UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Education

Learners' perspectives of identity and difference: a narrative study on visual and verbal representation of self and other

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2011

ABSTRACT

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This thesis discusses children's perceptions of self and others in the context of the inclusion debate, including debates about the conceptualisation of disability from the medical/individual and social models. The chosen media to investigate children's perceptions are their visual and verbal representation of differences. Therefore, this investigation is concerned with the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication, including an interest in finding spontaneously emerging metaphors. Linked to this concern with the representation of self and other in relation to differences and sense of belonging through visual and verbal activities, activities were designed to encourage the participants - young people with and without learning difficulties in more and less inclusive settings - to tell their stories using both forms of expression, following the principles of open-interview. The study is founded on notions of narrative as a means of interpreting the world and making sense of the lives of others. Therefore, the methods of inquiry are connected with narrative inquiry and auto/biographic research to some extent. Here the (life) stories are told not only in narrative form, but also in image-based representation of people, events, and meanings. An autobiographical thread is also developed alongside the presentation of the study and the process of producing it.
Pursuing an agenda for social justice this research is intended to capture the participants' perceptions as a means to listen to their voices and ultimately to 'turn up the volume' (Clough and Barton, 1998, p.129) of their voices, in the form of stories as a means of exploring ways to make the findings accessible beyond academia. The findings, that children were capable of expressing their perceptions both verbally and visually and that they visually portrayed differences between able/disabled people that they did not explicitly verbally express, contribute to methodological knowledge as well as the field of inclusive education and disability studies.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Maria Hilrani Gondim Lima Vinha, declare that the thesis entitled 'Learners' perspectives of identity and difference: a narrative study on visual and verbal representation of self and other' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………………………………………………….

Acknowledgements

In memoriam

To Olivio Gomes de Lima, my father, from whom I inherited the determination to complete a task no matter how hard, who finished his journey here so early

To Serafim Armindo Vinha, my children's grandfather, who honoured me with his surname, his unconditional fatherly love and irreplaceable friendship

To my eldest brother, Teta (Humberto), who I considered like a second dad, and would be the proudest of this thesis

Chapter 1: Starting a reflexive journey: the dialogue between reality and imagination

If you want to know me, then you must know my story for my story defines who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I, too, must come to know my own story. I must come to see in all its particulars the narrative of the self – the personal myth – that I have tacitly, even unconsciously, composed over the course of my years. It is a story I continue to revise, and tell to myself (and sometimes to others) as I go on living (McAdams 1997, p.1)

Introduction: the initial encounters and the research project

Narrative "can make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar" (Clough, 2002, p.8), therefore, I start by introducing myself as a stranger who is on a journey through new understandings about the perceptions of children and young people of themselves and their peers based on their visual and verbal representations. In this chapter I introduce myself as this stranger and, hopefully, by the end of it I will become familiar. The chapter consists of a narrative in four episodes in which my identity is represented by fictionalised characters and entities through the use of literary devices. As Smith (1987, p.47) argues, "because self-representation is discursively complex and ambiguous, a 'radical disappropriation' of the actual life by the artifice of literature takes place at the scene of writing", that is when the fictional elements emerge here. In some moments my identity was troubled by my personal circumstances and this is represented by an exchange of identities, which sometimes can be regarded as shifts of self-awareness.

The main metaphor that guides all the episodes is the idea of "encounters", which may be related to this shift between identities, for instance in the first episode where I am the woman that visits the child at the same time that I am that very child. On other occasions the encounter is related to actual meetings with others that provided significant dialogical encounters, for instance the meeting at the University coffee shop with Melanie Nind, who later became my research supervisor. Another metaphor presented through the episodes is the "flowery hat", in which the hat might represent the theoretical framework that shaped my early professional choices and the flowers may represent my subjectivity, my ideals and sometimes my hopes. In short, the "autobiography becomes both the process and the product of assigning meaning to a series of experiences, after they have taken place, by means of emphasis, juxtaposition, commentary, omission" (Smith, 1987, p.45). To elucidate the dynamics of this 'autobiographical process' present in those identity shifts, I now start

briefly describing the four episodes, which represent here the 'autobiographical product', to use Smith's terms.

The research journey in episodes

The first episode, 'The encounter between the girl and the lady with a flowery hat', presents a fictional story of a girl and a young woman who become friends. This is a re-visit of a personal experience I once had when I was writing a version of my life story. Here, like the first version, that girl Belise represents my inner child, and my recollections of my childhood mixed with the accounts of my mother. In this episode, the story was summarised and re-written to emphasise how the meaningful conversations with my mother helped me to re-signify my father's influence on my self-image and identity. Although the episode is not an in-depth description of that experience, it is intended to start a dialogue between my personal journey to where I am now, and the journey of who happens to read this text.

The second episode, 'On how she became the woman with the flowery hat', tells the story of how I became a teacher and how I socially inscribed myself as a woman in different moments of my life. This episode blends actual description of events with fictionalised accounts in order to summarise the dialectics of gaining and losing power and to illustrate how these oscillations shaped my professional choices and impacted on my ability to speak out and to have my voice heard. This is a complex episode due to the amplitude of the issues that it subtly touches, ranging from the complexity of learning the contradictions between theory and practice in my teacher education, to the even more complex learning experience of moving to another country, the immersion in a then unknown culture and the struggles with a second language.

The third episode, On when she lost the purple flowers and became a dual woman, deepens this process that started in the previous episode, based on my struggles as a voiceless outsider and how the return to my studies was empowering and enabling to me, and the impact of this to the present study. Episode four, the metamorphosis: from flowers and butterflies to research project, is the story of the research itself. In this last part, the story is connected with the research purposes, scope and the chosen approach to methodology.

Although these four episodes seem to complete a logical and slightly sequential cycle, they cannot encompass its conclusion, as the process is continuously in progress. The four episodes are also the starting point for a central part of this thesis, an ethnographic fiction where the research findings are re-presented. The characters who are about to be introduced to you also take part in that narrative, as the qualitative research findings have an intimate relationship with me as researcher and as an individual. However, the autobiographical narrative is only resumed later, after the research journey reaches its major

destination point – completion of the thesis - and then the autobiographical narrative takes the form of the postscript.

Episode 1: The encounter between the girl and the woman with a flowery hat

Belise had just turned five when she received that first visit. The visitor was a young woman, wearing a strange hat decorated with purple flowers. The little girl loved that hat, however strange it was. In the beginning the visitor had not told her name, never mind where she came from, or why. In spite of that, it was clear that girl and woman knew each other quite well, or at least they could easily understand one another. This was probably the reason they kept meeting fairly often for a long time.

Until yesterday, Belise was four and this morning she was extremely proud of her new age, because 'five years is quite something', as she said to herself. Therefore, today was a good day to talk about time and growing up, and so they did for the whole day. Belise talked to her new friend so effusively that they didn't notice the time passing by. After that long conversation the woman felt very tired at the same time that she felt a profound relief. The happy face of that young chatterbox worked as a balsam to her, which gave her the best night's sleep of ages. Although the memories were all mixed up and confused, that child's face had brought some peaceful thoughts. At the end of the day, the little girl was happy and safe.

The next morning the young woman woke up with the first glimpses of the daylight. In contrast to most of the days of her life until now, she felt the powerful effect of a good sleep. She took a cup of coffee then rushed back to see her little friend as soon as she could get there. When she arrived Belise had grown so much: she was reading an enormous book with very small letters and no pictures. She moved her small eyebrows, frowned and looked over the page, she stared at her friend and then declared: 'your hat is still my favourite'. 'I keep the flowers fresh to make you happy', the visitor replied with a soft voice trying to not disturb the reading. 'I'm glad you're back. I wonder why you came' – said the reader over her oversized book. 'Well, I came to see you, and to ask how you are managing life. I mean, how you are coping with strict daddy, old mummy, strong big brother, little brother and all those birds who already left the nest' – Said the woman under the flowery hat, while making herself comfortable in a funny blue small rocking chair. Movement followed by Belise, who shut the book, looked at it and sighed as if saying a regretful farewell, and started her favourite thing, telling stories.

The ability of that little young woman to describe the events with such vivacity and joy as if life was always great fun amazed her visitor. She talked and talked about how clever and strong big brother was, and how funny and delightedly helpless cheeky little brother José

could be. She would switch from the extremely able world of one brother to the enchanted and humane world of the other with such a delicate move that the visitor wondered how those two worlds inhabited the same house and family, and still could be so separate and distinctive. Moreover, she wondered how such a small girl could interpret these two distinctive worlds and populate both of them with the same joy and occasional annoyance. Under an exotic hat, her head wondered whether her memories were lost or living somewhere else, in a place to where she had forgotten the directions.

Those two friends kept on meeting regularly for eighteen days, and every time the woman in the hat found Belise more grown up, then on one occasion they stayed together the whole day. It was then when the woman with the hat understood the ways her father used to express affection and love. How could she have doubted that that was love, pure father's love with his uniqueness, shown through his own ways, his personality and sense of humour? She learned that the disturbing doubt was not a doubt of hers, but of her mother. It was her mother's expectations about how one is supposed to show love that had implicated the ways the daughter expected to be loved. That day, when the visitor said her farewell in the evening, the youngest had already become a serious young lady, juggling with her studies at university and her job as a primary teacher. She had become an adult, with so many plans, dreams and desires that she could not waste a minute. The two women said goodbye, touching each other's hands and giving a kiss on the face. Belise had grown so quickly that day that when their eyes met, the two friends were exactly the same age. Finally the woman with the flowery hat left the place, returned to her normal life and its routines, carrying Belise and those meetings within her, not knowing that she would many years later meet this young Belise again in a totally different context.

The above episode happened in a time inside the time. It was an interval of eighteen months – in actual time terms – when I was challenged by another woman[1] to write my first autobiographical account. Within those months I revisited my experiences, especially those related to my late father. I had visited my mother several times to talk about our memories, carrying with me a secret desire to find in my mother's words some extraordinary flavour that could provoke some sort of awakening, like the madeleine episode in Proust (1981), which aroused "involuntary memory". Talking to my mother was indeed insightful. When I went back to her to talk about delicate subjects that had intrigued me for years, I realised that she had played a significant role in the shaping of my memories. The way in which, in those

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[1] I refer here to my first contact with autobiography and first experience of writing my life story; which was in a course taught by the Argentinean psycho-pedagogue Alicia Fernández.

days, our daily life was always reinterpreted through her stories had informed (rather misinformed) my perception of the love of my father for me.

Now, so many years later, my mother seemed to have forgotten her interpretations of those facts, which had been impregnated in my memories, and affected my self-image and self-esteem so deeply. She then retold the stories as she remembered them, not as she felt them at the time they happened. The misinterpretation of my father's style was gone and I finally could see through a clearer lens the ways I had grown to mirror, as a daughter, her delusion with my father as a man. During those eighteen months, every visit to my mother was accompanied by this quest to understand why my father didn't love me, and that revelation was enlightening.

