



Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts

Philosophy and Literature Lead Learner Report

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1. The Gogol Workshop

The following report will examine the practice of open space learning, beginning with a single workshop for Philosophy and Literature students and branching out to consider the overall merits and applicability of this kind of learning. As well as observing the workshop myself, I interviewed three of its participants to get first-hand reactions.

The students were all informed about the workshop via an email which was received with mixed reactions.

Student A: I thought there was a possibility it was going to be really good, but also a possibility it was going to be awkward and terrible.

Student B: I hate drama, I feel so self-conscious... So it was quite, like, when you talk about a play that's interactive you sort of assume you're gonna be acting out and reading out loud... it was exciting though, I think, yeah, I liked the idea of it.

Student C: I really like acting and drama and that sort of thing, so I was really excited to do it.

Straight off, it was evident that the students had been under the impression that they would be participating in some sort of “drama” workshop. This makes sense – when we think of exploring a work of art by using our bodies

and the space around us, we think of theatre and performance. Any traditional seminar will incorporate some degree of performance; we gesticulate and use body language to emphasise the points we raise, or to make them seem more persuasive. However, many students will be put off by the idea of expression once it has reached a level in which it might be branded “theatre” or “acting”.

I began by asking the students about the text they’d had to read prior to coming to the workshop, Gogol’s *The Diary of a Madman*, and how appropriate it was to study it using open space learning (OSL).

Student B: I did enjoy [the text], but I forgot it quite quickly, and having it acted out, and gone through, and going over all the different parts and dynamics and then seeing how they linked up chronologically, you get a much better idea of the text, because you see it sort of in action, almost.

Student A: I find that with most things if there’s some sort of visual attachment [...] it’s gonna help me remember stuff, [...] so acting the whole thing out – I think it makes it more memorable.

One advantage of the workshop over a traditional seminar would be this visualizing of the text, which seemed to make it easier for the students to remember the plot and the sentiments that are expressed at different points. For me, it’s more than just this. True – seeing something out of the ordinary makes us more likely to remember it and whatever is “attached” to it, in this case the text. However, when we saw the text “in action”, as Student B put it, we weren’t simply seeing an unusual image which had some sort of link to the text so that we might remember it better – we were experiencing a physical embodiment of some of the ideas of the text, so that we might understand it better. I believe this idea of experiential learning over the memorizing of information is a key component of OSL, and one that I shall return to.

I went on to ask the students how they thought they would have felt about the text if they had studied it in a traditional seminar.

Student C: I don’t think I would’ve liked it, ‘cause I didn’t actually enjoy it that much when I read it myself, but I really liked it after we’d done the workshop.

Student B: *It'd have been average, I think, I did like that aspect of acting it out. I think that if I was being taught it, it would still be interesting, and I'd still enjoy it.*

Student A: *I would have been much more critical of it if it'd been taught in a more formal seminar. [...] I appreciated theatrical aspects [of the text] that I didn't initially see in it by doing it this way. Enjoyment vs. criticism*

One thing that I thought was particularly interesting was the social element of the workshop, which would normally be minimized in traditional seminar. The active state that the students needed to be in so they could interact with their peers seemed to cross over to their involvement with the text – there was no chance of someone drifting off or becoming bored, as all were clearly engaged.

Student C: *Actually when we were asked to interpret the play, we were asked to act out certain parts and you could interpret the text, and basically take it wherever you wanted. You're actually contributing something, which always feels like you're not wasting your time, you're sort of making an effort. That's part of the problem with lectures, you sort of just sit there, there's no participation, really, you just have to listen to what it is, and with that workshop it really helps you get involved, and it gave you the opportunity to understand it more.*

In a lecture, the student is a transmitter: his aim is to copy the knowledge that is being expressed from the lecturer via his voice, rewriting it in a legible and condensed format in his notebook, so that at a future point, he may look at these notes and try to keep them in his head for long enough so that he can transmit the information once again, only this time onto an exam paper. In many cases, the student's mind is active during this process, and as he takes notes or rereads them he is actually engaging with the knowledge expressed. In fact, some students will be so engaged by what they have learned that they will return to the material introspectively long after the lecture has finished,

perhaps even discussing their ideas with friends. In most cases, though, the task of transmission is given a priority which overrides the mind's will to engage creatively with new ideas, and so it dedicates itself to note-taking in a state which is basically passive.

