new writing commenced, in Phase 3 this happened flexibly, when it seemed best suited to the needs of the group. The exercises themselves also developed across the three phases of the education project, as I designed new ways of addressing aspects of the clusters and writing produced across the workshops.

The focus of the workshop also evolved across the Phases coloring the aims and intentions of the exercises and assessment, in Phase 1 the focus was Trust, getting student to trust in their teacher, peers, environment and importantly to trust their own intuition. Phase 2 focused on orientation, working with students to orientate themselves inside their own learning and creative process. Phase Three focused on the importance of the individual, and individualized learning and dynamic assessment whilst working actively and collaboratively. A constant theme was humor, though this manifested differently across the three phases as I reflexively developed the utility and relevance of it across the practice-based research.

EQUIPMENT

The workshop had to take place in a clean, safe, calm space designated for learning. The participants were asked to supply their own pens and paper, or alternative writing materials. The students were asked to send in their writing, the product of the Clusters by email, though I accepted paper submissions. Photographs of Clusters were sent using smart phones; again, paper submission was always acceptable. Inside the learning space, reading the compositions as a group was achieved using a beamer device and projecting the work onto a wall.

ETHICS

From a non-hierarchical teaching view point, working with the creative process means to be able to earn the participants' trust and handle this trust responsibly.

In order to do so, I kept the anonymity of students, both in the work they submitted in the lessons and in the write-up of this thesis and Education Project Report. Any materials shared with me were stored anonymously on a home computer.

All materials collected were given to me voluntarily and refusal to share did not exclude students from participating in further workshops.

As the leading practitioner, I was fully aware of the ethical ramifications brought up by critics of process-based writing. As such, considerations of my presence both as teacher and

as participant was always taken into account and responsive changes were made to the conduct of my research or the form of individual workshops in response to the educational and emotional needs of participants. Importantly, any embarrassing or potentially uncomfortable situations were avoided, though the workshop environment was carefully maintained to ensure there was the space for expression of embarrassment or un-comfort.

All participants were informed of the research that was being conducted, they participated voluntarily and were not rewarded with grades or ECT points that would further their bachelor. Only knowledge.

MEASUREMENTS

“In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety.”

— Abraham Maslow

In this practice-based research, the subject and analysis of it, operates in a border-space of subjectivity and objectivity. To consider the effectiveness of the research and its professional application in Education settings it is important to attempt to establish some form of measurements. These measurements are an approximation of a situation that is based on my developing understanding of practice and theory that perpetuate each other.

I measured two separate parts of the Education intervention: the Clusters and the patterns they generated in comparison to their texts and the student evaluations in Phase 2 and 3. Importantly, in upholding my core belief as a practitioner, I continuously thought and behaved reflectively which contributed to the early interpretation and measurement of the results.

The Cluster as developed by Rico in 1983 is a pre-writing technique used in process-based Creative Writing pedagogies. Everyone engages with making Clusters slightly differently. Importantly, the circumstances which generate the variation in Cluster quality are what the research sought to establish, and address, and will therefore be reported in the Results section.

Four Shades of Clusters, as I defined them:

- Limited: associations between words are not reached
- Over-Expansive: many associations are reached but the cluster expands continuously without reaching the point where the associations spark enough of an idea to start writing a text.
- Effective: there is a good number of associations, with secondary and tertiary associations, after a short period of time the writer catches hold of an idea or gist, and begins to write.
- Far-reaching: there is a greater, logical, distance between associations in the Cluster which represents positive creative jumps being taken, consistently this feeds a creativity and originality into the writing.

Each of these shades of Clusters are measured in direct relation to the text they do or do not produce. Furthermore, inside the paradigm of Non-Hierarchical Learning where individuality is valued there is no explicit right or wrong Cluster what may be an effective Cluster leading to improved Creative Writing for one student may not be the case for the next student.

A limited Cluster may be enough to spark a well-developed text; however, it is often the case that there is a clear correlation between the Cluster and the text. It usually follows that, the better quality the Cluster the better quality the writing that follows; an ineffective Cluster will not resolve or improve the writing or the writer's approach to the writing.

I reflected throughout the entire project, journaling and writing-up sessions. These reflections were treated as feedback loops to the education project and involved in development of innovative techniques for improving the quality of Clusters, addressing the inhibitors to the effectiveness of Clustering and the critical insight into the patterns of inhibitions and what this meant for the student and me as teacher and researcher.

The participants in Phase 2 and 3 were asked to give formal evaluations of their experience by completing a simple questionnaire at the end of the phase of workshops. The questionnaires, using positive "Dynamic Assessment" language, asked the student-participants to evaluate themselves, their writing and the teacher (myself) in nine questions (please see appendix for an example).

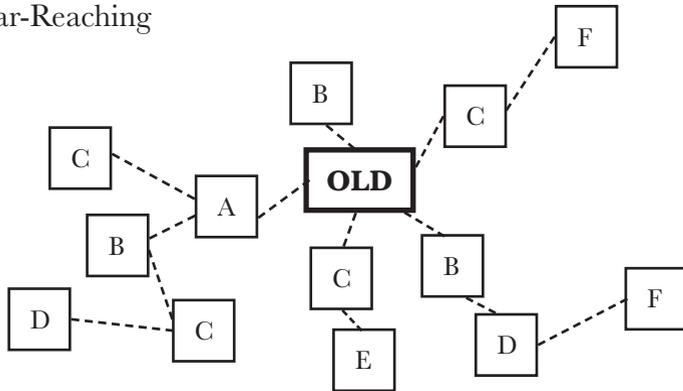
HOW TO READ A CLUSTER

The challenge with reading a cluster is, that while it is sometimes possible to guess how a connection is made, it cannot always be traced. Each person associates differently and sometimes association can move into directions for which the teacher has no knowledge or experience.

What the teacher is looking for here is, how far an association deviates from its source: While it is a simple association to think from 'frog'(a) to 'green'(b), it is much more unlikely and far reaching to think from the word 'frog'(a) to the word 'skyscraper'(c).