So, thanks to those actual meetings I was allowed to visit my "inner child" (Missildine, 1963), to talk to her, to listen to her own accounts and help her to reconcile with my father's love. The result was a written short story, the fictional tale of Belise which was knitted with imagination, memory, desire and affection, where imagination changed "outward events in order to articulate an essential truth" (Abbs, 1974 p. 23) about me, the writer. Only several years later, after having shared 'Belise' with some colleagues and few close friends I finally shared the story with some of its participants. My mother, sisters and brothers were there when I read it aloud. Tears of relief and a long silence filled the whole house. Everyone knew Belise well and could see her truth through the fictionalised episodes. The fictional ingredients, such as the "monumental time" (Ricoeur, 1984 p.106) which is more complex than chronological time helped everyone to cope with the pain and the pleasure of dealing with real life. It was a powerful experience for all involved.

Episode 2: On how she became the woman with the flowery hat

Long before meeting Belise, before she had started wearing that hat with purple flowers, and travelling back in time to meet her inner child, prior to her degree in Education, she had completed a diploma in primary education, which was then the minimum requirement for qualified primary teacher status in Brazil. She then started teaching children and at the same time that she started her degree at university. It was a paradoxical learning experience, because at the same time that the theoretical part was enchanting her, the school reality was frustrating to her, both personally and professionally. At that time, behaviourist approaches were the leading pedagogy in the school and she found the daily reality of this extremely oppressive for her and also for her pupils. On the other hand, she started reading the libertarian ideas of Paulo Freire (1987), the fundamentals of Vygotsky (1978),and the pedagogy of Lima (1969, 1974, 1999) - works which seduced her profoundly. At the end of that first year she decided to work in another school, where behaviourism was not the law

and where Vygotskian thought had a place amongst the influence of other scholars (Carraher et al., 1988, Fernández, 1987, Freinet, 1993, Montessori, 1909, Piaget, 1976) (Fernández, 1987, Freinet, 1993, Carraher et al., 1988). Following that change, her teacher education at degree level was always accompanied by her teaching experience in a more 'experimental' school, which allowed her to be innovative, creative and encouraged her to work collaboratively with other teachers. As part of this process, after four years working as a primary teacher, she was nominated educational supervisor. That initial conflictive experience provided her with the first threads that later she used to knit the hat that later impressed Belise. It was a thread coloured and textured by unconformity.

During ten long years she secretly worked on knitting her beautiful hat that she would never be allowed to wear. During those ten years that she worked as an educational supervisor, coordinating, advising and supporting teachers, she gradually found that her daily tasks were all related to an educational system that she didn't believe in, moreover one that she objected to. She had spent years developing strategies and creating materials to paradoxically support both the system she objected to and an ideal education that was real only in her wishes as a result of her intuition together with some readings of such writers as Piaget, Freinet and Wallon. Obviously her utopia clashed with the constraints of the then current education system tenets, which were dominated at all educational levels by the demands of a set of exams (Vestibular), which a learner needs to pass to guarantee one of the few places in higher education.

At the end of those ten years she found herself frustrated, drained and lost. It was at this point that she first heard about a school located in a small village in Portugal that created and regulated its own system, deconstructing the mainstream paradigms (Alves, 2003), and that had been working based on this ideal for twenty-five years. That school was a kind of insight for her. Out of her hopes, purple flowers started to blossom around her, and she thought that they fitted perfectly in her magnificent, recently finished hat. Since then she realised that what was inside her heart had a name, it was "inclusive education" with a strong focus on collaborative learning and knowledge sharing. In addition, she learned from that school's practices that her passion for storytelling and autobiographical accounts was not something to be supplementary to the curriculum, but rather something to be in the basis of the entire educational process.

Having her beautiful hat now decorated with recently picked purple flowers, she decided that she would wear it. Nevertheless, she knew that would not be possible to happen where she had been living so far. That discovery affected her personal largely, at the point that she decided to leave her home country in the direction of that school. However, life has its contingencies and the circumstances forced her to give up her recently initiated studies and to put her academic purposes into hibernation for about four years. This period of hibernation

was a crucial experience, which resulted in an identity shift, when she lost the purple flowers from her hat.

When she was on her way to the place where she believed she would finally wear her beloved hat and also meet people with their unique headwear, a strong wind blew away the purple flowers making her hat look like a mere ordinary one. She was also blown away from her original route and found herself in a different territory where she was only a stranger. Without her hat and its purple flowers, she was a voiceless stranger walking indistinctively amidst the crowd, until the day she realised that it was time to move on. However, she knew that that time would only come if she had the determination to change her reality. After an introspective period of questions and doubts, she decided to act. She knew that writing had been a cathartic experience for her for many years; therefore, she suspected that she could write as a means of building her self-confidence, moreover her identity at the present time in the very context she was immerse. Then she started writing to find her voice. The following are the two pieces of writings she produced during this process of searching for her voice.

Writing to find my voice: part one

Some years ago, I started a complex journey through time and meanings, when I have visited a girl who was very impressed with my hat, and I was impressed with the ways she dealt with grown up matters at such young age. At that time, I had made myself a hat with the thread that, my experiences provided me and decorated it with flowers that blossomed out of my hopes and my desire to understand the dynamics of being and belonging. After a while, I lost the flowers during a strange wind and later I lost the hat itself. It was when neither my previous experiences nor my heart could help me to be silenced. I was this silent woman for a long time until I started writing to find my voice and I am still in this continuous and endless process. I believe that during the course of my life, writing has been the best way to challenge myself, extrapolate difficulties and give new meanings to traumatic or unhappy situations. On the other hand, it has also been the means to express my constructions, build my self-awareness and, sometimes, to tell what makes me happy.

Taking my relationship with language into account, I decided to write my life story from the perspective of my language acquisition and development, to tell myself where my voice is hiding and why. To tell my life story fairly I have no choice but must start with my

relationship with my youngest brother José, especially if I focus on language.

I have already written a lot about how growing up together with José has always shaped the ways in which I see the world and how I relate to people. However, this present attempt is a completely new journey in two ways: firstly, because I am writing in English; secondly, because now my focus is on language rather than on the learning process. Though I do not intend to write another autobiography and I want to reflect upon my journey from being a confident speaker in my native language to an almost voiceless person in a second language, this journey started exactly with the impact of my brother's language on me.

According to my family's folklore, I started to talk very early, and from the beginning, I caused admiration due to my level of fluency considering my age. It was precisely at that time that José was born; therefore, he was among the "things" I named first. Later when he was supposed to start talking, he was able only to sit silently on a funny, small rocking chair. In those days, I was learning new things very fast and gaining some independence, while the needs of my dependent brother absorbed most of my mother's time. In addition, my older siblings were dealing with their grown up matters, leaving no room for supporting me never mind José. Consequently, my (forced) early autonomy developed together with my duty to help my little brother. This resulted in me as the one who better understood his attempts to communicate through new words created due to a lack of movement of his jaw, together with his own way to interpret the world. Since then doing translations became a strong part of my life, in view of the fact that very few people could (and can) understand José's language. Gradually I found that my closest friends were always keen to learn his words and peculiar phrases, and soon they started to use this alternative vocabulary as a sign of the link between those of us who knew José. Therefore, José's language became a sort of linkage between me and other people, including some of my relatives.

Reflecting about my voice today makes me travel back to those days because, now, I recognise how language always played a

crucial role in my development as a human being and my understandings and valuations in life. As a child, I felt the need to learn an alternative language in order to relate to my brother, as an adolescent I found that people who really cared about me also cared about José, and the means I had chosen to identify those was their interest in José's "idiom". At the same time that I became a sort of specialist on that new invented "idiom", I was also growing in fluency in my mother tongue. It was common receiving praise for my intellect, and I knew that I owed that recognition to my communication skills, especially my writings.

Revisiting those events now may help me to re-build up my self-confidence. Currently, my context is different, and my communication skills cannot assist me. The transition from the point where I knew how to speak my mind, how to be persuasive or poetic, where I could easily distinguish between an informal and a more formal conversation, to the point where words changed from my best friends to my adversaries, is most of the time a frustrating movement. However, that strong little girl is still here - somewhere - and I am determined to find her, and after that, I am convinced that our voices will speak in unison.

Writing to find my voice: part two

I started the search for my voice some paragraphs ago, but there was a moment when a pause was necessary in order to proceed searching outside my writings. That pause was crucial because it was also an opportunity to open a dialogical space and to listen to the other's voice. At that point a set of words came towards me as feedback to what I wrote and somehow woke up part of my self-confidence. That episode reminds me about the ways my voice used to travel in those times when I felt they were my allies. It is excessively obvious – but even the obvious can be disregarded sometimes – that a voice to be a voice needs to be heard. While I started to write to find my voice, I should have started to find an audience as well. That small piece of writing found some resonance in someone else's voice and made me feel the desire to continue moving on.

After that meaningful feedback, I realised that the point where I lost my connection to my voice was probably the same point when I lost my ability to be listened to. However, the urge for finding my way to express myself again intrigues me, regardless of reasoning about why I accepted the imposed silence. What inspires me now is not the logic of my loss but my perception of recovering and regaining. Regain here does not mean gaining the same thing again, but achieving something you had been able to but had lost contact with this ability. Additionally, the challenge imposed by the new context is in fact a benefit, an achievement in itself. The challenge to communicate in English as near as possible to how I do in Portuguese empowers me. It does not mean that I will ever express myself as a native speaker, however, it means having my own voice in the new context, which implies being who I am and listened to as myself.

In the beginning of my journey in this country, I carried a sense of not belonging, together with a sense of not being completely me. Listening to my own words and phrases was like hearing a stranger's voice, moreover the reaction of some of my interlocutors always revealed that they could not see me, at least not who I used to be, or believed myself to be. My lack of fluency sometimes made me feel like a fool in others' eyes. It was a hard time. I knew who I was, I knew I was not fool, but I did not have the words to act differently.

I remember a situation that marked me for a long time. I took a bus and asked for a ticket to my destination. Until this moment I was just a normal person talking to another person. Seconds later, I was as small as an ant and the bus driver was as big as an elephant. I just said a simple phrase which consisted of "a single to that place please", but the now giant's reply was clear, I had mispronounced the name of "that place" that I intended to go, and he must correct me for the sake of my intention to go there. I probably must be thankful for his care, but the way he looked at me, the tone of his voice and the whole expression that I could see in his face just scared me. That day I seriously considered that I should walk instead of taking buses until I could learn to talk properly, at least pronounce the name of the places I needed to go.

