

**Exploring the ethical issues related to visual methodology when including
young children's voice in wider research samples**

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Abstract

Understanding and working with ethical issues when including young children in educational research is critical to ensuring their involvement is meaningful. Increasingly, different methodological approaches have been used to address some of these issues, and the use of visual methods is showing particular potential for its age appropriateness. This paper will specifically focus on three examples of drawing based visual method used with samples of children across compulsory school age from the Learning to Learn in Schools project: Pupil View Templates (n=263, age range 4–12 years), cartoon storyboards (n=210, age range 4-16 years) and fortune lines (n= 69, 4–14 years). The discussion of each method will be framed from a pragmatic perspective and will particularly focus on the ethics of process and output, how the method was used and the data that were analysed. Questions will be asked about the considerations that need to be made when including young children in data sets with other older school-aged children and dilemmas identified: the affordances and constraints of visual approaches for all participants, the role of the visual as mediator, the role and positioning of the adult support and the impact this has on the nature of the data elicited.

Key words: Visual methods, inclusion, ethics, young children, Learning to Learn, student voice

Introduction

Since Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989), research eliciting children and young people's voice in relation to their lived experience has increased exponentially (Rudduck and Fielding 2006). There is now a significant international trend of student voice work extending across research (Cook-Sather 2014), policy (Bragg 2007) and practice (Mittra 2001). Many remark on the potential this type of work can have in developing a civic society (for example, Fielding 2004), a goal inherently ethical in its conception. There are warnings however about practice that does not live up to the intentions of the Convention, with tokenistic box ticking (Ruddock and Fielding 2006) or, as described by Alderson and Montgomery (1996), simply 'informing' children and young people. The desired alternative is a spectrum of dialogue (Lodge 2005) with children taking increased responsibility and significant roles in the decision-making processes (Robinson and Taylor 2007); although the extent to which full participation (Hart 1997) is necessary, possible, or indeed desirable, to qualify as 'voice' is up for debate.

Since Tizard and Hughes (1984) described the world of young children at home and at school, there has been interest in exploring the associated practices, cultures and experiences. This age group, in the early years of their formal education, experiences significant change as they commence their school career at a very formative stage in development. It has been noted that since the UNCRC there has been a change from 'research on' to 'research with' or 'for' this group of children (Darbyshire et al. 2005). This change, alongside the age and development of the children, has significant implications for traditional understandings of ethical practice (I'Anson 2013; Graham et al. 2015) with regard the research process (Flewitt 2005) and participatory approaches (Pascal and Bertram 2009). In this paper I will not only explore the ethical issues associated with the move towards eliciting young children's voice, but I will also discuss issues allied with including those voices alongside older children. This was an ethical prerogative in itself, but also had methodological implications.

I will explore ethics from the perspective of an emancipatory and democratic researcher. This was inherent in the Learning to Learn in Schools project from which the examples are drawn (Higgins et al. 2007; Wall et al. 2010; Wall 2012) and as such guided the data collection, synthesis and analysis process. Traditional research ethics, as covered by the guidelines produced by key educational research organisations (for example, BERA 2011; AERA 2011) are relevant. Even so, it is worth noting that neither mention the specific field of visual methodology or issues associated with researching young children. There are ethical principals explicitly associated with involving children in research (Graham et al. 2015), but the ethical process (te Riele and Baker 2015), however, of how we engaged with these samples of children and the visual data that we took forward in our enquiries was more nuanced. The way we included young children and their views in the research samples, must go beyond accountability and safe guarding to fulfill an agenda that is much more wide reaching and aligned with the UNCRC (1989) and democratic principles (Pope et al. 2010). The exploration of the ethics of process and output as presented in this paper will enable a range of ethical dilemmas to be identified and discussed.

The voice of young children

Educational research targeting the youngest age groups is under-developed (Clark 2005; Clark and Moss 2011). This is despite the fact that many researchers are documenting the insight and complexity of voice that can be elicited from this group if framed appropriately (Cremin and Slatter 2004; Robinson 2014). A significant contributory factor is that practices are so dependent on the beliefs held by adults about children's capacities and capabilities (Lansdown 2010; Komulainen 2007). This is exacerbated with young children given these same adults act as (protective) gatekeepers and decision makers (Tizard 1990). In many cases, researchers, teachers and those in authority, make decisions under the perception that young children are incapable of making their own opinions: they do not have fully formed views (James et al. 1998), will be influenced by the adult asking the questions (Hill, 2006) or need to be protected from the issues in some way (Alderson 2008; Cremin and Slatter 2004). Indeed, when these

children are consulted, processes can often tightly controlled, effectively denying young children a genuine voice or participatory role (Kanyal and Gibbs 2014).