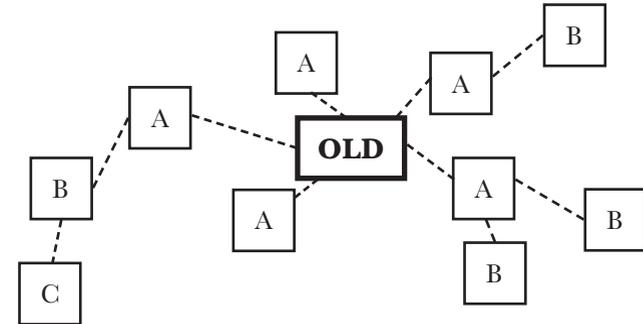
This indicates less inhibition in associating and a less critical "sign-mind" type of thinking.

Far-Reaching



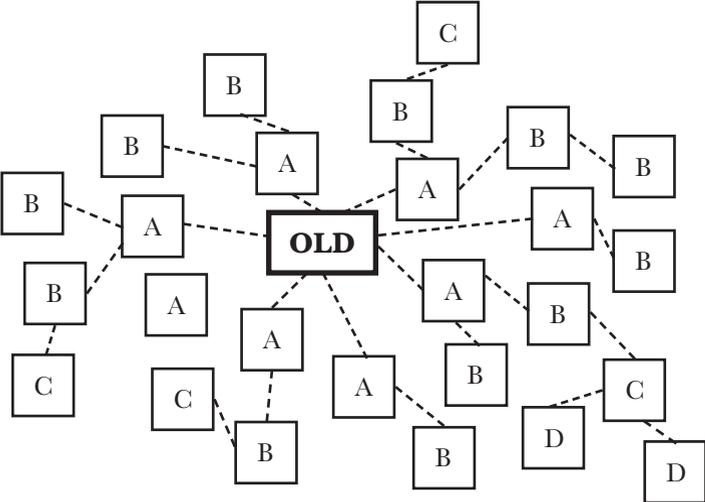
Another type of far-reaching associations is when a student is flexible in the hierarchy of their associations: When 'flower' is connected to 'garden' and from there to 'bushes' then the associations stay within their own logical field. If it goes from 'garden' to 'grandma' to 'rock'n'roll queen' then that could mean that the logical field has been broken open and new types of memories and the senses with which they have been experienced are included: the grandma's garden and maybe a song that played on the radio when being in her kitchen. Limited clusters are usually determined by containing mostly immediate, logical associations, while far-reaching clusters extend to more unlikely words and images.

Limited



(Over-)Expansive Clusters usually contain a lot of (a) to (b) associations but with a great word count.

(Over -)Expansive



RESULTS

With the education project I worked to re-position Clustering in a contemporary, non-hierarchical learning framework. Rather than reading the image produced by a single Cluster, I researched the patterns a participant's Clusters created across a series of workshops. I observed the causes of helpful/unhelpful patterns, were inhibitors to the creative processes; I identified these inhibitors and trialed techniques to address and/or prevent them.

“So often, writing is done for someone with authority over us who will judge whether our words are acceptable or not – which tends to mean whether we are acceptable or not. It’s easier to learn to attend felt sense during writing if we make a crucial decision about writing situations: we need to do some writing where we don’t have to worry whether readers like it or disagree with us.”

— Peter Elbow

Table to represent the observations and interventions across all three phases of the research project.

Phase	Observation	Cause of inhibition	Innovation designed to address inhibitors	New Result after exercise to remedy and/or prevent inhibition
1	Limited Clusters & Limited Text	Disruptions to Trust	Movement and Laughter exercises to Build Trust	Effective Clusters - point at which students chose to start writing came quicker in the process
2	Clusters following the same theme or emotion regardless of the word given to cluster & Limited or no realised text	Pre-determined Goals, ideas and/or Motivations	Attention-to-Process Exercises Discussing Aiming Vs. Goals	Far-Reaching Clusters - students orientating themselves in the learning space, let go and made bigger, creative jumps in clusters and subsequent writing
3	Clusters inconsistent with text presented	Clusters were producing ideas but not intrinsic motivation	Exercises in Felt Sense and inquiries into what triggers student motivation	Clusters that include what stimulates the student to write e.g. visuals or sounds
4	(Over-) Expansive Cluster with a limited text	Trying to find a logical connection whilst imagining creatively	Building trust in choosing with intuition or feeling; relating associations to personal memories; aiming	Multiple smaller effective clusters and longer text

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Of the 10 students asked to take part in the Student Evaluation at the end of term, only 6 people participated in the student evaluation sheet, however, two of these participants chose not to complete it in the suggested manor. Of these 6, all believed that they had improved their writing technique, all stated that the environment provided was helpful, more than half stated they could overcome previous fears of sharing their work, and none of them stated that they felt uncomfortable. One student described their progress as: “slow, but focused”. While another student described their development as: “starting with basic expectations and ideas ... towards more diverse and serious skill”. Student evaluations changed my understanding of the importance to work with inhibitors through Felt Sense and Affect, summed up by this comment about what was most helpful: “To start with feeling. ... Thinking was always the solution, but it stagnates into nothingness when done obsessively. Feeling is a way of knowing...”. However, the student comment “the importance was the open mind of everybody and the possibility to share without judgement” also made me realise that I had achieved a sense of communal trust in which feeling was an option. I could have improved the student evaluation as a mode of reporting results by putting myself less centrally and asking about trust in the learning group, more concrete ideas about what the students wished to learn, their own writing tools and asking to recount a strong memory of the workshops. This could have helped to pinpoint more precisely what it was that created this environment.

Comments made by students with reference to my teaching in this method:

“He provides a safe environment. Like blindfolding children in a pillowed forest. The anticipation of publicizing intimate written pieces is unnerving. But the space that Felix has created for us makes it feel neutral or levelled, that once you do step off the cliff it’s more inspiring than scary.”

Participant, 2018

“He’s very sensitive, careful and precise. Something good is in him, something pure, something that seems almost selfless. This gave an atmosphere of trust since the start. It is something you do not cross often in our hasty, mechanic society. A very, very warm honest personality.”

Participant, 2018



“Am I doing this right? Is this really what I’m supposed to do? Should I go back and see what exactly I was supposed to do? Will they judge me if I ask?”

A SPOOK-Y DISCUSSION

“The field of creativity that exists within each individual is freed by moving out of ideas of wrong-doing or right doing”

— Angeles Arrien

This part of the thesis will now describe and interpret the results of the research conducted in the educational project.