*After that episode, every time I needed to open my mouth in
a shop or at a till in a supermarket I wished just to disappear.*

*Today I can say cheerfully "once upon a time I couldn't even take a
bus", because now is the time when, despite my predictable lack of
fluency, I understand that I am not worse than any other second
language speaker, with the common struggles to understand and
to be understood. I no longer feel it as something of which to be
ashamed.*

The above episode also happened in a time inside the time. It was an interval of several
years – in actual time terms – starting from my early work experience in Education in my
country Brazil and ending with my recent research experience in the UK. However, the
interlude between these two major milestones is what really matters to understand this
episode. It is the sophistication of layers, textures and colours which characterised this part
of my journey that makes this episode so unique. At one end, as a young professional I was
given some power to change, to help, to influence. At the other end of that continuum, as an
adult woman and mother, I was completely disempowered and silenced, struggling to
become a researcher committed to social justice and inclusion. The beauty of this episode is
the return of the search for my voice, the power of the desire, and the power of the will. The
power resides in the willingness to change, to liberate, to participate, and also in the
meanings of being.

Episode 3: On when she lost the purple flowers and became a dual woman

*My name is Belise and I am here to tell the story of the brief life of Maria, a person who was
born at the age of thirty-four. This unusual event of being born as a dull adult instead of a
lovely baby occurred because despite holding that first name from birth, she had never been
Maria before. The new world forced her to accept being known as Maria. However, being
called by this name had not made any instant difference or strong impact on her. But the
new reality shaped her thoughts about her identity. Gradually she became Maria, a quiet
woman that spent most of her time in silence. This happened when Maria was living in a
dark place, where the sunlight was not always invited to come in, because the only window
had a heavy curtain, which was kept closed most of the time. The place was also small and,
in several aspects, frustrating. This outside little world was doing nothing but replicate
Maria's inside. In spite of this, she had not lost either her luminosity or her urge for freedom.
She knew that her flowery hat still existed somewhere and that it was hers. She belonged to*

that hat as much as it belonged to her. However, as the power of the outside little world, with all its constraints, was growing bigger and stronger, her inner contraction was more evident.

Soon enough Maria had forgotten a wide range of entities that were part of her original identity. Like someone who carries their treasure inside a rucksack with an unnoticed hole, she was dropping important things while she walked through her new life without being aware of it. She apparently had forgotten even our meetings, when she came to visit me wearing a unique purple hat. I am convinced that she had forgotten even the incredible hat and its fresh flowers. Nevertheless, Maria, this new person that I was starting to get to know, achieved important things, learned new skills, learned enormously about herself, constructed new meanings for old things, and found a place for herself in this new life. Being a mother and learning to look after this precious life was probably the most cherished achievement she was able to make at this point. I could not say that Maria was completely unhappy without being unfair to some degree. Having talked to her so many times in such different situations, times and places I can bring her own words during one of our conversations about what disturbed her: "My problem is not complex to understand; in fact it is quite simple: I don't see myself as Maria, with some of the things that came together with the new identity. On the other hand, I cannot say that I am that woman I used to be". She told me this while trying to fit her face in a worn tiny mirror she brought from Brazil. "That one that I once met and loved" I said to myself.

Maria was then in the midpoint between her and herself. Moreover, between the person she seemed to be in that particular time and the one she wanted to be. While she was dwelling with her selves, there was an abstract instance of another woman that she eventually envisioned from time to time. This unknown woman was a sort of invisible construction, which was emerging without the consciousness of her counterparts that is the unnamed past woman and Maria, who was fading gradually. She was building herself so silently that, when she finally emerged from the crowd, wearing her old hat that once had purple flowers; Maria was not there to testimony. Maria was gone. Having recently lost my dear friend Maria, the quiet, I was glad to find a new friend which was not unfamiliar to me, as she holds some resemblances of Maria and of me, yes, myself!! In fact, this new person knows me, she somehow recognises me!

We soon engaged in typical old friends' conversations, and she was pleased to tell me where she had had been, and how she had taken Maria's place. "It was a nice day when Maria went to a University's coffee shop to meet Melanie. Maria and Mel were unaware that I was somehow there. To be honest, even me, I wasn't totally aware". I listened to her in silence as I was fully aware of these exquisite experiences of our innermost self. I have been there too.

That was the beginning of a long and complex explanation that my friend gave to me. She says that Maria was a temporary citizen of nowhere. She had come on a mission, which she served fairly and from which, regardless of all the sorrow, she learned enormously. For this reason, she left without complaining, without looking back.

Back to that day in that coffee shop, when Maria started to talk with Mel, she didn't realise that in that particular moment she was dialoguing, in the sense that a dialogue is an encounter between two subjects. She just started talking and listening. Interestingly enough, it was Maria who allowed the beginning of the dialogue momentum when she abdicated the right to participate of it. As the initial talk advanced and developed into a dialogue, Maria slowly and politely left the table, leaving Mel not alone, but with my, then, unnamed friend. Although the exchange could not be perceived by Mel at that precise point, the unnamed woman was there while Maria stopped to exist for one hour or more. I have to say that at the end of the meeting Maria was back there, waiting outside to go back home, as she did. Before I tell you the name of my new friend, let me say a little more about Maria, the vanished woman. Maria could recall an old name by which she was known all her life, additionally some familiar voices eventually called that name from the distance. But even so, she was so separated from the meaning of it, which encompasses a certain lifestyle, social status, professional construction and relationship network that those calls were empty in meaning.

After the coffee shop day Maria remained doing some appearances, and for a while, in some way she was misleading and being misled by her own inability to face her absence. At the same time, the woman that had a brief but meaningful dialogue with Mel was most of the time filling the gaps left by Maria's absence, doing her daily tasks, silently. Job interrupted only when the inspirational voice of Clough called her not by any contingent name but by her identity. At this point she started to feel confused, and before the chaos was established she objected to replacing Maria. "Maria must go because she must go, as I am here now because I am!" she declared. That was a quite simplistic and non-explicative conclusion, but it was the end of Maria's journey. That was the beginning of Hilra's, the one that had one day worn a flowery hat. The old name, long ago shortened by a close friend, has today a completely new melody. The English accent that the name received is part of this woman's history and her place in the world. Today, Hilra dialogues in a different language as well on her own language, and after an intense search for her voice she is learning how to recognise it among the crowd. Meanwhile, I keep on visiting her now and then, usually wearing her flowery hat as a reminder that we are the same person. I, her inner-child, have never left her. How could I?

The above episode is another one of those that has happened in a time inside the time. It was an hour followed by a month or so – in actual time terms – when I was confronted with

my true self and that sort of alias that is Maria, with all the discomfort and confusion it had caused. I am not telling you a magical fairy tale with a happy ending. There is no magic in that episode and no ending either. What happened was a very human situation where our identity is troubled by the context we are immersed in and affected by the other's perceptions and by our own perceptions, together with our perception of their perception. It is a sophisticated combination of different layers that intersect, overlap, collide, unite and distinguish from each other. Together with all the above, there are the silences, omissions, and pauses in the telling which every painful experience imposes on the teller. It is over to the listener/reader of this story, to fill the gaps not with what is missing but with their own life experience, which is all we have to understand each other's experience anyway.

Episode 4: the metamorphosis: from flowers and butterflies to research project

Discovering the ways in which narratives help us rename ourselves helps us view the debate among competing theories of knowledge from a developmental perspective. The question becomes not what is the "right" standpoint for knowing, but how we can come to understand, individually and collectively, the forces that nourish greater inclusiveness, change, and growth over time (Witherell and Noddings, 1991: 55).

Once upon a time I had travelled back in time through imagination and revisited my 'selves' in different moments of my life – my childhood memories and the inner child, Belise; the unnamed growing up woman with a flowery hat; the voiceless stranger Maria; and not long ago the identity return of Hilrani and shift to Hilra. Through all these moments I have experienced a different journey marked by different roles that I have played in my life at particular conditions and contexts, including the recent experience of being a stranger, an outsider, an alien. I spent some time searching for my voice, and now I see more clearly that what I was looking for was not merely a voice, but my "authorial voice", as described by Van Maanen (1988, p.ix). Today, as a result of all those different roles that I have played I would like to portray myself as a student researcher in view of the wide range of aspects that comprise the singularity of my own journey. I am still the woman who one day had the desire to wear a purple hat with fresh flowers recently picked. I am still the little girl, amazed by the different ways we human beings learn and relate to the world. I am still the young lady, who one day was that girl. I am still even the very Maria, whose existence I have chosen to end. Probably the news I have now is the fact that I do not want only flowers on my purple hat, but also butterflies and colourful birds around me; bringing news from the other wondering people and bringing mine to them as well, creating then a magical and powerful conversation. I want to learn to listen to what those flying beings know about the whispering words amidst children, unspoken words perhaps. I want to learn to sing their songs, to sing along, to sing loudly.

With this wish list I resume my journey carrying with me a rough map, made in longhand in blue ink. My map tells me that there are children in several places and that I just need to find special entities, which not only know the directions to the places where those children are right now whispering those unspoken words, but also hold the keys to get in. I heard that those special, powerful entities come in two types: guardian entities and tutorial ones. The guardian entities possess the ultimate power because they look after the whispering children and only they and no one else can decide who can listen to their whispers or their songs. The tutors are second in power, as they hold the keys to the gate which leads to the guardians' den.

I listen to this entire mythological lecture and feel small and weak - powerless. How can I, a small girl carrying a disabled brother, find those powerful entities? How could I, a recently graduated teacher, passionate about education but without any knowledge of mythology start a dialogue with these semi-gods? I even wonder if I, this silenced woman who can hardly speak English, and who is frightened to death, can find the courage to open my mouth and present my quest. The only response to this problem resides in me, the recently recovered self, who encapsulates the girl and the other women, but who above all is the strong sister of the apparently weak but indeed resilient now man called José. I am empowered by what I have learned with him and from him. I am empowered by the certainty that our story is unique but also common to other people who are similarly as different as us. I love voices, I like to hear different voices and I believe that if I can wear my flowery hat at least once, the butterflies and colourful birds will come to tell me the secrets only they know.

So off I go with my rough map in one hand and all my hopes in the other. I stand outside an old building, where I heard that some tutorial entities live. A brick wall keeps the separation between those who belong from those who do not. I do not. Under a shy autumn sunshine as I sat on this bench which was placed here 'in loving memory of someone called Jane Wordsworth', my mind struggles to find a way to get in. Climbing the brick wall is obviously not an option. Squeezing in between the tiny spaces of the front gate also does not seem a clever alternative. I cannot just sit here and wait either. Actually, not having a choice is not an option for me as well.

The answers for my questions reside inside these walls amidst those who I see from the distance coming in and out at intervals. I wonder if Jane, whose life is celebrated by this charming wooden bench, with those lovely words carved in the wood, strategically facing that entrance, would had been one of the early insiders or if she was a wondering outsider like me. I did not know Jane and have not a single clue about why this delicate memorial was placed exactly here. Nonetheless, I feel comforted by the fact that I am not sitting alone but rather surrounded by the memory of one life that was worth remembering.