It seems to me that we should aim for a type of learning in which the mind is active – that is to say, rather than expending cerebral energy on the ritual of preparing clever words for regurgitation, the mind is interacting with the ideas placed before it. And what better way to activate the mind than with the body? A long history of ingrained Cartesian dualism has led us to believe that the academic world belongs to the mind alone, although OSL gives us hope that this imbalance is slowly being corrected.

I wondered whether a combination of lecture and workshop was ideal, in order to benefit from both pedagogical styles.

Student A: I always think I would've liked to have had a lecture and studied it for a while first, and then I would've had a better understanding of the text and I would've been more excited about the text to go in and then do an acting kind of workshop with it. I think both are quite important, both aspects.

Student B: I think the combination of the two would've been very interesting, because obviously in a lecture you get more depth about symbolism and all the rest of it, that kind of stuff, but I definitely liked having this side to it.

The general opinion was that lectures are a better way of learning about literary devices and the formal construction of a text (philosophical or literary), but they miss out on something that the students got out of this workshop. My question was, simply put: can we get the best of both worlds?

Student C: I would've liked a lecture as well, but I would've preferred it after the workshop – we had our own ideas when we went to the workshop, purely from what we'd read, not from what a lecturer had told us. I think if we'd had a lecture beforehand, so much of what we acted and did would've just been influenced by that. It wouldn't have really been fresh.

Student A: *That's a really good point, actually.*

So then, it would have been best to have the workshop first, and then a lecture afterwards?

Student C: *Or even just a discussion about the text – we didn't really discuss it that much, in detail.*

Perhaps a compromise like this is necessary in order to make OSL more widely accepted in the world of academia.

After all, the overall experience of the workshop wasn't entirely void of negative comments:

Student B: *I didn't like that bit at the beginning – It was a really little part of the day, but it was when you'd written down the moment you'd memorized best, or found interesting. You had to put it out on the floor and you had to walk around them saying hi to your neighbour, or giving them high-five, or a hug, so very much like "This is ice-breaking material."*

Student B went on to say that while this opening to the workshop felt contrived, she thought this was "the nature of drama in general", which she wasn't keen on. Again, it seemed as though the theatrical connotations were what made the event off-putting. I thought perhaps that the students may have felt patronized, being told to act naturally in a social environment which was clearly constructed by the tutor?

Student A: *No, I didn't find it patronizing. In fact, I found that the way it was structured and the way Jonny Heron led the group, he was very understanding of non-drama-y type people, I thought. There wasn't pressure, and it was quite relaxed...*

I went on to ask the students their thoughts about specific parts of the workshop.

Student A: *Basically, there was this flow throughout the workshop, you started where you made a tableaux of the scene, and then you kind of went off and developed it, and then we lined them all up chronologically in terms of plot, and then each of us thought of a word that related to that emotional point in the story, and went along [the line] and said all the words, and I just thought getting to that point was quite – exhilarating.*

Student C: *In such a short space of time, going through every word, you think “Oh my god, that’s all the emotional changes [the protagonist] goes through,” which you don’t notice necessarily if you read it over a few hours.*

So, through these exercises, emotions felt throughout the story were first isolated by different groups, then reduced to a single word, then rearranged in chronological order and read aloud, so that we could hear the skeleton of the story, and see how the pieces fit together. Jonny Heron, the tutor (although the word barely seems appropriate – perhaps “guide” is better?) also had the groups all freeze in their tableaux images as they stood in line, so that the line itself became a physical manifestation of the emotions experienced by the protagonist of the story. What does it mean for the students to actually be part of this line, to actually represent a moment of the story with their entire body, rather than experiencing the story as an object between pages, an object from which meaning is to be extracted? When the students made the line, the story was something that had moved from the pages into their bodies – if there was meaning to be found, it was within the student, mind and body, no longer the pages. The text was no longer an other – it now constituted part of the self as well as the other students, that is, the physical environment. At the very least, you have to admit that learning about a story disseminated across your mind, body, and immediate surroundings is more intriguing than learning about a story that remains confined to texts and theories.

2. Space

When I asked the students if they would like more of these kinds of workshops as compulsory parts of their course, the answer was a unanimous

“Yes”. However, when I suggested the possibility of optional workshops, everyone thought it was a bad idea.