In order to make this discussion more approachable, I have constructed an extended metaphor for talking about the inhibitions and the creative process: namely by calling inhibitions SPOOKS; and the exercises to confront them EXORCISES.

First, I will define what a SPOOK is and what is meant by EXORCISE. Further, I will describe a few examples of exercises/exorcises. Then a Practitioner Reflection describes the insights from the practice-based research. After that I will interpret the results from the Education Project.

I present a definitive list of the findings of the research before finally, interpreting these findings in the critical context of the integrative literature review I constructed for this thesis.

HOW TO SPOT A SPOOK

A SPOOK is an inhibitor to the creative process. It usually is something invisible, that sits in the back of your mind and is rather hard to detect by yourself. It is something that can influence your choices, can limit access to creative resources and even shut down motivation altogether. It is a form of intangible resistance

A SPOOK is not detectable within one Cluster and text comparison; it shows itself in the patterns constructed, across a series of Cluster-text productions.

Since a SPOOK is often times invisible it is necessary to look at the Cluster as well as the text

Spooks are troubling when you try to avoid them, they are handled best when addressed head on.

The “Cluster Pattern Analysis” technique was developed by myself in response to the practice-based research.

“Cluster Pattern Analysis” states: When comparing the development of Clusters, an ideal development would be that the Clusters become smaller and smaller and that the associations become more far reaching. When comparing the text to the cluster, a small cluster does not necessarily mean that we have reached a point where it is well developed: when it shows in the text that the text itself has not developed, it means that the writer is facing strong resistance already in their associations. Then we have most likely found a SPOOK. Also, when we look at the development of association in the Cluster and associations do not get to a point where they become far-reaching associations, and rather gravitate around basic ideas and logical connections, we have probably also found a SPOOK.

Ethically, it is important to state that the SPOOKS are not being called forth, or provoked into appearance. It is that, inside the creative process, socio-cognitive inhibitors are naturally occurring. Catching them in the act by reading the patterns of Clusters is an act for which I, as a teacher need the full

trust and cooperation of the students and cannot be forced. It is important to also consider that the romantic myth might have some merit to it, in the sense that as teacher I should not diagnose a spook that a student doesn't feel they have or prescribe an exorcise based on premature assumptions. As teacher, I am in a position of power that should never provoke SPOOKS.

The “Cluster Pattern Analysis” is an intimate insight into an personal development and has to be handled with care and respect.

(see appendix for a discussion between me and students about ethical implications)

EXORCISING THE SPOOK

An exorcise is an individual intervention to address the root cause of a SPOOK.

The exorcise is the trialling of new method or collaborative exercises designed to address the root-cause of an individual SPOOK.

An exorcise often aims to stretch the abilities of the student by creating and developing new pedagogical methods that will give the student a new perspective on their creative process.

These Pedagogical methods were designed to change the atmosphere so that the student sees themselves in a new light; students are released from the perception of a comfort

zone which is in actual fact a discomfort zone of false security which frees their creative process.

As teachers we are ethically able to intervene and confront a SPOOK, addressing it with exercises for the individual student that are perceived and engaged with as exercises for the collaborative group. Importantly, it is not that the teacher knows something the student does not as the resources being generated are from the student. Exercises come from both understanding the individual in front of us as well as the theoretical field (outlined by the literature review). They can either be invented or re-invented for a particular purpose or be partially used as a preventive measure.

EXORCISING DOUBT AND INHIBITION

In order to give an insight into how we converted theory into practice, I am going to give examples of how our lessons were conducted and the type of exercises we used:

Trust-Building

Aim: To build trust in the teacher-student dynamic, the peer-peer dynamic, the learning space and most importantly trust in themselves and their Felt Sense.

Action: Build a judgement-free zone, give positive criticism, that is clear to be directed towards the work rather than the person. We change work, not people. After initial trouble to hold to these ideals in the first group, we anonymized each student by giving ourselves names of different objects: Phase 1 chose fruit names, Phase Two chose tree names and Phase Three chose the names of gemstones.

Action: Do not deny a student's idea: Take it seriously when a student brings forth an idea, do not shut them down. Don't get insecure about losing their attention, accept and re-direct. If they pose a question that can't be answered or has no place in the lesson, tell them that you will come back to it later on. Never punish a question, never punish doing something in their own way. Rather ask them to let you know when they change the way they work, in order to be able to be part of the process

Dynamic Assessment in Feedback: When reading texts that were produced in class, direct the students towards the questions of: What strength does the text have? What works well and why? Later on, when they have gained more understanding of what is important to themselves and possible to do with text you can start asking: What does this text communicate with you? What imaginary place are you being introduced to?

Humour and Laughter - "A-ha! leading to Haha"

Aim: This exercise aims to wake up the students, guide their attention towards the here and now and address their baggage, through humour and oftentimes, spontaneous laughter. It's a challenge to be daring, but through repetition becomes easy - making it easier for students to speak in front of each other, affirming each other and try out something new. It also makes them laugh together, which is one of the most bonding experiences.

Action: Similar to an acting warm-up, the students are asked to walk around the room. A full exercise would include guiding the attention first to the self (to calm thoughts the student brings with them), then to the room (to raise feeling safe/owning the space), can also include paying attention to the other students (feeling safe with the other/meeting each other on eye level). The main part is to walk faster and, as soon as someone feels the urge to speak, they may share something about their week/current mood/important experiences. The person stops walking, everyone else stops as well and stands in a "Peter Pan" pose, s/he shares their experience/sentence (loud enough for everyone to hear) and all



others answer with a-HA! (the 'a' is held and then pushed to full volume using the diaphragm).

It connects to humour by simulating laughter (and does occasionally crack people up), while also simulating the normally stressful situation of having to speak out loud in front of people. Having a response, that feels both positive and without any judgement or criticism gives students room to explore. To quote one of the participants:

“I was not very confident and ... the people surrounding me in this group at the beginning were like “strangers”... with time ... and more and more exercises done well, they became trustworthy allies. From this small exercise I was confident that during this brief moment I could share anything and everything. The “strangers” became something more important than friends for this moment: People I could join and share with, without any danger, fear or spook.”

On a physiological level and according to cognitive theory, it raises associative thinking when done at a fast pace and lowers judgement: The fast movement asks more space-awareness and physical action and therefore takes up space in the working memory.