I decide to go for a short walk, in hope that that will activate my brain and some sort of insight will come up as a miraculous solution. Walking beside me is a smartly dressed woman – obviously a Guardian entity – holding her child's hand and I dare to ask "can I borrow your power?" "Do you mean my lighter? I don't have any by the way, I quitted a few years ago when I got pregnant", she replies while walking away from me. "No, I did mean your power", I said to myself while seeing her disappear among the crowd of Guardians and their little treasures, some not so little any more. These are the guardians of the children's voice. In their hands resides the power to allow these children's voices to be heard or not. I wish I could approach them and ask to borrow this indescribable power for a while to be able to open a dialogue with those who may have something to teach me about unspoken truths. Although I could not ask them directly, I may find someone with the power to ask them, the Tutorial entities. So the game would be: "can I borrow your power to ask the Guardians to borrow their power over their children's voice?" It sounds rather an impossible dialogue.

By the time this thought had fully developed in my mind I was already outside the school gate, about to meet the head of the Tutorial panel. In few minutes I was sat on a red velvet chair, ready to say "Can I borrow your power?" to that person who had not shown any sign of emotion or empathy to my presence so far. Not even my flowery hat has made an impression on her. I offered a brief description of my purposes and jumped straight to her earlier question "how can I help?", although I knew that the phrase did not exactly mean that she was willing to help anyhow; apparently it was rather a cliché that she was supposed to say, I guess.

After listening to my nervous attempt to make clear and short my complex request, she started a game which I still cannot name. She offered me a certain slice of time when I could probably meet the children, followed by the withdrawal of that very offer soon after I had agreed to it. She immediately started another analysis, leading to another possibility, which I gladly nodded positively to, just in time to notice that she had already withdrawn that offer too. The game continued for a good half an hour or so, time in which I gradually converted to the little girl I knew from my mother's accounts about her own mother. It was not our Belise; I had turned into my grandmother, when in her childhood she had been educated to not be a spoiled child by consecutive offers made by her parents of things to buy for her; always followed by the frustrating result of buying exactly what she had not chosen; followed by the (un)reasoning: "If we buy what you ask, you may think you can get anything you want! This way you know that we don't get everything we want".

It seemed tyrannical that my present feeling of powerlessness, had replaced my childhood heroic feelings towards that image of my sad grandma as that poor vulnerable child, whose will was not fulfilled, together with my desire to go back in time to save her, by a feeling of self-pity – as much as I hate to admit it. To my subtle question "Can I borrow your power?"

the answer was an iconic and ironic "No" and the subsequent polite "here is the code you need to open the gate on way out". Certainly, that code was not the one I wanted, and I had no choice but leave with "my tail between my legs". Therefore, I left not knowing if the children behind those brick walls would like to take part in a dialogue with me. I just know that my great-grandparents lesson survives: "You don't get everything you want".

I then leave that place thinking about ethnography and the simple concept of making the familiar strange and the strange familiar. I had just experienced that in an unexpected way. The strange that became familiar had little or nothing to do with my research: it was experiencing my grandma's lack of power. That feeling that for years I had towards that which was for me nothing but an extremely bizarre way of raising children and the submissive attitude of my grandma – which I also found hard to understand – had become very familiar. Moreover, the familiar environment of a school, which had been my professional habitat for ages, had become as strange as strange can be; with its codes to open gates, and clichés empty in meaning.

Nonetheless, I still intended to do an ethnographic study, so I decided to keep on asking if someone could lend me their power so I could achieve my purpose of giving voice to the voiceless or rather turning up their voice's volume. I just needed to include in my equation that those I wanted to meet and work with did not own even their own silence.

While all this happened, the words "voice" and "silence" kept dancing among my thoughts and an old song that I have sang lots of times in my teen's echoes with my reflections, probably a gift from the colourful birds. I wish I could translate the lyrics properly, but roughly it says that "there would not exist sound if it was not for the silence" and goes on saying that "there would not be light if was not for the dark". I then allowed the song to sing itself inside my mind, while I kept walking, wearing my gorgeous purple hat with its ever fresh flowers and accompanied by the flying entities which have helped me to listen to the children's whispers and songs, and learn from that, and fly and sing loudly, and call others to fly and sing along.

The above episode was the most recent of those that happened in a time inside the time. In terms of real time, it consisted of a five-year project, which started with that meeting in the coffee shop with Melanie in early 2006 and is about to be completed in 2011. However, this has been an incredible journey, rich in learning experiences and in personal achievements. I finish this course with the strong belief that doing a PhD is much more about the journey rather than the destination and far less about the starting point. This journey is never completed. One may change the carriage, may even renew one's luggage, but it is inevitable to keep on travelling.

The next chapters tell other parts of this endless journey towards new understandings and meanings. But before that, I owe the reader something closer to a typical introduction to my research aims and questions, along with the organisation of this thesis, which I do next.

The embodiment: The research project that emerged from the reality of this story

In this section I focus on the three major influences to the development of this study: (1) my personal experience as a sibling of someone with learning disabilities whereby he, and me too to some extent, were disabled by society; (2) my professional experience with children, teachers and parents; and (3) my experience as a foreigner in a very singular personal context. That is who I am and these are the voices I speak: the able-disabled sister, the wondering teacher and the once silenced stranger. I had started reviewing the literature related to my topic of interest mainly as the latter – the one that didn't belong and that longed to have a voice and to give voice to the voiceless. In the course of this process I found a statement that intrigued me and somehow paralysed me – the argument that in a life history context, our facility with language, our general fluency and articulacy and our ability to dramatize and tell a story determine how 'good' an informant we are. To a considerable extent they also determine the "success" of the identities we construct (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.47).

At that point I felt the urge to locate myself and my voice in the context of my own research. I believed that it was important to point out how my language skills (namely my weaknesses in this) could be useful and, if possible, advantageous to the course of the investigation on matters of voice. I started asking myself if it was plausible to believe that the fact of being a non-native speaker would allow me to see some side of others' discourse that could not be seen by a native speaker. Could the inability to communicate as efficiently as I would like put me in a position to understand those who, in spite of being native speakers, are not fully understood? Furthermore, would I see myself as an authorised person to produce some sort of narrative work in a language that did not "belong" to me and to which I didn't belong? Would I feel allowed to construct my thoughts, insights and own texts in this language? Could I have a voice in this scenario? How could my lack of confidence affect my development, the development of the project and the whole work? How could I build my self-confidence? And finally, how could I get the most out of this process of building my self-confidence to bring some enlightenment to the research itself? Was it feasible?

By the end of the second year of my reflective readings and throughout a constant enriching dialogue with my supervisor, I concluded that the answer to most of those questions was certainly a 'yes'. As part of this process, the investigation story was already been written despite my doubts. The story consists of conscious attempts to respond to a series of other questions that emerged from the core aims which this research comprises. Before discussing those questions, which led the research process, it is necessary to make explicit the core aims that triggered those questions. The research aims are the following:

1. To examine learners' perceptions of themselves and their peers in relation to their imagery of dis/ability[2], through visual and verbal narrative.
2. To analyse how identities are verbally and visually portrayed/represented, taking into account the more/less inclusive educational experience of the learner in question

The first aim raises some questions, such as:

- What verbal and visual representations could unfold about learners' notions of ability and disability?
- What could these representations tell us about the imagery of dis/ability and its relation to other images? (e.g. whether verbal and visual metaphor will occur); and
- Do the representations of differences have some connection with more/less inclusive educational experience?

In short, the first research aim focuses on learners' perceptions and the ways they communicate them. In the same vein, but with a slightly different approach, the second research aim entails another set of questions:

- Could verbal and visual representations inform us about which sort of imagery of dis/ability these learners are developing?
- How do notions of dis/ability relate to other notions which entail identity construction (e.g. health, beauty, and socialisation)?
- Are these notions expressed in a metaphorical form and how? and
- Do those images differ between learners in more inclusive settings and those in less inclusive settings? [and indent these too – they need to stand out on the page]

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[2] In this thesis the terminology 'dis/ability' implies that "disability" is a dialectic concept that can be changed – from "ability" to "disability" and vice-versa – depending on the societal response rather than a static immutable concept based on individual "capabilities" or impairments. In this way it is society that adds (or eliminates) the prefix "dis" upon the lives of people with physical or intellectual impairments or difficulties, through barriers, disadvantages, discrimination and all oppressive circumstances that disabled people often experience in a disabling society.

The questions embrace another challenge concerning inclusive education, which is to understand the process of building a sense of belonging to a community or group and whether this notion differ in different groups considering the type of setting the participants attend.

The autobiographical introduction that opens the present chapter emerged from the desire to better understand the impact of autobiographical accounts in the process of understanding our personal journey through life, as a means to experience at first person, and beforehand, what I intended to ask my informants. In Aristotelian terms, a plot must be a whole, "a representation of an action that is whole and complete and of a certain magnitude. A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end" (Aristotle and Butcher, 1961), p.15). In view of the nature of this study, this report seeks to be such a "whole". To achieve this, each chapter presents titles and subtitles intended to inform the essence of the research stage described, capturing its sense of story and plot, starting with my own particular story to my research journey, passing by the children's and young people's journey into inclusive education, and finishing with the research outcomes. In this sense, each chapter is part of this story. But also, I have written this report to tell the research "story" with a sense of it being a unit, also necessary to a plot, "the structural union of the parts", in which if any part is displaced or disregarded the "whole will be disjointed and disturbed" (Aristotle and Butcher, 1961, p.17).

The telling: Structuring the thesis that emerged from the project

The next part of this story consists of a review of the literature, which is aimed at connecting with previous researchers to include their voices here and to generate, based on their contribution, the framework of the present study. The review is organised following the core purposes of the research, in an attempt to broaden my understandings about what is already known and of what the voices of my participants could add to the current dialogue.

The review of the literature is followed by the design and development of the methodology applied in this study. It is in the development of the methodology that I have wanted my study to bring a significant contribution to research involving children and young people of various abilities. In that chapter I present my 'dialogical inquiry' approach, inspired and illuminated by the libertarian ideas of Freire (1967; 1970; 1983) and the social justice postulates of Griffiths (1998). It is because I agree with Santos and Mortimer (2002, p.3) when they argue that "dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate. It unveils a reality" that dialogue is at the heart of my proposed approach and guides all actions taken before, during and after the fieldwork.

As a consequence of the dialogical inquiry, the data analysis was also a dialogical movement of systematic conversation between me and the data. When analysing my participants' contributions I assumed a dialectical positioning of radical listening, which consists of seeking to "understand others' texts in terms of their standpoints and axiological commitments" (Tobin, 2009), p.505. I have done so by systematically revisiting the interview activities to approach the essence of the things said, in a phenomenological intent to listen to the thing itself. Through this radical listening, the analysis emerged as a two-fold model of listening and denotatively retelling the data together with a "metaphorisation" (Stafford, 2000, p.151) based on the idea that "metaphors may help to cover new situations or to elucidate new aspects of already familiar ones" (Loewenberg and Mooij, 1977, p.16). The findings chapter then is shaped taking this dual analytical posture, which comprises a narrative analysis based on a dialogue with the data, followed by an ethnographic fiction that tells the same story in a different way, embracing the idea that "metaphors are powerful tools whenever we are exploring, describing, interpreting or elucidating new situations, because metaphors enable us to describe, interpret and elucidate these situations". Banks and Banks (1998, P.93) argue that as a result of a general lack of dedication to the writing of experience in academic reports

> many of us 'do' ethnography but 'write' in the conservative voice of science. As such we forfeit both as individual scholars and as disciplines, an opportunity for our ethnographic research to make a truly distinct contribution to the understanding of human experience.