It is not just the gatekeepers' dispositions that are important (Wall 2012), but also the tools used (Black et al. 2006), the topics children are consulted about (Rudduck 1980) and the role and position of the adult in the process (Lansdown 2010; Komulainen 2007). These are arguably more important (and challenging) with younger children (Cremin and Slatter 2004; Einarsdóttir 2007). One of the key obstacles to accessing young children's voice is the dominance of speech and language (Robinson 2014). Questionnaires and interviews, however carefully and creatively designed, all require, at some level, responses that rely on literacy ability. If the child, due to maturity or developmental stage, has the inability to represent their true opinions in such a way, does this discount the thinking when attempting the task? What should the role of the adult be in supporting a child's response and how do the power dynamics impact on the findings? There is a potential tension here between the process and the end product as privileged by the researcher (Einarsdóttir et al. 2009).

Alderson (2010) noted that young children in private talk very differently, with more complexity and richness, when compared to more formal settings; therefore the contexts set up for the purposes of eliciting voice and how they are constructed and managed are influential. The process (through which the child's views are elicited) must be appropriate, but so must the construction of the research output (the way the data is recorded and taken forwards). Any approach undertaken with young children must be thoughtfully facilitated and conducted (Gascoine et al. 2016; Thomson 2008); however, what does this challenge look like when collecting views across all school-aged children? Will visual approaches help to bridge this gap?

Visual research methods

Student voice agendas are particularly well disposed to the promise of what visual research methods offer (Cook and Hess 2007). They are lauded for removing the barrier of literacy and being inclusive of 'hard to reach' perspectives therefore enabling participation of younger children (Thompson 2008). Visual approaches are considered particularly positive for researching young children's perspectives because of:

- Age appropriateness (Cook and Hess 2007);
- Close association to common pedagogies used in the early years (Einarsdóttir et al. 2009);
- Task familiarity (Hill, 2006);
- Potential to alter power dynamics between adult and child (Wall and Higgins 2006); and
- The inherent process which encourages thinking time: a ‘valued space’ (Cook-Sathers 2002, p. 4).

These aspects can be considered in regard the process that the visual facilitates, the way in which dialogue and consideration of the topic might be enhanced through a process that is mediated by a visual prompt or process, and the nature of the output produced, either a visual product or talk that has been mediated through the use of a visual tool. The extent to which they truly allow the involvement of young children (and how young this extends) is worthy of examination. Although of course, within this paper the reverse will also need to be considered: to what extent are the decisions made for the younger participants to the detriment of older sections of the sample (Löftsröm et al. 2015)?

There are ethical challenges presented by visual methodology to some of the more accepted principles (Wiles et al. 2008). Issues of consent, confidentiality and anonymity look slightly different and often more complex when visual data, particularly photographs and video, are considered. This paper focuses on drawn images and so the issues are less about direct representation. However there is still a need for care to be taken to ensure that approaches fit with the democratic ideals of an approach (Pope et al. 2010). If we focus on the drawn outputs as data then issues around how they are interpreted and analysed emerge. Drawing is an open activity (Einarsdóttir et al. 2009) and each child has his or her own artistic quirks and capabilities, which, it is useful to note, extend out of the youngest age ranges. Drawing is also not a neutral activity, even for young children, and so it is important to recognise that it can be influenced by gender differences (Cherney et al. 2006), age and cognitive development (Lambert 2005), other people’s influence (Rose et al. 2006) and can be seen as ‘multivoiced’ (Lipponen et al. 2015). While this openness and lack of researcher manipulation can be seen as a positive, giving control for the

framing of the response to the child, this can also feel overwhelming. Therefore, the level of structure built into each task and the impact this has on the outcomes are of interest: does an open response lead to more authentic voice? Ethics in visual methodology has similar considerations to researching with young children (Einarsdóttir 2007; Flewitt 2006), a contextual and continuous approach is essential.

Methods

This paper uses three different drawing mediated research techniques as exemplars to focus discussion on the ethical issues surrounding the inclusion of young children in research samples. All three samples were drawn from the same collaborative research project, the Learning to Learn (L2L) in Schools Project Phases 3 and 4 (2003-2010: Higgins et al. 2007; Wall et al. 2010), which used a practitioner enquiry methodology (Baumfield et al. 2012) and involved schools including children from the ages of four to sixteen (all compulsory school years in England at the time). All of the techniques described in this paper were developed and administered in partnership with other researchers and practitioners. The reflections on their use are my own. Each one was not used specifically with the youngest age group but rather was designed to include the youngest children's voices alongside their older counterparts. This was an ethical decision based on understandings of inclusion and democratic spaces that were fundamental to the project (Wall 2012).

The three techniques chosen, Pupil View Templates (PVT), cartoon storyboards and fortune lines, all aimed to investigate different aspects of children's experience of L2L (of pedagogies aimed at promoting metacognitive awareness: Wall et al. 2010). Methodologically, while they could all be generally described as survey instruments, they also represent different ways of incorporating and using the visual to aid the elicitation of young children's views in samples that aimed to include their perspectives alongside older children. They represent a range of visually mediated data collection processes (see figure 1) that developed over time from relatively closed and large data sets to relatively open and small(er) data sets. The background, the intent behind each tools use, the processes and outputs are outlined as well as ethical reflections on the method as a whole.