Trust in themselves comes from acting and getting a positive response. The: A-ha exercise lets students offer thoughts without devaluing them and gives the feeling they can speak without being judged.

An effect I didn't anticipate was that repeating it also worked to bring the group together and put them into "writing mode":

"It helped acknowledging the fact that we were here to work and present works; for which it created a bridge.

By a bridge I mean an essential mood or feeling that helps to create; a crew atmosphere. As if we are all part of a space craft leading us into some galaxy far, far away."

(see the rest of the statement in appendix)

Identifying needs

Aim: This exercise aims to give the writer an understanding of what fuels their writing and connect with it emotionally in order to overcome overly rational and critical expectations.

Action: The students were asked to quickly associate to the context of "How do I write?" with the following words: Place, Space, Time, Myself, Others, Mood, Tools, Rules and Sustenance. Then they were asked to write three sentences about how they write and how they envision themselves in a free and expressive way by first: Writing a silly or over-the-top sentence about it; then writing a sincerer or vulnerable sentence about it and lastly a sentence of their own choosing that sharpens what they want to say.

Trying to say something sincere and meaningful is difficult, because it sets the bar for what one wants to achieve very high, which in turn raises critical thinking. The exercise therefore starts with a humour as a countermeasure and an imaginative, judgement-free, associative door-opener.

The second sentence then comes with more ease and with a focus on emotion. The third sentence serves to either deepen this emotional focus or add a different, broader perspective on the answer.

Examples:

Silly: "Throwing up like a giant on a mountain, feeling like Pompei is my paper and I am Vesuvius."

Sincere: "When I write it's a mix of coffee and forced focus. Fully enclosed in a space where I can't be distracted. But that's not enough, I need to have a burning need, some desperation to drive my pen."

Sharpened: "I don't cry, since I'm about 8-10 years old and I thought drugs were my tears, but maybe it's this: my creation is a way to finally exhale, finally cry."

The exercise points toward the inner needs and values writers carry with them and helps to bridge initial resistance to feeling.

Knowledge in the body

Aim: This exercise aims to experience Felt Sense physically in order to give overly rational writers insight into how to make creative choices based on feeling.

Action: The group gathers standing in a large circle. They are asked to focus on their body and listen well to how it reacts to certain words. When they hear a word, they are to ask

themselves (and specifically their body): Does this fit with me today, in this moment in time? In the case that they feel it does, they are asked to take a step forward. If they feel it doesn't feel fitting, they take a step back. If the feeling is ambivalent, they can take a step to the either left or right, or even into any other direction they feel their body wants to move into.

As Gendlin puts it, there is knowledge in the body. Gaining access to this yet unformulated knowledge can be freeing and also help identify what it is one is really trying to say. Does the word I just wrote really represent what I meant to say? Or the other way around, what does this something I feel represent? Where does it want to go and why is it here? The exercise also serves to help rational writers to let go and find meaning in focussing on their feeling connected to their body. To quote one of the participants:

“What helped me most was getting to know where my potential lies and where I can develop. To start with the feeling. Something I have not been used to since childhood. Thinking was always the solution, but it stagnates into nothingness when done obsessively. Feeling is a way of knowing I had always negated, but now I’m slowly getting there.”

PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

It was clear by the design of the research, and its theoretical underpinnings, that I was going to face the primary challenge of managing student-made resources that are novel to the student, peer and myself inside the learning space. The literature review demonstrated the emblematic qualities of Clustering in Non-hierarchical Learning for exactly this reason, that the resources are “bottom-up”, individually and dynamically assessed.

It was important to constantly, reflexively evaluate: my presence and position as the teacher, the role of humour and laughter, the dynamics of mood and affect and the prevailing positions of trust. The utility of criticism and the manifestations of Felt Sense, all in relation to the tasks and exercises and development of the active individuals in an active collaborative group.

The following part of the thesis, briefly walks through the reflections and insights I gained across the Education Project.

Teacher Presence

There are different ways of how the body of the teacher can influence a student negatively: If there is a lot of pressure and judgement, then socially, the student can get stuck in fear of judgement.

On the other side though, if the teacher is fully present with their body, if their needs and urges are not only visible but also play a major role in the classroom, then it can also

detract from the students learning experience. That is especially so, if the teacher puts their own experience first or if a student feels loyalty or friendship towards the teacher and wants their well-being to be kept intact.

The teacher’s body should, in my experience and opinion influence the students with positive affect, specific to the students’ needs: Include every student, show that they are trusted equally and each have a place in the classroom.

Teacher Position

In the time teaching my students, I realized how I had changed my own position and conduct between the first and the second course. To test whether this difference in how I conducted myself as a teacher was influencing the students, I took a different approach when I set up the third course. In the first course, I took a position as trainer. I took full charge of the decisions about what we did at what time, I guided the students through the exercises and did lots of complementary cognitive exercises that went into different aspects of clustering. That means, we focused on getting faster at associating and also get a deeper knowledge of the possible meanings of words. My goal was to train the students to become stronger at associating in order to formulate stronger ideas and guide their attention to letting go of troubles and prioritizing their Felt Sense.

They had no further homework than sending me the text they wrote in class and could let go of it outside.

My position was to guide the students and keep an overview of their specific needs. My own needs, in the sense of my research questions were not necessary for them to consider. Instead, I told them that their own creative process had absolute priority and that, whenever they felt sufficiently stimulated, they could immediately start writing, even in the midst of the lesson. Also, if they didn't attend a lesson or wanted to leave at a point, then I accepted it if the reason was, that they were inspired to work on something.

In the second course I asked the students for their trust and whether they would be willing to share their clusters with me. I compared their clusters to their texts, looking for their individual strategies. What I found was that clustering was not helpful for every student and while some grew (perfectly) according to theory, a few had troubles, inhibitors that still kept them from progressing.

My position was a little more open, that of a mentor. I talked more about my own goals and needs in order to win the groups trust. I also put more effort into giving their personal strategies space, such as letting them cluster in their own way spending more time on their specific interests. Also, I opened up to discussions about their strategies, rather than just guiding them as I saw fit.

In the third course, I started off by asking the students questions about their identity. I also shared with them who I was and what exactly I wanted to get from them: Getting to know what motivated them and what held them back. I scaled back on collecting clusters and put more emphasis on the methodical use of humour. Next to exercises that involved laughter,

I also shared funny videos or anecdotes that connected to the topics of the lessons.