It is in this same vein that I include ethnographic fiction in my research report. I agree that "we often render our research reports devoid of human emotion and self-reflection. As ethnographers we experience life but we write science" (Banks and Banks, 1998, P.93).

Presenting the findings in such a complex structure, putting the literal and metaphorical side by side, the discussion needed to embrace the same complexities. Therefore, the discussion chapter puts the dialogical inquiry into question; here I discuss not only possible findings and inferences gained from the participants' contributions, but also the whole process from accessing the participants to the impact of the research on me as student, researcher and individual. The culmination of the discussion is the conclusions section that sums up the story of this research, gives it a compact shape and points to what comes next.

Concluding remarks

This thesis tells the story of my journey towards the challenges and discoveries that this study allowed me. As a result, the structure of the thesis echoes the dynamics and dialectics of each stage of the investigation, and of each phase of my personal development that took

place during that journey. However, the entire process has been far more complex and sophisticated in layers than I am able to report, comprising amalgamations, metamorphoses, multiple voices, unspoken truths and a great deal of silences that will remain. The result of that complex journey is impossible to be told or explained in full. However, I finish this thesis with a Postscript, which is an attempt to 'tie the loose ends' of this endless journey through learning, discovering, and above all, of being.

Chapter 2: Connecting with and developing the literature: a reflexive review

Few of us will be lucky enough to complete our lives without being

handicapped (Oswin, 1971)

Introduction: Reviewing the literature as part of the dialogue

In the previous chapter, I presented an internal dialogue between my selves through encounters with significant others. In this chapter, I sustain the dialogic disposition by bringing the voices of other interlocutors, by means of a review of the literature which may answer questions that emerged from that internal dialogue. However, the dialogical disposition brings again the issue of voice. According to Chase (2005, p.652), "for all narrative researchers, a central question revolves around which voice or voices researchers should use as they interpret and represent the voices of those they study"; especially considering that "narrative makes the self (the narrator) the protagonist, either as actor or as interested observer of other's actions" (p.657). In view of this, this thesis presents a dialogical narrative in an attempt to enable my role as narrator to contemplate both my positions as actor and observer of other's actions.

According to Freire (1970b, p.76), "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world". This literature review aims to 'name the world' by analysing the major concepts beneath the topic of this research. However, that encounter is marked by the interchange between what the literature has to tell me in relation to my search for meanings and my response to what is said. Freire also argues that "dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another" (Freire, 1970b, p.76). Bearing this in mind, for this review to become a legitimate dialogue I have to position myself throughout the evidence found in the published studies I considered. Therefore, I deliberately make my voice present while I am connecting with the literature and developing the theoretical framework of this research. As a result, I claim this review as essentially a dialogue, which is an "act of creation" (Freire, 1970b).

In the previous chapter the research aims and questions were presented in relation to my personal journey into professional choices and also to my voice in different stages of this journey. In this chapter, my predominant voice is that of as researcher; therefore, it is crucial to situate where my quest has started long ago and why I identify myself as simultaneously able-bodied and disabled.

Since my childhood I have been enriched by the experience of being an older sister of a boy who had unclassified learning difficulties, with mild mobility issues. His learning difficulties compromise his speech and for this reason, as a child I was constantly faced with other people's questions to which he was 'unable' to respond. Both children and adults used to ask me what was wrong with my brother. They would ask me if he was ill, or crazy, or 'Mongol'. All of these speculations upset me and I struggled to explain that he was just "different". But it seemed that for some people there was no 'just' about being 'that way' – 'that way' was another unnamed qualifier, a significant omission, a silence about his difference. The unique label for my brother that doctors had provided my parents with was "mentally retarded", which for me was obviously depreciative for that boy that I loved so much and who was so joyful, and smart in his own way.

Later, when he was accepted in a special school, I learned the then terminology "exceptional", which I quite liked because I already knew the meaning of the word and also that it was used to refer to things that were incomparable, outstanding, and extraordinarily good. That was exactly what José was in my view: extraordinarily good. So, now I could say he was 'exceptional' and then a long rationalization on how different he was through stories about him used to follow; opportunity which always gave me great satisfaction.

Working on this literature review, I identified with Manners' (2006) accounts of her relationship with Emma – a 29-year-old woman with learning difficulties who was a participant/co-researcher in Manners' study – when she declares that Emma's quest for an identity "resonated" with her. She cites that she had to think about the "fundamental difference" between them, which consists of Emma having learning difficulties and Manners not. Manners' connection with Emma's search for identity also echoes my early questions in relation to my brother and I, especially because people outside our home used to compare us; intrigued about how could we be so different despite of being siblings their questions, together with José's difficulties in articulating his own questions, trigged my search for answers.

Manners felt unable to answer Emma's question "who I am that I have a learning disability and you don't" (Manners and Carruthers, 2006, p.206). Similarly I asked about myself, initially trigged by the inquisitive others that assumed that the talkative girl was 'the voice' of her (poor) speechless and "crippled" – a term commonly used on that time – brother. For some reason, I accepted the role of being his (articulated) voice; therefore, I also took on myself part of his identity and struggles. Until he developed to be able to walk, I used to carry José in my arms to the place where we would meet the children from our street to play with – my parents were probably in denial of his impairment so they did not provide him with any

sort of pushchair. Indeed, such a thing was not used at all in that small village; therefore, its use would probably corroborate people's assumptions that José was "crippled".

My memories of that time give me a bizarre picture of a six-year-old girl carrying a four-year-old boy nearly the same size as herself (as illustrated in Figure 2-1) – although at that time I did not feel bizarre. After he started walking I still had to carry him – with the help of my best friend as José had become too heavy for me – whenever José had a bad mood and did not want to go back home. This memory gives me a nice visual metaphor about my relationship with my brother and our relationship with others. At the same time that I carried José, this very action created a bond with others who sympathised with it and even joined in it (See figure 2-2).[3]

Figure 2-1: José being carried first by me alone and then with the help of Umberto

When explaining their positioning in their ethnographic study on self-discovery with a feminist group, Foltz and Griffin (1996, p.301) argue that "in order to show the changes we underwent, we need to reveal a bit about who we were before we began our study and how the research came about". Based on the same premise, I have introduced myself as one of the voices in the dialogue, and I now situate the literature as part of it as well. Taking into account that a literature review must lie at the heart of the research inquiry (Scott and Morrison, 2006), the structure of the chapter reflect s the dialectics of the encounters

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[3] Excerpt from my presentation in the conference 'Families, History and Learning Difficulties' organised by The Open University in 9th and 10th July 2009, when I presented the paper: 'The exceptional experience of difference'. These two illustrations were part of the visual narrative I have used, and was produced by Weaver Lima especially for the conference. Full paper in Appendix 5 (p.266)

described earlier, echoing the structure and essence of the research aims. It is, to some extent, the content of that Freirean dialogue aimed at "naming the world". As the essence of this research, the dialogical act is continuous throughout this thesis, with the findings and discussion ultimately becoming part of the dialogue with the literature.

In this thesis, the terminology I predominantly use is "disabled people", the preferred label of the British Council of Disabled People (an umbrella organisation that represents many organisations run and controlled by disabled people) and "people with learning difficulties", the preferred term of most self-advocacy groups. However, I may use learning disabilities interchangeably. Nevertheless, as Race (2002, p.216) points out "this issue of terminology is far from straightforward" and varies across continents, e.g. intellectual impairment, developmental disability, intellectual disability, mental retardation are regularly used (Goodley and Hove, 2005, p.18). Moreover, some other groups with a social view of disability and interested in social inclusion also use different terminologies, such as "intellectual disability" used by Inclusion International (2006) to define "people who sometimes need particular support and care because of their unique learning, communication and other needs and contributions". However, according to Race (2002, p.216), "within the UK authors writing from a social model perspective tend to use the term 'people with learning difficulties' in preference to the term 'people with learning disabilities'". Furthermore, the two leading paradigms which dominate the discourses of disability – the individual medical and the social models – have ideologies that permeate the ways in which disability is perceived, understood and labelled.

The presentation of self and the representation of identities

From a young age I inferred that each individual acts depending on where they are and with whom. It was an intuitive conclusion drawn from seeing my brother's variable level of dis/ability depending on who was with him. His aptitude visibly differed from when we were on our own from when we were with other people, who expected less from him than me. On those occasions he used to put up the more disabled "performance" (Goffman, 1990). In those days I was unaware of studies on stereotypes and how labels and expectations influence our behaviour (e.g. (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968, Scheff, 1984, Goffman, 1990). Later I married my intuition with some theoretical information that I learned, and for this study I have revisited my own position and addressed the literature to build the basis of the analysis of my participants' contributions. I particularly like the term "performance", in the sense that it provides a sense of transitiveness, ephemeral act, in opposition to fixed and immutable situation, as stereotypes and alike indicate.

Goffman (1990, p.32) refers to performance as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and

which has some influence on the observers". In other words, what I am able to observe from my participants is their performance, situated in the context of the study. It means that I become this continuous presence for a certain period of time. As part of the performance there is the front, which is defined as the part which regularly occurs in a permanent manner (Goffman, 1990). Because I am interested in the participants' perspectives in relation to the type of schooling they have experienced, I consider this argument of interest. Further, Goffman (1990, p.37) argues that "a given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name". Taking this argument into account, the interpretations of any findings in this study contemplate the surroundings of them, the context where they have been generated, the interactions at the time of the interviews, the whole societal expectations towards the individuals involved, and the effect of my presence and my own expectations on them.

Considering my personal experience with dis/ability, I have noticed a close relationship between learning difficulties/disabilities and mental illness. I consider that misinformation leads to confusion and also to a sort of interchangeability of stereotypes transiting through both paradigms. This is probably due to the traditional individual medical view of disability, with the panoply of methods of diagnosis, remedies, and search for cure, together with the aura of tragedy around the individual. In view of this, I consider propositions 4 and 5 in Scheff's (1984) discussion on stereotyped imagery of mental disorder:

> ***Proposition 4:*** stereotyped imagery of mental disorder is learned in early childhood;
> ***Proposition 5:*** The stereotypes of insanity are continually reaffirmed, inadvertently, in ordinary social interaction. (pp.74-75)

Both propositions can easily be applied for learning difficulties. As well as Scheff's discussion on the vicarious learning, through which individuals learn how to behave accordingly to their labels. It seems to fit a description I recently heard from a sibling of a woman who, according to her, was wrongly diagnosed with some sort of learning difficulties. She told me vigorously that her sister has "learned to be disabled", and twenty years later, when the scientific and academic knowledge have developed a better understanding of the matter, and her sister was finally released from the old label, she had to learn to un-disable herself as well as people had to redefine their perceptions on her. That was an intriguing story for me, as it highlighted so clearly the notion that disability can be learned and performed.