Student C: *Optional would be nice if everyone turned up, but I don't think that would ever happen.*

Student A: *You'd get a very specific kind of people who turned up.*

I myself have usually belonged to the group of students who aren't attracted to this kind of “active” learning. Last year, I was a part of the Faust Project (or Interdisciplinary and Creative Collaboration module) mostly because it branched out away from my core subjects, literature and philosophy, and into more diverse areas, including music, film, economics, and neuroscience. I was only partially interested in the less traditional kind of seminar that I was to experience; and I know I would still have applied for the module had it been taught with traditional seminars. However, I would soon learn the benefits of including space and physicality as a part of my studies.

One seminar in particular seemed to follow a model similar to the kind which Jonny had used in his *The Diary of a Madman* session. It is best illustrated with examples: for instance, we would all walk around the room in no particular direction, using all the space we had, until the teacher called out an image or event which we would have to react to by forming individual tableaux with our bodies. I think most people probably felt a bit silly, myself included. There is something about the “unacademic” stereotype that goes along with this kind of exercise that it often creates embarrassment, as well as the fact that each student has to offer an on-the-spot interpretation, which might make some worry that they will make fools of themselves.

“The world is shrinking, everything is becoming smaller and closing in on you.”

The teacher clapped her hands, and everyone froze. I assumed the position that came to me instinctively: I stretched out my arms and legs as far as I could, making my body take up as much space as possible. I was surprised to see that most people, on the contrary, had curled up into balls, altering their bodies to suit the shape of the hypothetical world, rather than

resist it as I had done. I'll always remember that simple exercise for what it taught me about interpretation. The ways of reading texts and situations had always seemed to me purely intellectual, and yet we could all see from looking at each other that, relying on instinct, we had all taken different *physical* stances on how to react to and interpret the imaginary scenario. While this exercise taught us about ourselves and how we interpret, it was too vaguely connected to Goethe's *Faust* to teach us anything specific about the text. Nonetheless, it got us in the right frame of mind (or body) to then do some close reading of Goethe's play.

This was close reading as I had never experienced it before. We all stood in a circle, and read out the parts of the text that we had been given. We were to read the text five times, each time focusing on a different sense (i.e. sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) as a means to experience the words on the page. Afterwards we would discuss what sense or senses we thought the most appropriate or pleasurable as means to experience Goethe's poetry. While this exercise eventually became tedious, I feel that I have learned more about the areas of text that we looked at in terms of affect. By exploring how a text had different physical impacts on my state of mind I had a sense of understanding that I normally would only get when examining semantic aspects of a text. Importantly, this phenomenological understanding was not reached through research or theories, but simply by attempting to "feel" words rather than analyse them.

So there we have two ways in which physicality may be beneficial to learning: exploring how we instinctively react with our whole bodies to ideas, and attempting to use the senses to experience text rather than merely understand them in terms of theoretical meaning. A third benefit is the natural and social elements of open-space learning. I am not alone among students who often have been too lazy or intimidated to share their thoughts in a seminar. In the structure of a normal seminar, there is always a clear teacher, whose stereotypical role is to impart knowledge, whilst the students' stereotypical roles are to receive knowledge. After all, their parents are paying money to the university so that something is gotten in return, so on some basic level it seems to make less sense for a student to talk or interact – sadly, I believe that education is often reduced to a business transaction

mindset, and knowledge as something to be bought, or achieved through simply getting in to university. Although these thoughts may not run through many students' heads, just from observing attitudes amongst my peers and within myself, they seem to sometimes exist at least on a subconscious level.

In open-space learning, the students are often standing and so on the same level as the teacher, and the encouragement for students to interpret things creatively makes seminars closer to normal social situations. I'll use another example from my past: I was in Spain, attending Spanish lessons in a small school. On my last day, the teacher invited us to a nearby pub, and in the relatively short time that we spent drinking and chatting together in Spanish, I felt that I spoke more confidently than I had done in any of my lessons. Though the alcohol factor must not be dismissed, it seemed to me that while I was in class, I was under pressure to speak Spanish in order to complete an exercise that I didn't really care about, whereas at the bar I was under pressure to speak Spanish because I really wanted to communicate. I think that this change of spatial and social environment can have a hugely beneficial effect on all types of learning.

Another example: my mother is a teacher at a school in London, and for a time their facilities were suspended, and they suddenly found themselves without enough buildings for their students. They solved this problem practically by giving classes in different parts of London – physical education was taught in a park, art and history students were taught in museums, and many other classes were simply given in areas such as cafés and scenic spots in the city. While this was only intended as a short-term solution while the school secured more buildings, the scheme was so successful that the school has retained its teaching method despite now having enough classrooms for all its students. The idea is that students are more likely to be engaged and interested in what they learn if it is in a “real-life” setting as opposed to an “academic” setting. When learning outside of the classroom, students were more enthusiastic and tended to participate more, and given that the scheme is still successful at the time of writing, it seems unlikely that this enthusiasm can be attributed simply to the novelty of learning in a new place.