My position was not that of a classical teacher, but that of a fellow writer who despite having more experience was their equal as a person. I laid open what it was I was researching and what I wanted to know from them. I also openly started sharing and performing my own texts.

Humour and Laughter

As examined in the literature review, humour does indeed help overcome barriers. However, through my practical research I feel it is important to qualify that not all barriers are bad for learning. As one student put it: "It has a good side by making us feel less nervous and judged, but too much humour makes us less disciplined, makes us see the course as something relaxed and then not take it as serious."

Humour laughs away the doubt, but it doesn't address it. If a student has a doubt about what is expected of them, how an exercise works or something else directly connected to the next steps they have to take in a lesson, address this doubt first.

Trust

The overwhelming majority of the students have answered that they trust me to a very high degree. Reasons for this differ only a little between the groups:

In the first two groups it was because of my calm demeanour and the way I took what they shared about themselves very seriously. Showing that I was interested in their individual approach and listened closely to what they had to say made it possible to share without fear of judgement. Setting “finding their feelings” as a goal, meant that the pursuit of personal feelings was even rewarded and validated.

Trust relating to Motivation

Extrinsic motivation helps getting students focused on a task they wouldn't choose to do by themselves. Intrinsic motivation though, is the more valuable for students that are supposed to learn to create something novel.

Therefore, I think that teaching students to listen well to what motivates them and trying to connect tasks to what they are already interested in leads to a stronger investment on the students' side. In fact, all students I interviewed, explained that they experienced my focus on their interest established a trust in my motives.

This made it possible to give them tasks they wouldn't choose to do by themselves and trust that it would help them grow. My practice-based research encourages the assertion that while both humour and trust building are essential to the writing classroom, the real power lies in empowering the emotional connection to a student's motivation, their intrinsic motivation.

Criticism

Importantly, I want to point out that criticism is not a bad thing, it is absolutely necessary in order for students to grow. Criticism is only harmful when it criticizes a person in their identity. A discrepancy between who someone wants to be and who they are can be troublesome.

Almost every student has been in a situation where they lied to a teacher in order to show that they are actually deserving of a good grade. This can be harmless: maybe they simply procrastinated or partied too much. But it can also be more harmful when, for example, the lie keeps the student from asking for help they actually need.

Felt Sense

My experience in this research convinces me that, in order to learn well about their Felt Sense, a student needs to be able to put themselves first. If a student feels the urge to create and doesn't react because they don't want to hurt the teacher's endeavours, or peer experience, if they don't actively want to look for something they could want or use, because they are monitoring the teacher's emotions then they lose the very necessary autonomy their creative process needs.

The role of the writing teacher should always give enough space and care to let the students explore and not feel like they are judged for their mistakes. Trust, that the teacher will not wilfully harm them, that the teacher will give them space to express themselves in the group and protect them, if need be, is absolutely necessary. But according to my experiences,

I cannot recommend complete equality with the teacher, when the goal is to become stronger in their Felt Sense: A teacher must be mindful of the space they take up and should not forget that even in a more democratic setting they are responsible for the students and their experience.

Group building

The student feedback also taught me, that the way I conduct myself as a teacher and influence the students should reflect how I want the students to act with each other, because the affect they have on each other is just as important as the affect my presence has.

The mutuality of trust in the group to care for both each other's work and person was named as one of the most important factors for individual success. A group that works towards the shared goal of becoming stronger in their individual practice empowers all its members. Critique given to help and taking personal choices and expressions serious helps to bridge differences and creates a space everyone can feel safe in.



“It scares me that I don’t know what will come out of this. Why aren’t my thoughts going into the direction I want them to go? Why am I not thinking of what I should be thinking of? I had a goal, I should go back to that.”

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

“Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart; confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write.”

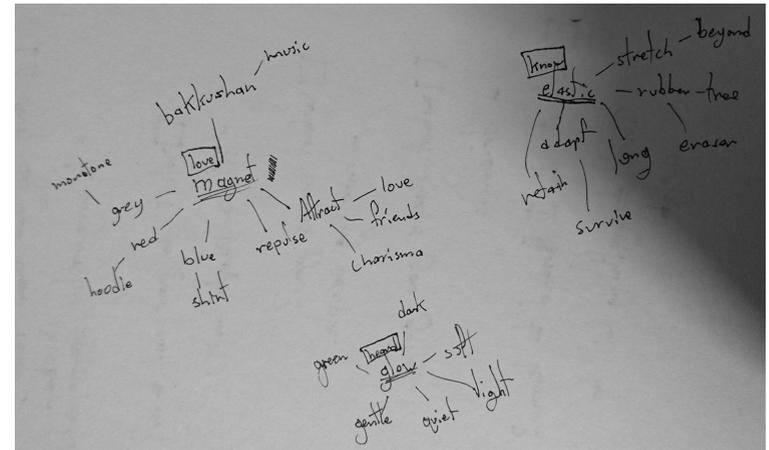
— Rainer Maria Rilke

This part of the thesis will now interpret the results of the Education Project by phases.

PHASE ONE

Phase One was about instilling trust in the participants; both towards the group and teacher and towards their own innate ability to face the challenges before them.

While the clusters were not actively collected and stored, clusters were seen by myself and some participants shared their clusters with the group. While not uncommon in new writers, one student in particular continuously produced a very small amount of words in a larger amount of time. (Image below).



After seeing their clusters, I talked to the student. The inhibition I identified was that the student was feeling unsure about what thoughts they should invest into, trying hard not to write something they felt was 'stupid'. They also had trouble with one other student's critical assessment of other group members work and personal tastes.

In order to address the first part of the problem, I employed exercises that I hoped would circumvent the critical doubt in the student's mind and the way the group interacted with each other: I developed a series of exercises around laughter and improvisation acting. (e.g.: "Speed-dating with your mom", a twist on a standard two person improvisation, where a third person chooses the answers another person can give and hilarity ensues.)

To address the second part of the problem, I arranged for every student to send me the name of a fruit and used these to anonymize the writers in the critical reading sessions. (e.g: A student was then called "Apple" and their text was discussed as "Apple's" text; which meant they discussed it in the third person.)

The result was that the student's clusters started to grow and their texts became bolder and more experimental. Several students also voiced relief over how the reading sessions were conducted and participation in discussions rose.