This is me, that is you: visual and verbal representation of self and other

The central purpose of this research is to analyse learners' perspectives of identity and difference through visual and verbal representation of self and other – to analyse their visual and verbal expression of different identities, which may imply different labels in terms of the ability to learn. Because these representations may express learners' perceptions, as a starting point I turn to the literature in this arena, namely the phenomenology of perception. According to Merleau-Ponty (2008, p.77) "our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have". I am not calling on Ponty here to say that people are objects, but rather to clarify the inaccurateness of our perceptions because in his phenomenology our human gaze only posits one facet of the perceived object at a time, and that one can have "a harmonious and indefinite set of views of the object, but not the object in its plenitude" (Merleau-Ponty, 2008, p.80). If this limited perception is true in terms of the objective world that surrounds us, it is even more convincing that we can never perceive a human being and the subjectivity of being in their plenitude. Our perception is probably that of one facet at a time.

If to conceive an object in its perfect density it is necessary that an infinite number of different perspectives are amalgamated into co-existence, to present it to another an infinite number of eyes are all engaged together in the act of seeing (Merleau-Ponty, 2008, p.81). I assume that if this perfect density is unreachable in terms of objects it is even more unreachable in terms of subjects. My interest in pointing this out here is not to reveal a novel idea, but to reiterate the concept that the representations that are the object of this study reflect this ever incomplete dimension and are contingent on one's perception of oneself and others.

Merleau-Ponty (2008) also argues that our body is our point of view upon the world, and one of the objects of this world and that our perceptual history is a result of our relationships with the objective world. This drives me to reflect on our perceptions of our bodies based on our relationships to them, moreover, our embodied perception of ability and disability as a result of these relationships in the objective world of human bodies, let alone the subjective world. This reflection sends me back to one of my research questions, which is about exploring how learners' representations can be linked to the kinds of interactions they have had - whether with a diverse or homogeneous group - in more or less inclusive environments. Based on the phenomenology of perception, it seems plausible to acknowledge that positive interactions can result in positive perceptual history. Whatever theorisations can be applied to accurately explain perception and its expression, at least one of Merleau-Ponty's postulations is crucial, that is, "I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it" (p.231). This is why I find my interest in learners' representation relevant, because it is in their living their

bodies and identities that they can enlighten our understandings. The search for an appropriate means to comprehend those representations such that I can learn from them is the major purpose of this section.

The use of visual and verbal metaphor

At the heart of this study there is a concern with individual perceptions of identity with regard to dis/ability, and underneath the whole debate on labelling, stereotypes, and social disablement, there is a subtle notion of symbolism and representations. The debate is not only about what makes a person disabled (their biology or society or both), but also how this disablement process takes place. Scheff (1984) argues that the imagery of mental disorder – which here I am comparing with learning difficulties – tends to be attached to the dialect of each language and culture, reaffirmed by both the mass media and everyday conversation. This concurs with discussions in this thesis about the language of dis/ability and about the urge for a new enabling vocabulary.

Therefore, I sustain my quest for which language populates my participants' imagery. Rorty (1989, p.6) argues that, "the world does not speak. Only we do". This affirms the socio-interactive nature of language, which corroborates with that idea of naming the world through dialogue, postulated by Freire (1970b). Therefore, the task of analysing language in use requires that I start by understanding the nature of language as a social construct, that is, the rationale of our "language games" (Wittgenstein, 1953) in opposition to arbitrary vocabularies. The concept of language games consists of the whole, language and the actions into which it is woven (p.4), it is the amalgamation of the language in a specific context and the context itself. Rorty (1989) emphasises the notion that only other human beings propose us a language game to play - that is it is the human actions on the world but not the world itself that generates language. It is only through human interactions that the vocabulary emerges, that it is not "already out there in the world, waiting for us to discover it" (Rorty, 1989, p.6). Taking this postulate into account, it is crucial to understand the roles that interactions play in the formation of the language we use, and which criteria govern our language games. This is part of the rationale for my binary data analysis approach, which more than looking for patterns and categories, takes into account the interactions.

According to Rorty (1989, p.7), the "human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary". (Bruner, 1990, p.34). In this sense, language has a creative power over human construction of self, which is of great interest if one is seeking to promote change in society, shift of paradigms and moreover, the enablement of new identities. When seeking a more just society, it becomes necessary to seek also a language that will contribute to the construction of this society. Rorty (1989, p.7)

argues that "changing languages and other social practices may produce human beings of a sort that had never before existed". It is not changing language alone that is the agent of change, but together with practices based in the social justice principles, language will contribute to this new construction.

Another aspect of language that is of interest here is the meaning-making and meaning-using processes, which according to Bruner (1990, p.13) connect man to culture. He postulates that "by virtue of participation in culture, meaning is rendered public and shared. Our culturally adapted way of life depends upon shared meanings and shared concepts and depends as well upon shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation" (Bruner, 1990, p.13). Taking into account this public nature of meaning-making and meaning-using as well as Rorty's argument that language has a function in the production of human beings in particular ways, it is possible to conclude that the notions of what a human being is, and what we are individually, are a result of the language games we speak in a certain time, in a certain context, that is, it is simultaneously a socio-cultural production and its product. Bruner (1990, p.34.) proposes that:

> it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action by situating its underlying intentional states in an interpretive system. It does this by imposing the patterns inherent in the culture's symbolic systems – its language and discourse modes, the forms of logical and narrative explication, and the patterns of mutually dependent communal life.

This corroborates the view discussed in this thesis that it is not the impairments (biology) that determine the dis/ablement process or notions of dis/ability, but the social participation those individuals with impairments are entitled to in society (culture); it is their power to negotiate, to have their voices listened to that gives meaning to their identities and positions them in the community life. It is from this basis that my main query regarding the influence of the educational environment – comprising the placement and the interactions which take place there – emerges and develops. It is important to analyse how those more/less inclusive cultures with their constantly changing vocabularies affect the language games which those learners speak and their meaning-making of themselves and their peers. For the purposes of this study, there is a particular aspect of language that is taken as central because it serves to understand perceptions and mental image that is metaphor.

Ortony et al. (1978, p.920) state that "philosophers have been interested in the nature of metaphor at least since the time of Aristotle". The postulates of Aristotle on metaphor have been frequently referred as both the starting point of several discussions on the topic and the target of some criticisms in regard to his views on the subject, such as the widely cited argument that metaphor "is the mark of genius" (Aristotle and Butcher, 1961, p.31); even

though this interpretation of the Aristotelian argument is widely accepted, it is not unanimous. (For a different view see Mahon, 1999).

When studying metaphor it is necessary to clarify the basics of the subject by answering questions such as 'what is metaphor?'; 'how do we use (create and interpret) metaphors?'; and 'why do we use metaphor?'. In short, the broad response to those questions range from (a) definitions of metaphor as ornamental language, rhetorical devices, seasoning of language, to notions of subconscious drives (Sharpe, 1968); (b) passing by explications of the metaphor process which derive either from a two-dimensional (language and thought) or a three-dimensional (language, thought and communication) model of metaphor. Gibbs (2008, p.3) argues that in the early days metaphor study was founded on "speculative accounts of how metaphor works and is understood", and that contemporary studies also invest "much great attention to the way that context shapes metaphor use and understanding" (Gibbs, 2008, p.3). In other words, early studies on metaphor have been founded on a two-dimensional model of metaphor focussing only in the relation language/thought, while more recently other studies use a three-dimensional model that comprises the role played by the context, moreover the interactions that take place within that given context. The distinctions between those two approaches are relevant for my study because it seems to me that the divide retains the paradox between individual characteristics and/or development and the role played by the social context.

The two-dimensional model: a psycho-scientific framework

According to Steen (2008, p.213), "most contemporary metaphor theorists hold that the typical function of metaphor, simile, and related figures of speech is to map correspondences across two concepts". This involves analogy, similarity and comparison, namely linguistic conceptualisation of one thing in terms of another. Steen (2008, p.214) claims that a two-dimensional model of metaphor is the focus of recent research on metaphor because "contemporary metaphor theory and research appear to have focused on the nature and function of metaphor in language and thought, at the expense of metaphor in communication". He claims that this two-dimensional model produces a paradox of metaphor suggesting that the majority of metaphor in language is not processed metaphorically, that is by some kind of comparison, and therefore a different model is needed to resolve the contradiction.

The standard pragmatic model of metaphor embraces the claim that metaphor requires a discrete three stage process which comprises (1) the nonsensional interpretation, that non-literal meaning does not make sense, or is not true literally, (2) the assessment of this interpretation in the context, which due to the lack of sense, leads to a (3) different interpretation which then makes sense that is a non-literal meaning. According to Glucksberg

(2003, p.92) this pragmatic model has been dominant since the Poetics of Aristotle, and its pragmatics consists of a view that nominal metaphors are false if taken literally, which characterises that their meaning are defective because their assertions do not make sense (literally) in the context they are applied. In this sense, according to this model, the initial recognition of metaphor comes from those false assertions, to which literal meaning must be rejected and replaced by an alternative meaning that makes sense, which is the non-literal one (Glucksberg, 2003, p.92). In this sense it is the discrepancy between what is said and what it means in literal terms that allow another signification, which is the figurative, the metaphor.

The three-dimensional model: a socio-interaction framework

The rationale presented by Steen (2008) for his three-dimensional model of metaphor is based on a contradiction which he describes as follows:

> What is metaphorical to the linguist threatens to be not metaphorical to the psycholinguist. The psycholinguistic crack now threatens to break the cognitive-linguistic mirror. The contradiction between the claims from the two disciplines poses a grave threat to the credibility of all metaphor research (Steen, 2008, p.221)

For Steen, this contradiction is derived from the cognitive-scientific (psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics) focus on the relation between metaphor in language and thought. He proposes a framework that includes communication in the equation, which he classifies as discourse-analytical (Steen, 2008, p.221). The major rationale for this discourse-analytical framework is that the neglect of an important aspect of metaphor in most metaphor research has caused a distortion on the views of the nature and function of metaphor, only analysing the communicative aspects on the basis of conceptual and/or linguistics terms. This neglected communicative aspect has to do with deliberateness of metaphor production and reception. Steen (2008, p.222) argues that this "deliberateness belongs to the separate dimension of communication".

The position I adopt

Bearing in mind that I am not a linguist nor a psycholinguist, my approach to metaphor is that of an educator, interested in processes rather than results. Therefore, in this research, the role played by metaphor usage is chiefly led by my personal communication style and belief

that metaphor is used as a means of making sense of the world, so it is part of the process of naming the world, which is the central preoccupation of this inquiry.

Although I am familiar with metaphor as a speaker/writer, I decided to limit my intervention regarding metaphor when it refers to the participants. I intended the dialogical inquiry to be an essentially open-ended approach, and I did not intend to direct the use of any kind of specific form of expression, such as figures of language. However, as I am convinced by Lakoff & Johnson's (2003) argument that metaphor is not a mere accessory in language, but that indeed we think metaphorically, I wished to keep myself alert to any metaphor emergence in the participants' contribution, including verbal and visual metaphors.