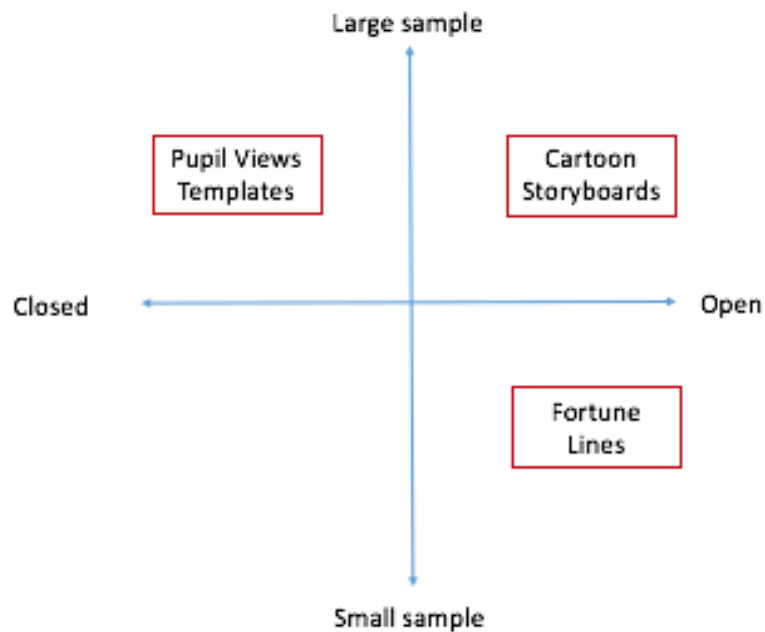


Figure 1. Range of drawn visual mediated approaches chosen

These tools will be explored from two related positions, process and output, enabling a contextual and continuous reflection on the ethics involved. These are reflected in the process and output of the research. This structure was apparent in my discussion of the literature: in the voice tradition, when researching young children, and in the visual field (outlined in table 1). I will use these aspects, separately and at the point at which they interact, to engage in reflections on the different techniques exemplified in this paper.

Table a: Typology of process and output considerations

	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Voice agendas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue and participation • Supports devolved models of power • Space to accesses thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate communication of perspectives • Allows a range of voices • Supports ‘hidden’ voices
Researching young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the process (the tool and the topic) is ‘tuned in’ to their needs • Reflect familiar pedagogies • Role of the adult as facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally appropriate (level of literacy required) • Interpreted in line with the intent of the participants
Visual Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create spaces for talk • mediation of power dynamics between adult and child • level of scaffold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationship between visual and more traditional forms of data • Accurate interpretation • Quantity versus quality

Pupil View Templates

Background: Pupil View Templates (see figure 2) have growing recognition as a tool to facilitate pupil conversations about learning (Wall et al. 2007). They were developed in partnership with teachers in the L2L project and have been used for both pedagogical and methodological intent (Wall and Higgins 2006). The cartoon aims to be visually appealing to children of all ages while also providing an image and structure that encourages conversation around a particular scenario. The tool can be used to either create visual data (the completed template) or to mediate discussion that can be recorded (producing a traditional transcript of the discussion). The former being suitable to large-scale survey while the latter enables rich, detailed exploration on a smaller scale. The cartoon format, of speech and thought bubbles superimposed onto an outline drawing, has been shown to be inclusive and understood by all age groups and by participants from a range of culturally diverse backgrounds (Higgins et al. 2007; Wall and Higgins 2006).

Pupil Response Record – Circle time

Name:	_____
Age:	_____

Circle time...

I think circle time is good because we get more friends

I think circle time is special because we think about others

in circle time we can make more friends by talking and playing games

in circle time we share our thoughts and smiles

University of Newcastle

Circle.doc – Copyright 2004

Figure 2. An example of a completed L2L Pupil View Template

Intent: The templates were used in the L2L project to explore children's perspectives on metacognition across the age groups 4-11 years, with the hypothesis that children engaged in Learning to Learn would be more metacognitively aware than their peers outside the project. The intent was primarily large-scale survey, with the desire to include the youngest children in the broader sample. The L2L templates were compared to those from three other research projects that did not have the same metacognitive emphasis. The visual was used to facilitate dialogue about the learning scenario (pictured in the template) with the speech and thought bubble enabling a move from the more concrete (what are the people saying) to the more abstract (what are they thinking). The templates were used as a way to scaffold children's responses, while also providing a structure that could increase the reliability of the tool when administered by teachers across a variety of contexts. The data taken forward to the analysis stage was the written comments from the speech and thought bubbles; therefore, the visual was supportive of the research process but the end data was more traditional.