However, even within a single classroom, space can be manipulated so as to create an environment which is fun and interesting to learn in. This was the case with the Faust Project, and was also true on the Philosophy and Literature Weekend trip that I went on in my first year. We were working on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge, whilst exploring the area in which it was written in the West Country. While there's no doubt that this wonderful location and change of ordinary setting affected our understanding of the poem as we went through it, the exercises I remember most were the ones in which we manipulated the space we had ourselves.

In my group, we had the audience sit in a shape on the floor that resembled the prow of a ship, and then turned off all the lights and recited our assigned piece of the poem in darkness, using flashlights as though they were swinging lanterns. We hauled ordinary desks across the wooden floor to imitate the creaking of a boat, and rhythmically repeated the word "water", the first word of our section of the poem, to make the audience feel surrounded by waves. In Coleridge's narrative, the boat has become a sort of ghost ship at this point, so the darkness and lack of physicality worked in our favour. In poetry in general, where affect is generally more important than in other types of literature, understanding is inextricably linked to feeling, and as we feel with our senses it is important to include them in our learning. We even splashed a bit of water on their faces from time to time, and the sudden shrieks from members of the audience really helped with unnerving the rest. But while they were an audience, this wasn't just a performance – by putting them on the boat, we were teaching a specific way of feeling and understanding Coleridge's poem. It was essential that we transformed the space of a simple room into the Mariner's boat so that we could all *be* there, rather than just use the room as a place where we could talk *about* the boat, as one might do in a traditional seminar. You could say that OSL often means the difference between experiencing a text first-hand and experiencing it second-hand, that is, through a veil of previous accepted readings and scholarly interpretations. It is the difference between seeing words on a page, considering what they mean and how they make you feel, and hearing ghostly whispers and creaking boards, salt-spray hitting your cheeks under a flickering light as you

move forward under a starless night over a bottomless ocean, and then afterwards think about how *that* made you think and feel.

3. Shakespeare

The manipulation of space within a single room in order to teach is an optional part of the module “Shakespeare and Selected Dramatists of his Time”, which allows for traditional seminars (“Chairs”) and open-space seminars (“No Chairs”), as well as a third “Hybrid” option which incorporates elements of both styles of learning. I interviewed two students, one (Student D) who has been enrolled with the No Chairs seminars from the start, and another (Student E) who started the year taking traditional Chairs seminars, but a few weeks later switched to the No Chairs option.

I began by discerning the reasons for this student’s switch.

Student E: I picked Traditional because I thought that I’d always done well with Traditional, so I might as well stick with what I knew. No Chairs looked like hands-on acting, dramatization, and I don’t consider myself a theatre student, so I wanted to focus on reading a text.

[...] I was not learning anything in my seminar. I did everything at home, making my own evaluations, and then found myself going to the seminar, and reading it again and making the same evaluations.

The seminar tutor already had obvious conclusions in mind, and if you tried to suggest something new she wasn’t open to that.

Obviously, it could be the case that the reason the traditional seminars were so unappealing to this student was because of the tutor rather than the structure of the class itself. Nonetheless, from her criticisms it seems that she would be happier in a seminar that allowed her to express herself more freely, which is one of the aims of OSL. Despite her reservations regarding the "drama" element of the No Chairs seminars, she supported the idea of further incorporation of OSL into the syllabus.

Student E: *I think traditional learning should be scrapped entirely, and interactive learning made compulsory.*

Both students, like the three interviewed for the Gogol workshop, were in favour of compulsory OSL rather than making it optional, on account of the fact that a more varied group of students would be assembled instead of those who are typically more enthusiastic about physical expression.