Representations of dis/ability: two contrasting epistemologies

According to the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That is the definition of disability currently accepted by the government for the purposes of assessing equality (Purdam et al., 2008 p.53). However, notions of disability are still controversial as Schillmeier (2008, p.611) states:

> concerns about disability depend on the perspective from which they are viewed. Different perspectives enact disparate matters of disability. It is the social/cultural perspective of disability studies that has put significant effort into highlighting the perspective-dependency of disability: disability cannot be unified into and from one perspective.

Taking the above statement into account, in this section the two main paradigms which lead to disparate conceptions of disability are presented as a means to understand different definitions according to the contemporary literature.

The twentieth century has witnessed important theoretical considerations on health, diseases and their consequences. These considerations have generated various conceptual models, some of which share the same focus and point of arrival, the so-called 'Disablement Process'. While the first formulations saw this process as dependent upon the characteristics of the individual (his/her pathology and impairments) though, subsequent concepts attributed a progressively growing role to the environment (in its physical and social aspects) (Masala and Pettreto, 2008). The major discrepancies between the two competing paradigms of the individualistic medical model and its prominent counterpart, the social model of disability are discussed in next subsections.

The individual medical model of disability

Many authors agree (e.g. Barnes, 1997, Oliver and Barnes, 1998, Thomas, 1999, Thomas, 2004, Shakespeare, 2006, Simmons et al., 2008) that the understanding of disability traditionally is marked by a divide between two main competing paradigms, that is, the medical and the social model of disability. Although the idea of a medical model is widely referred to as such, I adopt a terminology that combines the "individual model" used by Oliver (1983) to encompass "a whole range of issues" emphasising the "personal tragedy theory of disability", with the historic terminology of the "medical model", which emphasises the medicalisation of disability and disabled people. The use of the term "individual medical" here is aimed at offering a less usual viewpoint of the customary discourse related to the disability paradigm. Oliver uses the terminology "individual" instead of medical, because for him "there is no such thing as the medical model of disability, there is instead, an individual model of disability of which medicalisation is one significant component" (Oliver, 1990a, p.2). My choice however, is based on my belief that there is a medicalised view that is focused on the individual condition of having impairment, and that it is the combination of this individualisation together with this "personal tragedy" that sustains and disseminates the paradigm that has caused so much oppression over disabled people. The major aspect of the individual medical model of disability is that disability is seen as a problem within the individual, which calls for prophylactic or remedial/medical (disabling) interventions. By contrast, the major aspect of the social model is that disability is seen as a socially imposed problem experienced by individuals, which calls for societal (enabling) actions.

The individual medical model is informed by an understanding of "human beings in relation to a normalised view of ability – an ideal type – which in turn regards those with impaired ability as abnormal" (Simmons et al., 2008, p.733), and also by "the idea that disability is caused by illness and impairment and entails suffering and some social disadvantage" (Thomas, 2004, p.570). This concept sets disability into a personal level, as an intrinsic characteristic "located within individual human bodies that do not match the standards set by the normalcy of non-disabled relations" (Schillmeier, 2008, p.611). Furthermore, the individual medical model "constructs disability as a problem to be solved or contained with procedures tried and tested much as medical remedies" (Clough and Corbett, 2000, p.10), aimed at achieving the "restoration of normality" (Oliver, 1990a, p.3). In this sense, "to talk of a 'medical' model in the context of learning difficulties is to point to practices which call on pathology (that is, a science of disease)" (Clough and Corbett, 2000, p.10).

Clough and Corbett (2000, p.08) argue that the educational developments during the decades between the 1920s and 1950s were based on the individual model which "essentially saw the individual as being somehow 'in deficit' and in turn assumed that a need for a 'special' (if any) education for those individuals" (Clough and Corbett, 2000, p.8) was

evident. Butler and Parr (1999, p.3) maintain that disabled people are still categorised by society, which "pathologises certain peoples" (Butler and Parr, 1999, p.3) following the individual medical line of thought. Similarly, Blanchet (2002) argues that the individual medical perspective is reflected both in discourses about disability and the type of support given or denied to "people in situation of disability". According to French (1993, p.22) "disabilities are still largely defined in society as problems located within unfortunate individuals, an approach which has done considerable harm to disabled people and which has failed to improve their lives either socially or financially" .

The social model of disability

Within political and civil rights movements, the individual model was criticised and challenged in the process of developing the "social model of Disability" (Butler and Parr, 1999, p.3) – sometimes referred to as "disability activism" (e.g. Light, 2003, p.131). Clough and Corbett (2000, p.8) called this "the sociological response" with the model developed initially in the 1970s by Oliver, a disabled sociologist, based on a publication by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) entitled Fundamental Principles of Disability (UPIAS, 1976), in which they declare that:

> it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments; by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (UPIAS, 1976, p.3).

The social model consists of a critique of the individual model and makes claims about the social construction of disability. In this sense, disability is a product of society which 'disables' the individual by its structural and environmental injustices and is not an innate product of the struggles caused by impairment (e.g. Oliver, 1990b, Goodley, 2001). Furthermore, Oliver (1990) argued, "it is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation". Consequently, in this model disability is an institutionalised product of discriminatory practices in and by society - disability equals oppression.

This stance is also taken in a different approach in which Stokkom and Fougeyrollas (1998) draw attention to the social barriers which may create "handicaps" for disabled people. They discuss the need to consider the enabling effects that social changes in regard to accessibility might have in disabled people's lives. They argue that whether we are discussing programmes to maintain people at home, family support schemes, the adaptation

of homes and of transport or leisure facilities, or the accessibility of public buildings, the urban environment or communications, the central issue remains to access precisely to what extent these schemes reduce the handicaps faced by people with disabilities. It is about the practical effects they have on the quality of their participation in society (Stokkom & Fougeyrollas, 1998, p.7). Even if the scope of that report was not based on the UPIAS social model of disability framework, it presents a clear understanding of the role played by society and namely the environment as a cause of what they call "handicap", but which I read as synonymous to disability in the sense that has been presented here.

The central deliberation of the social model of disability is that it is informed by the notion that it is how society is organised that is disabling (or enabling), in conjunction with a clear distinction between disability and impairment. Disability, therefore, is a result of this society rather than an innate condition to impairment. In this model, disability is seen as a form of social oppression (Thomas, 2004). In this sense the social model encompasses several significant elements that challenge understandings of disability associated with individual incapacity. It encourages research to focus on the disabling environment that renders disabled people powerless and voiceless (Watson, 2004).

In summary, the social model of disability makes a distinction between 'disability' and 'impairment', where the former is a socially created circumstance and the latter an individual situation which would only create disability if society fails to provide the adequate facilitators, meaning mainly accessibility and mobility. In this sense disability – as with other forms of oppression – can be created or removed, since "disability is closely linked to the environment where people live and can disappear if the context is adapted to people" (Blanchet, 2002, p.1).

The social model and the place of impairment

According to (Watson, 2004, p.101), "the social model of disability has been highly influential in the development of disability politics and disability theory in the UK", and has been considered 'the big idea' of the disability movement (Hasler, 1993, p.280). The model has been challenged and criticised not only by scholars outside the disability movement (e.g. Swanson et al., 2003) but also within the movement by what Barnes (1998) calls the 'second generation' of British writers. For Barnes (1998, p.76) these authors "writing on disability studies have been questioning the hypotheses that underlie the social model of disability, stressing the need to focus on "everyday experiences of disabled people". Those everyday experiences, which according to Barnes have been neglected, relate to gender, ethnicity, sexuality and impairment. This could be viewed by some as a return to impairment or to a medicalised view of disability, which could lead to a return to the old individualistic paradigm that puts the onus of disability on one person's impairments causing the disability movement to revert or draw back. However, Goodley (2001, p.208) argues that "rather than viewing a

turn to impairment as de-politicising, re-medicalising and 'watering down' the social model, more and more writers are arguing that a focus on impairment, alongside an alliance with the social model and disability movement, re-socialises impairment". Crow (2003, p.137) argues that the silence about impairment prevents us from dealing with the difficulties which individuals face. She states that a consequence of this omission is that "many of us remain frustrated and disheartened by pain, fatigue, depression and chronic illness", preventing the development of the full individual potential and even of combating the oppression of disability. However, she acknowledges the risks of stressing the implications of impairment for the disability movement, as dominant perceptions of impairment as personal tragedy systematically plays a role in weakening the social model of disability and strengthening the individualistic view.

Shakespeare (2006, p.33) has recently argued that the social model became "an obstacle to the further development of disability movement and disability studies". In the same vein French (1993, p.17) has expressed concerns related to the social model even though she agrees with the basic principles of it. She believes "that some of the most profound problems experienced by people with certain impairments are difficult, if not impossible, to solve by social manipulation" (p.17). Based on her personal experiences as a visually impaired person, she claims that some of the difficulties people with certain impairments may face fall into a "middle ground" between the individual and the social paradigms of disability, as she recognises that some of the struggles she has experienced were due not solely to her impairment nor "born of social oppression" (French, 1993, p.19). Crow (2003, p.139) adds that "recognising the importance of impairment for us does not mean that we have to take on non-disabled world's ways of interpreting our experiences of our bodies", and that the impairment is an objective concept with no intrinsic meaning, but the fact that aspects of a person's body do not function or function with difficulty is often taken beyond this objective reality to a further level, when this implies that the person or her body is inferior. She affirms that "the first is fact, the second is interpretation" (p.139). Shakespeare's (2006) criticisms of the social model echo to some extent these questions. He argues that different "approaches share the spirit of social model approaches" (p.18) but that this distinction between disability and impairment is a characteristic exclusively of the British social model of disability. According to Shakespeare (2006, p.30), "the social model was crucial to the British disability movement" for identifying a political strategy to encourage barrier removal, meaning a pursuit for transformation instead of pursuing a means of cure or rehabilitation; and also for being "liberating for disabled individuals" (p.30). He also argues that the social model encouraged a shift from studying individuals to "exposing broader social and cultural processes" (p.30). Regardless of the impact and the importance of the social model of disability, Finkelstein (2001, p.10) argues that it is crucial to recognise that it "does not provide an 'explanation' of disability and disabled people are not the subject matter of the social interpretation of disability".

Shakespeare (2006, p.18) emphasises the strong – and possibly questionable – criticism that advocates of the social model developed against the individual model which became a "proxy for all that it is wrong with traditional attitudes to disability". Furthermore, he argues that due to this widely spread conception of the medical paradigm as the wrongdoing representative it became a "powerful symbol", but conversely when carefully scrutinised the whole concept is a mere misrepresentation of such a position, or in Shakespeare's words "it is nothing but a straw person" (p.18) - "not a coherent or useful concept". Shakespeare questions the ways in which social model proponents have portrayed the individual model and stresses a series of problems that arise from these erroneous accounts of the social model of disability.