Process: The children's teacher administered the templates with their own classes. This had the advantage that 'experts' made decisions about how best to work with a particular age group. The downside of course was that any power dynamics existing between child and teacher could impact on the data. As experts the teachers decided on the design of the template (the image), the number working together in a group (with a broad tendency towards smaller groups with the youngest children), the resources given to the group to aid completion (such as target language, pens and pencils) and the extent to which extra support was necessary (for example, scribing). Although not ideal in research terms, these variables in administration were considered to be in favour of inclusion due to the teachers' familiarity with the children and their needs. It was felt this would have an ultimately positive impact on successfully accessing a range of children's voice.

In total 509 PVTs were analysed: 263 from the L2L phase 3 Evaluation and 246 from the other projects, all collected across the primary age phase from children aged four to eleven years old (findings were reported in Author 2007). The hard copy of the template was 'owned' by the children and therefore the research team used photocopies, often in black and white (which were sometimes difficult to interpret due to the copying process). Due to the size of the sample and the means of administration, the templates were considered the 'output' of the process and only the written comments were taken forwards. The scale of the data set was such that a broad, bottom up, analysis of the templates was impractical. Each template was transcribed and text units were isolated on the basis of sense, this could have been anything from a single word to a sentence. A deductive analysis was applied using 5 key codes derived from Moseley et al.'s (2005) Framework for Thinking and work categorising metacognition done by Veenman and Spaans (2005).

Ethical reflections: Across the age ranges the use of the Pupil Views Template, including understanding of the semiotic frame and its capacity to generate dialogue, was not reported as an issue. The cartoon provided an accessible 'valued space' (Cook-Sathers 2002), which supported all ages in engaging with something quite abstract and difficult to talk about: their learning. On the surface inclusion of the youngest children was achieved. However, there was significant issue on the prominence given to the

written element of the PVT task. For this to be completed effectively, the role of an adult was more prominent with younger and less able children. We were accepting of the extent to which a task necessitates adult involvement, but the privileging of the written output increased the relevancy of the potential influence this might cause and as a result this became an ethical dilemma for us. It was not simply a matter of trying to remove the need for adult support entirely, but more about considering the most pragmatic way forward while ensuring each child's voice was contributed authentically. The pedagogy that young children normally experience and the role adult support plays in this was relevant. Maybe, in regards generating an ethical process and in line with the advantage of visual methods being pedagogically appropriate, 'what they are used to' should be considered. The templates purport to be a school-based task and a lot of their agency is centred around this claim. If children were used to adult support in school maybe taking it away would be detrimental to this feeling of 'normal' practice. The important thing was ensuring that the adults' dispositions were supportive of the voice agenda and to minimise any inhibition that might occur. If it is a case of a supported voice rather than no voice at all, then surely this is more in line with the UNCRC (1989).

The role of the written element was emphasised because this was the one element of the template that was extracted and taken forward for analysis. This decision, for reasons of scale and to fulfil the comparative intent of the overarching enquiry, limited the voice of all children and for the very youngest it increased the likelihood, due to their skills and capabilities, they would need to use adult support. In this form the data did not represent voice as dialogue (Lodge 2005), in regards the conversations that were had around the template or in regard participation with the research itself. It did however enable the inclusion of more children's voices, and there were advantages to this. In regards the ethical treatment of this single element then the way it was used and interpreted became even more important to ensure findings were representative of the children's perspectives on the topic. There was a need to ensure a faithful engagement with the original intent of the writer and to ascribe meaning as carefully as possible.

The structure of the PVT was predetermined and relatively tight, although as part of the process the children did add to the image: giving the people expressions or adding elements to the scene and the data taken forwards was equally limited. With the other

techniques, described below, the structure was less but the complexity and range of the responses increased. There is a pay-off here between the size of the data set and the range of the responses. The extent to which this influences the ethical narrative of the research – inclusion of a wider sample within a contained processes (PVT) compared to an open process collecting wider perspectives but from a smaller sample (fortune lines) - is an important consideration especially when considering the democratic ideals of voice under which this research was undertaken. Would the ethical narrative have been improved through greater communication of the wider intent of PVT usage to the children, would this have helped them to understand the structure and its implicit biases to a greater extent? The way this was done,, however so it was understood by the younger children would be crucial.

Cartoon Storyboards

Background: The image used on the Pupil View Templates (PVTs) represented a static point in time whereas the Learning to Learn Project used a definition that emphasised the process of learning (Wall et al. 2010). We were aware of Galman's (2009) work with graphic novels and how they had been useful in supporting students in developing a flexible narrative: 'to create a performance ... a drama of their words' (p.213). So combining these ideas, storyboards were designed (Wall et al. 2016) to explore the children's stories of their own learning trajectory (examples of completed storyboards can be seen below in figure 5).

Intent: The intent was to survey across participant schools to explore children's perceptions of the process of learning. We wanted to see if there were developmental trends in this understanding and therefore any implications for how pedagogies could be implemented at different ages. We did not want to provide too much structure or dictate the type of narrative that the children told and so a simple structure of 6 boxes (2x3) on an A4 piece of paper was developed and the children told they could use this as they wanted.