PHASE TWO

In Phase Two, the work was directed more towards understanding the personal strategies of students, their relation to the clusters they produced and communicating about this with the student.

I found the following patterns:

1. In one student, who otherwise was very skilled and experienced in comparison to the rest of the group, clusters stopped producing new words. In a series of clusters, the same words would reoccur over and over, while the texts written from them became more and more limited in expression and size.
2. A second, more puzzling occurrence to me was that in one student, clusters and the texts the student shared the next meeting had very little correlation in topics or themes.

I identified the following inhibitors:

1. After comparing the cluster to their correlating texts and addressing the discrepancy, it became clear that the student had developed two problems: They had set themselves a fixed goal that they wanted to reach, which limited the possibilities to think of something new and also felt that as a more experienced writer, they continuously failed to produce something up to their standard; failing in their own eyes as well as in those of the teacher.

The student was having trouble to choose words from which to write with, because they tried to make a logical connection with what they created. This made it difficult to spark ideas and the ongoing trouble led to frustration due to exceeding the time-limit.

I devised several exercises that aimed to raise Felt Sense: I said words to the students and asked to choose words depending on whether they felt these words 'belonged' to them. One exercise connected this to movement: we would take a step forward for a 'fitting' word, a step backward for those that didn't fit and a step sideward for those that felt different.

Furthermore, I suggested an in-depth exercise that would address this type of choosing with feeling and bring it into personal memories. The student then practiced this exercise and tweaked it into a method that fitted them and included looking for metaphors.

This resulted in the student's ownership over their own process and strategy. The student came back to the class and taught this exercise to the rest of the group, to varying and fascinating effect. Their clusters turned into several, smaller and more condensed clusters. Their texts grew and their motivation reached peak levels.

FINDINGS

“It seems that the necessary thing to do is not to fear mistakes, to plunge in, to do the best that one can, hoping to learn enough from blunders to correct them eventually.”

— Abraham Maslow

By performing the research in a practice-based paradigm with Non-Hierarchical Learning methods the contemporary relevance and utility of Rico’s Clustering technique is achieved through a new development of “Cluster Pattern Analysis”.

The findings of the Education Project are listed here, they are the sum of reflexively reviewing the results of the research:

– The contemporary relevance and utility of Rico’s Clustering technique is achieved through a new development of “Cluster Pattern Analysis”.

– The “Cluster Pattern Analysis” technique established by myself is effectively able to confront inhibitions in the creative-writing process through student generated pre-writing resources.

– The inhibitions identified by the “Cluster Pattern Analysis” are effectively worked through using exercises that re-affirm a positive-open-accessible mood; humour and laughter; a reoriented sense of trust inside the pedagogy.

– The exercises are not the solution to the inhibitor, they are a means of confronting the root-cause of the inhibitor.

– “Cluster Pattern Analysis” offers individual insights, universally. The centrality of the individual inside the active collaboration is upheld, in line with Non-hierarchical Learning.

– The presentation of the exercises that is set to address an inhibition in a single student are greeted and co-created by the whole group, what is an exorcism for one is an exercise for all.

– “Cluster Pattern Analysis” uses materials created by the student for the student which is quintessentially “bottom-up” teaching, again, paramount to the beliefs of Non-Hierarchical Learning.

– “Cluster Pattern Analysis” is a visual aid teaching tool for Creative Writing.

– “Cluster Pattern Analysis” is a tool for enabling the teacher as much as the student, and therefore has exciting ramifications for instructing teachers.

– Rico’s Clustering and “Cluster Pattern Analysis” is not only compatible with Non-hierarchical Learning it is emblematic of it.

– The development of “Cluster Pattern Analysis” as a pre-writing, process-based, creative-writing learning and teaching technique being created through repositioning a classical 1980s technique in contemporary Radical Pedagogy is evidence that it is a worthwhile academic endeavour to constantly re-visit and reposition the successful components of former pedagogy.

– The effectiveness of the methods implored in this method for other types of writers has to be explored. It can be safely said that creative writer beginners, a vulnerable group, can benefit from the “Cluster Pattern Analysis”, but the effectiveness on experienced writers would still have to be tested.

– “Cluster Pattern Analysis” has been demonstrated to effectively re-situate a classic process-based technique, applying “Pattern Analysis” to other techniques such as Elbow’s “Free-writing” and vom Scheidt’s “4-column method” it can be reasoned would also garner relevant, useful enquiry in the field of Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy.

INTERPRETATION, INSERTION AND IMPACT EVALUATION

“People have lost their animalistic side, the things where they don’t know exactly what it is, but they do know. They can’t listen, because they are so busy driving cars and reading texts; no one has time to come into contact with their own self.”

— Bonsai (participant)

In light of the results, reflections, discussion and findings of the research, it can be said that Rico’s 1983 Clustering technique when further developed into a “Cluster Pattern Analysis” has new contemporary relevance and utility in Non-Hierarchical Learning. This thesis will now interpret and insert these findings into the critical context of the literature review, and evaluate its wider impact on Creative Writing pedagogy.

HOW IT AFFECTS THE WIDER CONTEXT IN RELATION TO:

Pre-writing resources

The resources produced through Clustering can now be mined in further process-based writing research and make these endeavours tangible.

Evaluation of Rico’s Clustering

Rico’s method that was born from popular psychology can become a tool for teachers to dynamically assess their student’s development and inhibition in process-based Creative Writing in a Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy.

Clustering technique

Clustering may not be the single most ideal tool for every writer to use, but it is a strong exercise that produces more than just unobstructed writers, it can be seen as a dynamic measuring tool as well.

The sign and design mind

Teacher understanding of the sign and design mind in light of contemporary psychological developments can give a deeper insight into socio-cognitive inhibition in a writing student and help to aid and prevent inhibition.

Gabriele Rico

Rico, originally created her writing tool based on now disproven popular psychological theory but found the effect of her tool and its own theory to be a helpful addition to process-based writing pedagogies. We can learn from this that approximation to a problem and a dynamic practice-based research can lead to useful applications.

Unobstructed Writing

Looking at unobstructed writing from the perspective of this research shows the importance of why we try to prevent obstructions in the first place, but no one method is the ideal path for one writer. Writers need to be able to understand what it is that influences, motivates and obstructs their process in order to tweak these methods and create their own access to unobstructed writing.