Student D: *There are people in my seminar who were a lot more reserved at the start, but have opened up over time. [...] I think it does appeal to a certain type of personality, but I don't think that means that it's not good for other people – I think that anyone could come into that seminar and benefit from it.*

Student E: *When it was first advertised to us, I stereotyped myself: I thought, oh, I'm not really into theatre, I don't want to do that. And I found that a lot of other people did the same thing. [...] I think people are categorizing themselves, and they have done from the very beginning, and unless you actually assess your own learning to find out what's right for you, very few people are going to change.*

I find that I myself get a certain satisfaction when theorizing about a text, that is, considering it in the light of other texts and modes of reading, that is easier to express in traditional seminars than in open-space seminars. For that reason, I was glad that the Hybrid option was created and made available to literature students this year, so that I wouldn't be forced to choose between Chairs and No Chairs. I feel that I learn best the more I am exposed to, and so a mix of both traditional and open-space learning is ideal. Of course, at the moment my opportunities to engage in OSL are incredibly slim compared to my opportunities to partake in traditional seminars, and hopefully a more equal balance will be achieved in universities before too long, so that the benefits of this kind of learning are more easily available to students.

I asked my interviewees what they thought the benefits of their No Chairs seminars actually were.

Student E: *I think it teaches more skills. These seminars develop the skills we learn at university in a much more progressive way, and in a more well-rounded way.*

Student D: *It's a combination of being more relaxed and somehow being more pressured as well. It is a nice relaxed atmosphere, but it's also just expected that you will contribute and that you will be a part of it. I don't think I've missed a single piece of reading for Shakespeare, which I do with my other modules if I feel like I don't have the time.*

So the social atmosphere seems to increase student activity and productivity, rather than reduce it in any way. This would make perfect sense from a psychological point of view, as I pointed out in my example of the Spanish bar. Students are more likely to do their reading if they see their tutor and classmates as trusting friends rather than necessary cogs in the academic machine.

Student E: *You realize that because she [the tutor] is letting you relax and chill out, it's because she also needs you to give back to her.*

4. Philosophy

With all these inherent benefits, I wondered why OSL hadn't been applied to many subjects beyond literature, and started asking the two students what they thought about physicality and space becoming part of teaching in general.

Student D: *It's particularly well-suited to theatre, and would need a bit of extra creativity to apply this to other Literature modules, but I don't see why it couldn't be done. Every piece of literature we study has characters, language, some sort of existence in space within the narrative. As long as it can be made interesting and relevant, and doesn't just become an exercise in doing it for the sake of doing it...*

Doubts already, and that was only the suggestion of applying OSL to other modules in the Literature department! The other student, however, immediately suggested its applicability outside of the department in all areas of learning.

Student E: *I think it could work in most subjects. Maybe not things like Maths and Physics, where it's quite theoretical, but then they have things like lab time, where they get the chance to experience more active learning.*

I decided to try and make the question more relevant. Both students are doing Philosophy and Literature like myself, and so I asked them if they thought philosophy in particular was suited to OSL, and if they would be interested in taking No Chairs modules in Philosophy.

Student D: *It would be cool to see more of these options available.*

Student E: *I think the space is so important. Like, just being in a big empty room with a group of other people, you think about where you're positioning yourself, where you're moving, but then also you want to move other people [i.e. convince them that your point is valid]. And I think you could easily apply that to philosophy. When we were talking about things like qualia, we were always like, "I mean, just look at this chair", but if you were in a big open space and had seminars where the focus was experiential as well as theoretical, it'd be a lot easier to involve people with examples that had to do with how you experience the world, instead of just what you think of it.*

I could sympathise with her point. I remembered learning all those theories about the "true nature" of the physical world, such as Locke's primary and secondary qualities, or the qualia that threatened the physicalist assumption that everything in the universe was reducible to scientific understanding. Surely these topics would have benefitted from seminars that used space and physicality as mediums to teach them?

I tend to learn most about whatever I find the most interesting and engaging, and the aspects of philosophy that I find most interesting and engaging have often become less so after I've had a few seminars on them, sadly. This is not always the case: I remember learning about Deleuze's philosophy of art in my first year, and actually going up to the seminar tutor at the end of the last lesson to thank him for presenting the arguments in such a fascinating way. I am not exaggerating when I say that my entire perspective of the world has been slightly altered ever since I attended those seminars. This is because everywhere I look, I can see the theories of Deleuze popping up in front of me; when I admire a piece of art, or a beautiful moment in life, Deleuze's words just *make sense* as a description of how I feel. The traditional-styled seminar was so beneficial to me because I could instantly apply the knowledge I had gained to the world around me, and by doing so actually experience the world in a slightly different way.