Process: This tool was used during school visits in the summer term, 2008. Learners from the ages of 4 to 16 were given the storyboard template to complete by a member of the research team. It was emphasised to each group that there was no need to

use the template in any particular way; indeed, within our sample of 210 cartoons, almost every possible permutation was explored: including using only one or two of the six boxes and flipping the template over to use the blank reverse for one or two large images. The majority used all the boxes, either creating a six box story or having three boxes containing pictures with explanatory text in the three boxes below, a format which is frequently used in primary schools for story writing.

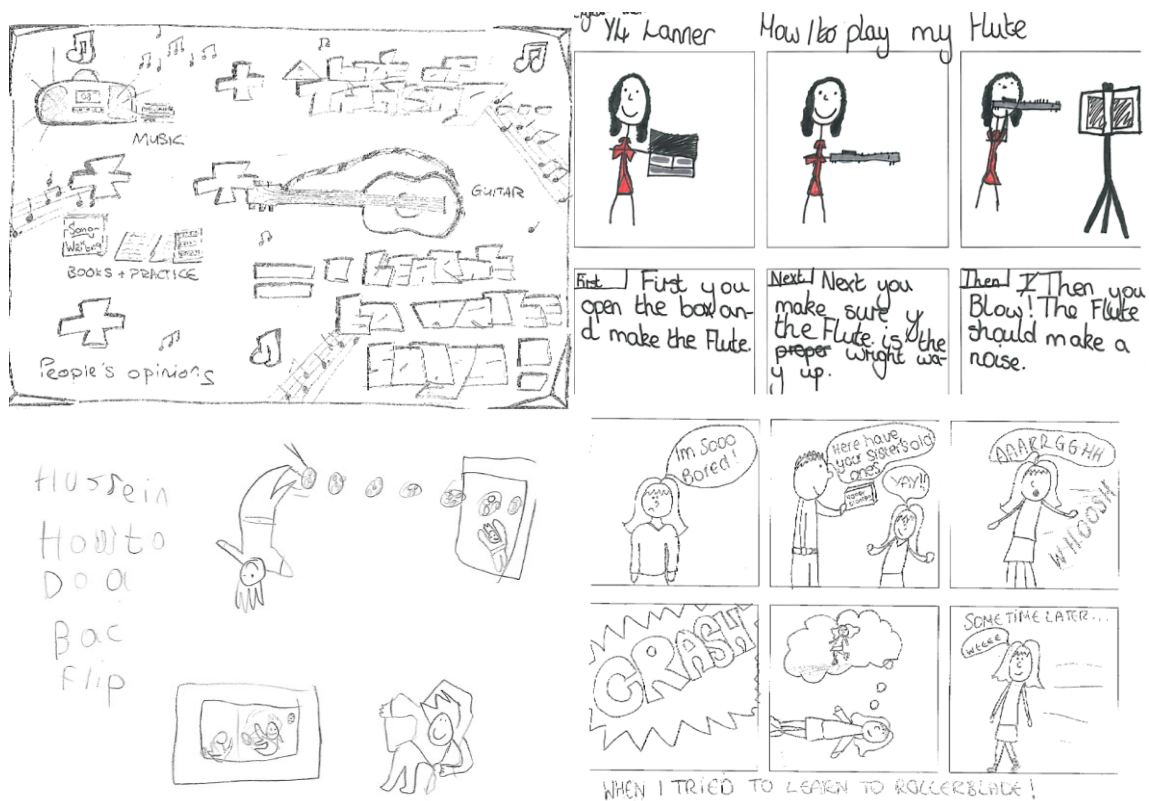


Figure 3. Examples of cartoon storyboards exemplifying different use of the 6 box format

The prompt ‘tell me the story of when you learned something new’ was used. It was made clear that this could be in the recent or distant past and it could be any kind of learning, at home or at school, learning a skill, some information or something about themselves. The activity was completed by a member of the research team working with a small group (around 5 or 6 learners) withdrawn from the class, however, sometimes this varied and we worked occasionally with the whole class. This was due to context specific circumstances.

Ethical Reflections: A key aspect of process with the storyboard activity was participants' understanding of the semiotic frame of the task. Most understood the cartoon and associated structures: thought/ speech bubbles and a narrative going from box to box. As with the PVTs, the semiotics of cartoons was found to be relatively universal across school age children. The idea of using the six boxes as they saw fit in relation to their own personal narrative was also well received with many seeming to relish the opportunity to use it as they chose and to do something different from other children in their group. However, the way that the boxes were used showed that the medium was influencing the nature of the children's response.

As the researchers were the adults administering this method, the task was introduced as a part of the wider research project (which most knew that their teacher was participating in: Wall and Hall 2016). The students were explicitly asked if they would like to participate—any who chose not to were typically allowed to do other attractive activities such as using the computer. This was not possible with the PVTs as the teachers were responsible for this element, one step removed from the research team. This process represents our attempts at a more robust ethical protocol around authentic permissions that engages with the recommendations of the UNCRC (1989). The majority of students were keen to participate and many, predominantly the youngest, were interested in the wider project: sample size and constituency, age of other participants etc. This wider knowledge of the intent with which this task was undertaken engaged a more authentic and considered voice from the children. It is interesting to note that it was the youngest children who asked the most questions and the impact that this might have had.