Motivators to address inhibitors - Mood, trust, laughter, humour

The theoretical frame of the research shows of the possibilities for art educators to integrate trust building, humour, laughter and positive affect into lessons that aim to raise creative output and open doors to experimentation.

Psychological Approach

Teaching and learning from a place that seeks to psychologically understand the mind and how it can be affected, encourages the uptake of new technologies which is an important and powerful aspect of Radical Pedagogies. Inside the pedagogical space, particularly a Non-Hierarchical Learning space working with Psychology insight can empower the teacher with a socio-cognitive approach to inhibition and Creative Writing.

Felt Sense

Utilising Felt Sense in the Creative Writing process has long been acknowledged for its ability to empower the student to self-direct. The “Clustering Pattern Analysis” technique is a tool that can achieve this without drawing too much conscious attention to the act: as such, development of “Pattern Analysis” across multiple techniques will be a progressive step in using Felt Sense in Radical Pedagogy.

Affect Theory

The influence of the learning environment affects a student, which has an impact on their creative inhibitions. Empowering students in a non-hierarchical learning space is essential to its’ success and growth, understanding how the learning environment, including the teacher and the group, affect the individual in a way to create even more effective learning spaces.

Process-based Writing

From the perspective of this research, process-based writing is the key to understanding and structuring education that aims to the creative success of every student. It shows that analysing and working through the individual creative process, if done ethically responsible, is in fact not destructive to the creative process: It gives the student the power

The Romantic Myth

There is truth in the romantic myth and there is a major flaw to it: Truth is, creative processes may indeed be individual and not transmissible, but gaining an understanding of one’s own process is an empowering act of self-actualization and it is indeed possible for a teacher in a non-hierarchical learning space to help a student find it.

Pedagogical Research

In Art Education, the creative process is often still treated with the romantic notion, that it cannot be taught. It is a central understanding of process-based pedagogy that this needs to be addressed. This research shows that through the transformation of the learning space into a non-hierarchical one, creative processes can be approached, shifting the understanding of what teaching in this context means: Not to hand down the ideal path to creativity, but dismantling obstructions to it and giving students tools to understand and handle their own creative process.



*“**This** could be interesting! But wait, does it really make sense? Hm, it reminds me of this other thing. That’s what I should write about. But how, if I don’t mention that? Oh, and let’s include this thing as well...”*

CONCLUSION

“If you’re to create something powerful and important, you must at the very least be driven by an equally powerful inner force.”

— Ryan Holiday

In conclusion, through a critical Literature Review and Practice-based Research that took place across three years at the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam I have been able to develop Rico’s 1983 pre-writing Clustering technique into a new process-based learning and teaching technique: “Cluster Pattern Analysis”.

“Cluster Pattern Analysis” is a shining emblem of Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy in the sense that it evolves around the learners’ individual experience and transforms it into shared knowledge. The materials generated are produced by the student. The inhibitors to the creative process that are revealed are transformed into new teaching material through Dynamic Assessment. It is a way of teaching Creative Writing that focuses on the active individual inside the active learning group, which in turn co-creates new experiences for the individual.

“Cluster Pattern Analysis” takes an influential idea from the past (Clustering) and puts it into a radical contemporary pedagogical space, offering support for future academic endeavours of this kind.

The lengthy development of my technique, grounded into its critical context, has focused on the application of “Cluster Pattern Analysis” with people who, though not new to creativity, are new to Creative Writing. The next direction for this research could be to demonstrate the contemporary relevance and utility of “Cluster Pattern Analysis” in a Non-Hierarchical Learning Pedagogy with novice, intermediate, established and emerging creative writers.

Furthermore, this research has demonstrated the effectiveness of developing an existing process-based tool into a “Pattern Analysis” for identifying and confronting inhibitors to the Creative Writing process. It would, therefore, be of further pedagogic interest to perform research on Elbow’s “Free-Writing Technique” and vom Scheidt’s “4-Column Method”; what patterns could be found and understood?

In conclusion, the experience of developing my “Cluster Pattern Analysis” has developed my position as a teacher, practitioner and researcher. I was able to deliver a series of workshops that improved the Creative Writing abilities of three groups of students whilst effectively honing a technique for both addressing and researching inhibitions in the Creative Writing process. I hope that the results will be a useful insight and tool for both students and teachers committed to Romantic-Myth-Busting in the Creative Writing classroom.

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APPENDIX

STUDENT EVALUATION

Student Evaluation

1. How do you see your development?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What would you like to get better at?
4. What did you learn or develop?

Grades:

For _____ I deserve a

For _____ I should get a

For _____ I give myself a

Signature: _____

Docent Evaluation

1. What helped you the most?

2. Do you still miss something?

3. Do you trust him?

4. What makes you trust/distrust him?

5. Other things I would like to tell my teacher

Grades:

For _____ I would give a

For _____ he deserves a

For _____ I think a is adequate

TRANSCRIPT OF A CONVERSATION WITH MY STUDENTS ABOUT ETHICS AND MY HYPOTHESIS:

W: What is your hypothesis?

F: My hypothesis is that talking about this, about the process and what works well and what doesn't won't destroy the creativity behind it and rather help with addressing our problems and eventually help to find solutions.

W: And what if the answer is negative. What if it does destroy everything?

F: Well, ... I might destroy all of you. In all seriousness, I was scared that I could be wrong and it would mess with your creativity.

R: What? Nooo! That's nonsense!

F: I wrote and thought a lot about the ethical aspect of this research. According to one side of the argument in Creative Writing, this may be very unethical. Or it could be. It is a dangerous area. If for example, I told you, how the process works for me and implied or accidentally gave you the idea that this was a universal truth to which I would hold you, then it may negatively impact everyone who works differently.

I, as teacher have to be very careful how I conduct the lessons and most importantly myself. I have to make clear, that I'm here to listen to your opinions and that they are valid. I have to make sure that no one believes that what I say is law. Imagine I imposed a different approach on something that is

actually already working for you. Or if I told you that you have a problem that needed fixing with this one specific method, but the method doesn't work for you. That could be very destructive.

... These are easy mistakes to make.

I have these troubles myself: The reason my process isn't working at the time is because I had certain assumptions about what a thesis should be and how I would need to conduct myself when writing it. So, I have to be aware of the possibility, I have to be aware so I don't install such a spook into your process.