I am of the opinion that whether I had been taught this theory in a traditional or open-space seminar, my reaction would have been similar. However, there have been a lot of philosophers that I haven't got on with in such a positive way – a lot of theories that I've found difficult to understand, or simply disagreed with and so not bothered pursuing them. I think that if I'd had something that gave me that experiential shove, a way to learn with my body as well as my mind, then at least I would have been more engaged with these theories. Even philosophers that I loved to read, that filled me with a bit of that enthusiasm I had felt with Deleuze, even they were often marred by seminars that made me feel immensely distanced from the work. It is, of course, important in philosophy to challenge propositions rather than accept them, or merely indulge in the pleasure we get from reading them. However, hearing Kant's theory of the sublime being picked at for an hour transformed it from ingenious conception to boring argument. I had the honour of making the last comment in that seminar: "I know this may not be the point, but surely rather than just talk at each other for all this time, the best way to settle this is to look at your favourite painting, then climb to the top of a mountain, and if what you feel is the same then the beautiful and the sublime are too, and if what you feel is different then so are they."

Now, I know the accusation that many philosophers will hurl at me, and it will be completely true: I am, at heart, an art student, and prize affect over argument. But just because this is my personal opinion, it doesn't follow that others in philosophy would not benefit from a more experiential style of learning. I spoke to a friend of mine who is doing straight Philosophy for her degree:

Student F: The way they teach philosophy needs to change. All the things about philosophy that I found interesting, that made me attracted to it in the first place, have been torn apart since I came to uni. Philosophy is supposed to make you go "Wow! That's an amazing way to think about the world!" But instead we just sit in a room attacking and criticizing every argument and theory, all the time. It's actually depressing.

Don't just take it from the students, take it from the philosophers. Anyone who has studied Nietzsche will know that his style of writing is as important as the points he raises. Deliberately aggressive and confrontational, he might make a point and then write "and I dare anyone to disagree with me", as he does in *Twilight of the Idols*. He will also insult and attack other philosophers with a bitter and almost demonic glee, sometimes on barely any grounds at all. This provocation engenders a certain feeling within the reader, something which will probably be different in every reader depending on how insulted we feel, or how defensive of the other philosophers, etc. But this reaction is far from incidental: it becomes *part* of Nietzsche's argument itself. "All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth comes only from the senses," he writes. And by forcing us to feel his arguments rather than think them, he is admirably backing up his point. What better way to study this philosopher than in a seminar that teaches us to feel thoughts for ourselves, using our own senses, rather than one which teaches us to analyse and scrutinize these thoughts by holding them up to parallel thoughts and counter thoughts, thoughts that were being thought long before we were born, and consequently seem like stale echoes from a world a hundred miles away from the one that immediately surrounds us?

It doesn't stop with Nietzsche. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus writes that "To think is first of all to create a world." I agree with this – all thought is accompanied by creativity, and so the creative spirit of students must not be stifled in any seminar, whether traditional or open-space, if we are to create new worlds based on the thoughts presented to us. A world exists on many planes, it has mountains and canyons, rivers and oceans on which to sail ghost ships. When a philosopher puts forward an argument, we could only benefit from exploring it from all angles, whether they be conceptual, sensual, psychological, physical, phenomenological, and so on. To return to Deleuze, his philosophy presented me with a way to *live*, a way to experience the world, not just think about it. There is a union between thought and being which has been steadily pulled apart over the centuries, and which OSL aims to repair.

5. Conclusion

From what we've seen, it seems evident that open space learning not only is proving to be a great tool in education, but also has great potential to be of much further use in the classroom. The benefits could be listed:

Student A: *You got an idea of people's characters that wouldn't talk in lectures.*

Student C: *It was structured really nicely... nice to have that taking you from the very bottom to think about the small things and then linking it all together to end with a big overall impression of the text.*

Student A: *Very well organized, and the atmosphere was really nice.*

Student D: *I find the key thing is that No Chairs learning is engaging – it's a way of getting people into a text which they see as either boring or something they've done before. And the fact that you can do something you enjoy whilst learning just as much if not more than what you would in a traditional seminar, that's what I think it's got going for it.*

And yet despite the positive aspects of open-space learning mentioned here and outlined in the rest of this report, it remains “experimental”, in the words of one of the participants, and has not shaken off its reputation as a mode of learning targeted at theatre students. Hopefully, further investigation will make OSL more popular and readily available amongst students in the years to come, and reveal its potential to be applicable to all kinds of subjects.

Student E: *It just allows for you to think about a text in so many more ways, and in a really enjoyable way, which is something that I've never really come across before.*