In regards output, the storyboards proved a very successful way of collecting data. Across all the age groups the task was met with enthusiasm, although there were challenges. The older children were sometimes inhibited by the need to draw, but were encouraged by the researcher to use stick figures and written narrative if that helped. With younger children, there was no such reluctance, but here we saw what we perceived to be an impact from the media on what they chose to draw and how they chose to draw it. At analysis it became obvious the younger children were more likely to draw learning outside the classroom, for example, sports, learning to play an instrument. We reflected

with the teachers on this and considered the extent to which academic progression was difficult to picture and draw. We felt that we were more likely to see subjects such as sports (Wall et al. 2016), because the progression of learning could be drawn more easily: 1) they did not know how to, for example, surf, 2) they practised, and 3) they could do it. We think the structure of the 6x2 frame exacerbated this by providing the children with a structure that encouraged a narrative with a beginning, middle and end. The power exerted by different media to implicitly influence the nature of the voice elicited was not something we had previously contemplated and is important again in considering the ethical narrative of the research process.

Once the data collection was completed we were faced with a large, complex sample. The visual process was accessible and inclusive of most respondents which produced a lot of storyboards, but the open-ended nature of the cumulative sample was huge. This was exacerbated by the complexity, depth and breadth, of each individual, isolated piece. The level of potential interpretation was overwhelming. The breadth and depth might neatly correspond to qualitative approaches, but we were faced with the problem of how to deal with the scale of the data set. The pragmatics of using interpretive analysis techniques on a sample of 210 complex sources felt unrealistic on its own (Wall et al. 2013a). The resulting analysis used a mixed method frame that drew on both qualitative and quantitative traditions, although the underlying approach was inductive (Wall et al. 2013b). The extent to which we valued the complexity of each child's response, given their commitment to our research agenda, against the pragmatics of giving an overview of the sample, is another ethical dilemma.

Fortune lines

Background: Continuing the focus on learning process in the project, we wanted to explore the children's experiences of Learning to Learn over time. A powerful pedagogic technique was adapted; a tool that we knew was effective for eliciting children's thinking and concept formation within a teaching scenario. Fortune lines are a thinking skills technique that has been shown to support young children's thinking about a particular factor over time (Higgins et al. 2001). With the joint objectives of inclusivity and high levels of reflection, a mediated interview was chosen with the fortune line, with

feelings on one axis and time on the other, providing the mediation. The interviewer was able to prompt the child while referring to specific aspects of the drawing. Examples of the completed tool can be seen in figure 6.

Intent: The intent of fortune lines was to explore children's perspectives of their experiences of L2L over time. This was a very open intent and we did not want to influence the children's responses too much. If we had been researching adults' views then a narrative interview style might have been appropriate, but with children then a scaffold to support their thinking and responses was felt to be appropriate. The story element was felt to be important and linked to the work of Yair (2009) on students' key educational experiences.

This technique with its emphasis on talk as the main outcome of the research process was much more in line with the traditional visually mediated interview (for example, Allen 2009; Prosser 2007; Harper 2002). The child engaged with a visual task and the conversation, the main target of the activity, flowed from there. The intent was for the visual to act as a bridge to their understanding (Harper 2002); however with a sample including young children then our intent went beyond this and aimed for the mediation process to create a space where dialogue about the child's experiences of Learning to Learn could be accessed and explored.