R: So, that you don't indoctrinate us? *laughs*

F: Yes.

H: But, talking about these structures and how to get into that flow or whatever it is that we are doing; it's not imposing that we should work in a certain way, so there is a huge difference, a huge gap between those two things.

Talking about it and creating structure that you need to follow, that's completely different things.

W: Yeah.

F: Yes, but that's why I am trying the best I can to conduct myself in this way.

... As someone who is new to research it can easily happen, that I might find out about all of these new things, see all

these connections, formulate my theory and be blind to all other possibilities. It's a powerful thing to think that you hold some sort of truth with which you can explain everything. Because I have been to this point where I was thinking:" Ah! This is how it works! This is brilliant! I am a genius! I should tell everyone how it truly works!"

R: *laughs*

F: Exactly, that's why I have to be careful and why I have to be insistent, that this is merely how things work for me personally.

R: I think you've been doing a good job at doing that.

H: Yeah, you're providing tools. And these are tools that we can choose to work with and try them out...

M: And twist them.

H: ... and twist them and create our own tools.

F: As W. has done. Very successfully.

H: Yes. Without talking about these things, without knowing how you work, I would not know how to twist my own way of working. Now I can use your tools to my benefit.

R: Mhm, the methods have been so far pretty subjective.

F: Thank you. I'll definitely quote you in my thesis.

H: *laughs*

INTERVIEW WITH BONSAI

F: What did the Academy teach you?

B: I learned to dig deeper into my emotions and what was important to me. At the same time I also learned not to care too much about everyone's opinion. Because it was impossible. I have too many teachers with too many differing opinions, if I try to listen to all of them, well... that's impossible. But not only them, also everyone else: People can be so jealous and malevolent towards each other. (That was nice about your lessons, we were a small group, we didn't judge each other.) Most importantly, I've learned to grow up. I've lived through so many experiences ... (retracted) this time taught me who I am and that the world is not always a nice place... I became stronger. And I learned that everyone just does things. Even the teachers ... No one really knows things, everyone just does something and sees if it works.

F: What hindered you in developing yourself?

B: I was put into a corner. On one hand, I was supposed to try out everything, but also, I was supposed to keep doing certain things. I originally wanted to be a sculptor, but if I dropped my camera, people would start crying.
... It was not really focused on me.
I took your writing lessons originally to learn to be better with words, because we always had to explain ourselves to others using words, but for me, my emotions are often so strong, that there are no words to describe them. I can describe it visually, but I don't know what to say.
... (Felt Sense)

F: What do you think makes people stronger? (in regards to Felt Sense:)

B: People have lost their animalistic side, the things where they don't know exactly what it is, but they do know. They can't listen, because they are so busy driving cars and reading texts; no one has time to come into contact with their own self.

F: A last, question, maybe. It is strange to ask like this...

B: That's fine, just hit me.

F: Do you trust me?

B: What do you mean? Do I trust your methods or...?

F: Me as a person and separately, me as a teacher.

B: I trust you absolutely. Because you're honest. You listen. Many teachers are so busy with their own things, it's difficult for them to listen and look at what I need.
With you, I have an appointment and you are there, not fifteen minutes later or not at all, you are here and I trust that you are, because you care. Do you know how many times I have been forgotten about?
And in your lessons, in your methods, I feel I can trust, because it's not about just deadlines, deadlines; It's about finding your feelings. It's in a small group and you ask us what we see and what we want and you take that seriously. You involve the students and you look at them.

STUDENT REPORT ON THE A-HA EXERCISE

Why the a-Ha exercise is important?

...
...
...

Cheesy name cheesy pose.

a-Ha!

Arguably the most awkward exercise I have ever done. I mean, the first time we did it was in front of classmates that I was more or less considering (at that time) to be strangers and this guy Felix a complete stranger, who asked us this: walk around and after a while if you want to share something feel free to do so, by taking the “Peter Pan” pose, say loudly what you want to say and yell “a-Ha!” when you are done. Well let’s not lie I was not really confident in this, and that was a bit of a mistake. Then again, who would be overly confident when it’s an exercise about exteriorising your feelings or thoughts, with others?

The first time the exercise went on, it came a bit slow, building on for everyone at a different pace. I don’t recall what I said most of the time, yet I understood later the good behind it.

It’s not just a mere exercise of exteriorisation, but also a step into a group involvement. It feels to me the same as saying good morning or goodbye. It’s a way to introduce your mood your feelings or the fact that you had to deal with a plumbing issue this morning. Because everyone has something to share

and to say but still nobody is obliged. Doing the aha exercise made this very casual and informal. It helped acknowledging the fact that we were here to work and present works; for which it created a bridge.

By a bridge I mean an essential mood or feeling that helps to create; a crew atmosphere. As if we are all part of a space craft leading us into some galaxy far, far away. You finally connect the people with basic issues (or more personal) that involve you/us in a community dynamic, because we are sharing the trip.

As the meetings went on, this exercise became a normal thing to do. It helped me sometimes to get rid of some pressure and also made me sure that we knew we were here for the group work.

From a routine you create some confidence and trust. That’s very important if you want to share what you wrote or did as a creative: you need to fully trust the people around you. The walking part is something I want to embed, it seems unnatural to walk around in a small room, and yet it is important because it creates two things: First even if this exercise is about giving /sharing it’s also about receiving, listening and perceiving.

Which already seems like a lot to take in passively, but it’s important to understand your surroundings, the people, how they walk, where you want to stop and be aware whether someone is waiting in peter pan pose, so you can receive their message.

Second part of the walking is about moving while thinking and stopping to speak.

When I move around, I must be inside myself, but when I stop, I am either a receiver or a giver: I will share or listen to someone and I will always share the “a-Ha” ending with the entire group.

It reminds you constantly that you are not alone and part of something; which is also very important towards the group experience and involvement.

I said previously that I was not confident and that the people surrounding me in this group at the beginning were like “strangers”. Therefore, in my opinion, this part of the work was the most important. It requires you to start from somewhere with other people (even if they are almost strangers) and with time ongoing and more and more exercise done well, they become trustworthy allies. From this small exercise I was confident that during this brief moment I could share anything and everything. The “strangers” became something more important than friends for this moment: People I could join and share with, without any danger, fear or spook.

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