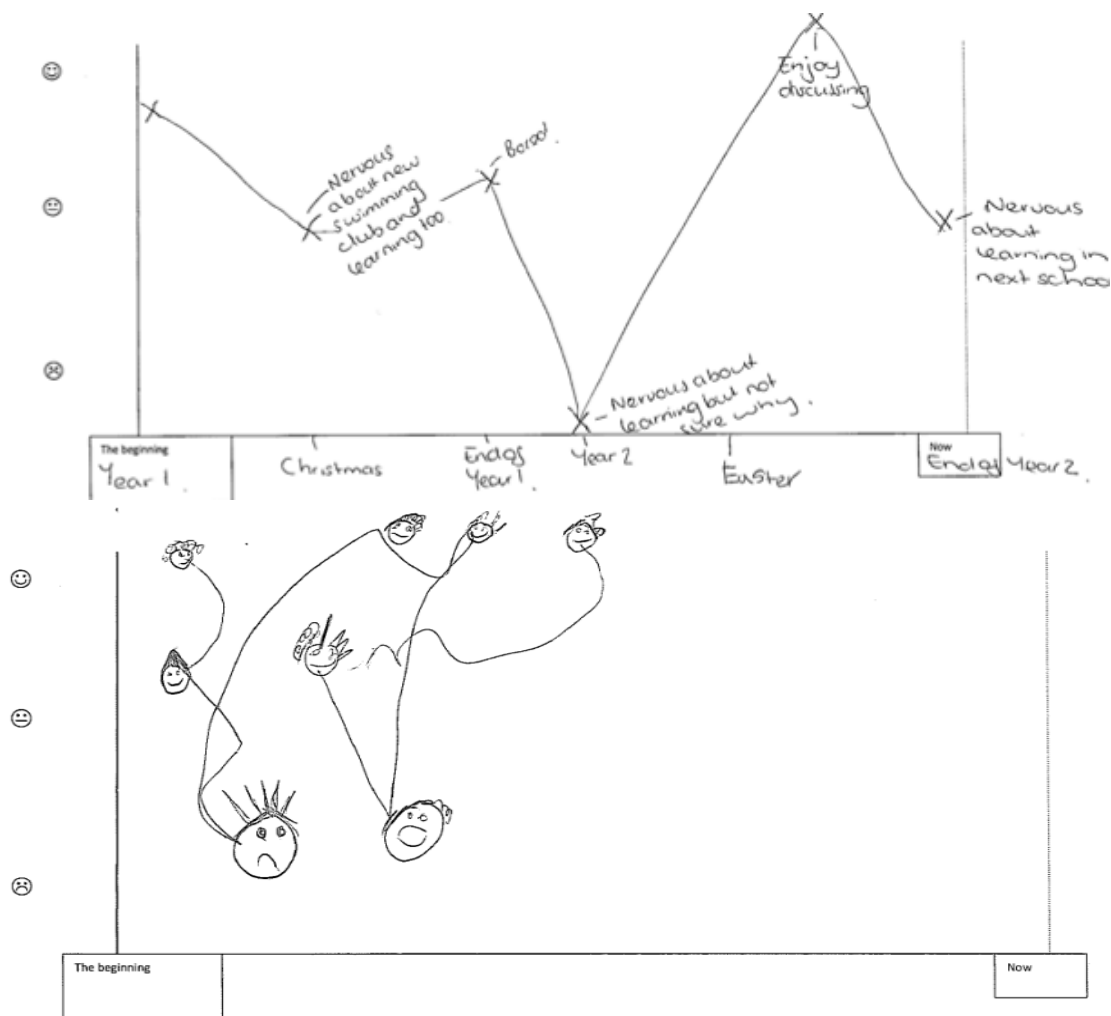


Figure 4. Examples of completed fortune lines

Process: Student interviews were completed as part of the school visits in the summer of 2009. The interviews were completed on a one to one basis with children of all ages. The prompt was to tell the story of their learning as part of the L2L project. First they were asked how they felt about their learning on the day of the interview, to make a distinction between academic self-concept and their general mood. They were then asked to think backwards to gauge their feelings about learning at ‘the beginning’. For most students, this was the beginning of the school year, as we were looking at the impact of the particular cycle of inquiry in the school. Students were then asked to track their journey from beginning to end, either as a linear progression or reflecting ups and downs.

Whatever kind of line they drew students were then asked to explain what had either supported an increase in positive affect or contributed to a decline.

In total 69 fortune lines were completed, including a range of age groups from 4 to 14 years. The potential data included both the fortune line itself and also the interview transcript of the conversation between adult and child.

Ethical reflections: This technique, in terms of process, probably had the most in common with traditional interviewing. As such the children were faced with a one to one situation with an adult stranger. The potential for voice to be inhibited was significant and the role of the visual task to mediate these dynamics was very important. In a photo elicitation scenario (Clark 2005; Harper 2002) the visual mediation supplements the interviewers' questioning and provides a space which diffuses some tensions and encourages dialogue. Here the visual was more interactive, rather than a supplementary prompt, and through this enabled a range of means to communicate an opinion as well as providing an additional way of diverting attention from the immediacy of the adult-child dynamic. Baggis and Buckingham (2008) showed that visual mediated interviews gave "access to a wider range of voices" (p. 121) and I believe that with the fortune line activity, combining visual and verbal response, this was literal as well as metaphorical. This range of response was all the more important when young children were involved as it provided a 'normal' and meaningful method with which to express themselves.

The output data was interview transcripts and fortune lines and at analysis stage this brought an interesting consideration around the validity of considering one without the other or how to combine them effectively. This dilemma was essentially ethical as I do not believe we can be confident of an accurate representation of the child's voice without due consideration of the drawn response as equally important to the verbal. This was frustrating as after the event we had no way of matching effectively the spoken narrative to the process of drawing and then engaging with the fortune line. To do so would have been especially important considering my reflections about multi-modal responses for younger children. When undertaking the task some children, not necessarily the youngest although they were probably more prevalent, used the fortune line explicitly in articulating their thoughts—using finger pointing and even adding elements to their fortune line as they talked. In analysing the transcripts in the manner of a traditional

interview then this would be lost. If the research were to be repeated then consideration needs to be made about the way in which the fortune line and verbal response have been constructed as part of the interview dialogue. Maybe an accurate representation of the child's responses would only be possible through capturing the talk and engagement with the visual over time (Lodge's (2007) use of an overhead video camera to record the dialogue and the interaction with the visual would be a good starting place). It is worth reflecting on this when working with techniques that combine verbal and visual responses, we need to question ourselves early about the nature of the voice that we are eliciting and the role that the visual and verbal are taking individually and in combination. The extent to which this emphasis might change as a child matures is also noteworthy.

Conclusion

In this paper, the intent was to explore the ethical dilemmas inherent in using visual approaches, both as part of the process and as output data, to survey perspectives across school-aged children including children under the age of seven. All three methods succeeded in eliciting the perspectives of these youngest students and including them alongside their older counterparts. They show the value in using visual approaches to provide a process and/or output that is supportive of this intent. However, there were issues within the decision-making, administration of the method and analysis attributed to each that have ethical imperatives for further work. In particular, there is a need to be critical of the nature of the tool, the way it is read (by different individuals and age groups) and the way that different media can influence the nature of the response given. First, with regards process, there was no doubt that the visual enabled the youngest children to be included due to age appropriateness, association with common pedagogic practices and, to a certain extent, the removal of the barrier of literacy. The methods allowed a visual contribution even when the child did not feel able to speak directly to the researcher. For example, in the fortune line activity we had a number of children who chose not to answer any of the prompt questions about their drawing, but because they completed the visual element then their voice was 'heard' and included in the wider sample. Under democratic principles then the visual did provide a medium which gave

voice to individuals that may be missed or unheard, particularly individuals represented in the youngest age group.

The second dilemma that becomes apparent is the role and positioning of the adult. For the youngest children having an adult involved was almost impossible to negate without excluding them from the research. I have reflected on the extent to which this represents 'normal' pedagogy for this group but when the research is focusing on learning and teaching then having your teacher involved in eliciting your thinking must impact on the authenticity of the data. Reassuringly however even with the more structured tools, such as the PVTs, the visual task was seen to dissipate some of the potential power dynamics and provide outlets that were supportive of voice or emergent voice in the younger children. The simple fact that the children's attention was drawn to the task rather than directly at the adult was helpful. With the youngest children, the visual provided scaffold to enable some independence thus allowing groups of students to work together (PVT and storyboards) rather than the more challenging one to one/ adult to child scenario (fortune lines). Even in the latter, where some children did not say anything in the spoken part of the activity, they still participated in the drawing element, and were therefore afforded a voice in the wider process. This is not to say that the influence of power dynamics was alleviated, it would be naive to say so, but it helped to create a process that moved towards a more authentic and warrant-based voice.

Third, and in regards output, the nature of the media and its influence on the nature of the data captured and disseminated requires thought. The youngest students' views however were not any more important than the rest of the sample. The extent to which the visual provided a tool with which to access voices across all age groups was an important facet. The reflections show that this was not universally successful. The nature of the media used and deliberation of the way it might influence the contribution made by different groups is essential. The storyboards, which arguably incorporated the most significant need for a drawn contribution, evidence this somewhat. For younger pupils, then the semiotics of a drawing based task were relatively familiar as a school-based task (Wall and Higgins 2006), but for the older students this was less normal practice and met with some reluctance. However, where the researcher gave permission ('yes, we want your drawn response'; 'you can annotate') and emphasised a position of non-judgement

then the students often approached the task enthusiastically as something different. No child, whatever the age, opted out of the activity and so all had a point of view that was represented in the final data set. The visual supported this process and allowed all the children to have a voice and in small ways influenced the direction of the project.

The final dilemma that emerged, was more all encompassing, was the issue of voice and what constitutes an authenticity of process and output. While none of the methods described represent children being involved in decision-making (Robinson and Taylor, 2007), the tools were used to collect voice to inform project outputs, to survey views and lived experience of L2L. While full participation is a goal, it may not be necessary in all voice activities, indeed it is arguably not possible. So we need to be open to how a democratic ethos that enables voice can be created in activities where the control is still with others. Within the exemplar activities we certainly went beyond the ‘informing’ process that Alderson and Montgomery (1996) critiqued. By surveying opinion we gave the children a voice to contribute towards the project findings, even when structured towards a relatively closed project intent, and in many cases creating a process, as mediated by the visual, that moved towards what Lodge (2005) termed dialogue. Within the scope of survey research design the intent was to ensure that the voice that was heard was as authentic and informed as possible. By using stimuli such as the PVT or fortune line then we were providing a prompt that facilitated a conversation. The tools were chosen as catalytic (Baumfield et al. 2009) in as much as they opened a space in which children could express their opinion and explore their understanding of the concept (in these cases learning) with an openness to giving an authentic opinion with little direction to a right or wrong answer. However, due to the need for extra support I wonder whether, when working with young children, we should consider an emergent voice contribution, representing a contribution no less than older peers, but is mediated and often supported contribution. What the visual seems to provide is a tool that helps the youngest to access their thinking and communicate their perspective with increasing independence. The strength comes from the universality of the visual process to all age ranges.

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