Although acknowledging several benefits of the social model, Shakespeare develops a critique about the problems that he believes this model created. First is the claim that disability is "defined entirely in terms of social oppression, social relations and social barriers" (Shakespeare, 2006, p.31) resulting in political and conceptual dilemmas such as the difficulty for disabled individuals to organise and share experience with regard to their impairment as the only aspect to be considered would be the common experience of oppression. The second problem is the rejection or undervaluation of attempts to minimise or cure medical conditions, due to a misconception that those efforts were irrelevant or even misleading actions that could compromise the strategy of barrier removal and civil rights. The third problem is sole focus on disability in terms of societal oppression and exclusion, causing a lack of interest and of work aimed at meeting the special needs of individuals with impairments.

When discussing issues that arise from the social model, it is necessary to draw attention to the place of learning difficulties in the whole disability movement. Goodley (2001) declares that his perspective on disability was fundamentally changed by literature of the social model. Crucially, this stance made two things very clear. First, that society creates disablement and is the arbiter of disciplinary powers that (re)produce pathological understandings of different bodies and minds. Secondly, that disabled activists point to the need for social change in which all social members—disabled and non-disabled— are to be involved. With such a clear social perspective then, it has become increasingly disconcerting to note how, as Simone Aspis[4] points out, 'learning difficulties' remains tacitly conceived of as a biological deficit (Goodley, 2001, p.211).

Goodley presents a disturbing question about the positioning of learning difficulties within the social model: "are we finally prepared, in this postmodern theoretical climate, to accept a

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[4] Goodley is referring to a self-advocate who he had quoted earlier.

personal tragedy perspective over a social model of disability, in the case of certain impairments?" (Goodley, 2001, p.211). This disquieting question leads him to the not less disquieting conclusion that in the social model "people with 'learning difficulties' are consistently underwritten".

The Québec classification: an appraisal

Although some see the British social model as a distinct and crystal-clear approach, Shakespeare (2006) declares that, "it is just one of a family of social-contextual approaches to disability". Furthermore, he argues that there was "a plurality of social approaches" and that among them one became the "orthodoxy of the British disability movement and of British disability studies". Shakespeare questions the British model and its disregard of non-British approaches that do not recognise disability as oppression. He also challenges the almost unanimity of criticisms towards the so called medical or individual model and argues that "it is necessary to rehabilitate pre-social model and non-British disability research, in order to rescue the important insights and findings of other scholars from the dustbin marked 'medical model'" (Shakespeare, 2006, p.19).

Among the models that were developed after the social model two stand out that were drafted and disseminated under the aegis of the World Health Organization, namely the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) [1,2]. These are just one part of the conceptual elaboration in the field.
Shakespeare's criticisms about the absence of a place for impairments within the social model, together with Goodley's call for a re-socialisation of impairments, have some resonances with the studies carried out to review the ICIDH and ICF criteria. Those studies come from a medical tradition, developing a more social view of illness and disability, while Shakespeare and Goodley (and other scholars with similar views) are somehow going the other way round, coming from a social/sociological model which disregards any "medical" influence in the disability debate. Nonetheless, they seem to have come to a very similar conclusion: it is the interaction of individual and social factors that inscribes or rather informs the experiences of disabled people, and that determines the notions of disability (Barnes, 1997, Atkinson et al., 1997, Corker and French, 1999, Goodley, 2001, Arnesena et al., 2007, Graham and Grieshaber, 2008).

One significant contribution to this debate is the Quebec classification: "Disability Creation Process" (DCP) (Fougeyrollas, 1999), which is used as a "synonym to the Disablement phenomenon" equivalent to the expression "Process of disablement" (Fougeyrollas, 1999). The DCP model proposes a new definition/classification of disability based on three main factors: 1) personal factors (i.e. age, gender, impairments); 2) environmental factors (barriers and facilitators); and 3) living habits. This three-element definition demonstrates that the

DCP model takes into consideration individual factors, which some critics argue were neglected by the social model. The DCP model "brings some evidence that life for people with disabilities can only be improved if actions that are changed have a direct impact on these three aspects" (Blanchet, 2002, p.1). The DCP model originated from a long research process along with an international task force for the revision of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps[5] (ICIDH), published by the World Health Organization (WHO). The major distinction that the DCP model added to the existing model/classification was the introduction of environmental factors. (Fougeyrollas, 1999, p.166) explicates this relation by arguing that:

> it is nevertheless the different obstacles or facilitators met in their environment that, in correlation with their own disabilities, will hinders the accomplishment of life habits, compromise everyday life activities and social roles, as well as put them into a full social participation or total handicap situations.

In this sense, the social impact of disability is taken into consideration in relation to individual needs, not regardless of them. Another reason for my particular interested in this model is that I anticipate in my study that the language as a form of expression and representation plays a significant role in understanding multiple perspectives. Therefore the DCP model is pertinent because it also claims to promote a change of the vocabulary by introducing a new terminology (e.g. "people in a situation of disability" rather than disabled people) and the authors argue that a new taxonomy of human capabilities applicable to everyone – that is not exclusive of disabled people – is proposed within their model (Fougeyrollas, 1999, p.13). However, the main purpose of the DCP model is to provide criteria for assessment and classification of impairment/disability/handicap in light of the existing ICIDH (WHO) to inform the decisions to be made regarding the provision (i.e. education, rehabilitation, care) needed for individuals "in situation of disability" (Fougeyrollas, 1999, p.xx).

With assessment and classification as its purpose, the DCP taxonomy incorporates new nuances to definitions of widespread concepts such as personal factors and capability. Nonetheless, it does not offer a new enabling language, which would corroborate and promote the creation of new meanings and concepts. It rather re-visits old labels and reformulates their usage, and the claimed universality does not differ clearly from notions that are used to categorise individuals along a spectrum of normality based on "organic systems and capabilities", as the personal factors. Thus, I regard the DCP as a potentially dangerous tool, taking into account the emphasis on those personal factors in contrast to the minimal emphasis on the "environmental factors". The language of "disability creation"

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[5] The ICIDH was first published by the WHO in 1980 and has undergone its first major revision in the mid-nineties, occasion when the DCP was developed.

encapsulates similarities with the social model, but the disproportionate range of personal factors compared to environmental factors send us back to the individual medical view. The detail in the list of organic systems and capabilities involved, and the vagueness of the list of social factors seem to show a tendency to lessen the impact of social barriers as risk factors (see Figure 2.3). Consequently, the individual situation and the ways that the individual interact with their own "biology" and the physical and social environment are the foremost cause of a "handicap situation". Figure 2-3 shows the dynamic of the factors that encompass the creation of disability, the interaction between personal and environmental factors, where the latter are described as "facilitators and obstacles" (Fougeyrollas, 1999, p.166).

© INDCP / CSICIDH 1999
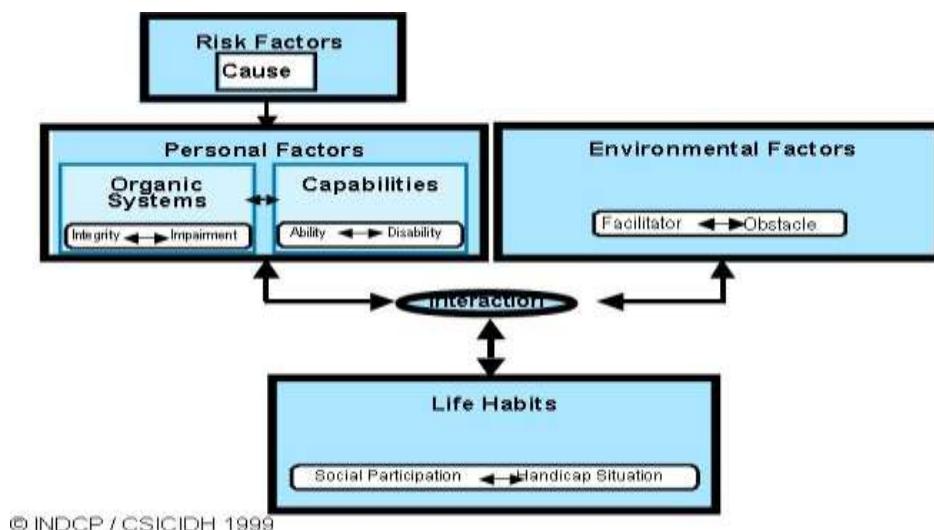
Figure 2-2: The disability creation process

The position I adopt

The above brief critical examination of the social model makes it even more crucial to position this study. Amid the criticisms of the social model, French (1993, p.24) summarises what is the essence of all the analyses when she states that "the social model of disability represents the most important way forward for disabled people", however it is also necessary to note that "the time has now come to broaden and intensify our examination of disability" (p.24). It is clear to me that locating disability within the individual solely is oppressive and may dismiss the societal responsibility to meet the needs of all citizens. However, disregarding the role played by individual needs, by locating disability entirely in social barriers, is incomplete. It is necessary to incorporate the role of impairment in the process of dis/en-ablement, and this need seems to become even more evident when the focus is on learning difficulties, especially severe difficulties as they can be "left in the realms of static, irreversible, individualised biology" (Goodley, 2001, p.213). I am particularly moved by Goodley's argument that "the place of (some) people with 'learning difficulties' in the context of a social model of disability is decidedly shaky" (p.213) and that "we need to enter into a

dialogue about the possible and perhaps necessarily exaggerated social origins of the 'learning difficulties impairment' per se" (p.213).

In my view, the DCP model encapsulates a conceptual framework for societal changes, as the environmental factors are considered determinants in the disablement process. However, I consider the terminology, "environment", excessively neutral and disengaged in contrast to "social context" or "society". While the first calls attention primarily to the physical (natural or created) barriers, the latter highlights the social responsibility to their creation and maintenance, as well as their removal and to the development of facilitators. Although the classification embraced somehow the role played by the context, it seems to underestimate the role played by discrimination and oppression. The "interaction" between the individual and the environment in the DCP model differs from the "interactional approach" proposed by Shakespeare (2006, p.56) in the sense that the DCP seems to refer to a more linear relation of demand/response, which still puts a strong responsibility on the individual, while the environment is a factor that contributes to the disability creation which leads to a need to adaptations that would reduce the demand or facilitate the responses.

Taking into account the literature considered here, my research is situated among those studies that recognise disability as a form of social oppression where some individuals are silenced or segregated by the failure of society to embrace their/our needs/differences as part of the social assets and the essence of humanity. However, I also recognise the role of impairment to the disablement process, because as a sister of someone who is mildly physically impaired and who has severe learning difficulties, I understand that my brother's specific difficulties played a significant role in our – my brother's, mine and also my parents' to some extent – struggles to belong to our community. Part of our struggles were a result of a general misunderstanding of what learning difficulties was in those days, but also because the sort of difficulties my brother faced imposed some limits by themselves.
In this sense I identify with French's (1993, p.19) argument that part of her difficulties was caused by her impairment and therefore not born of social oppression.

Thus, I strongly agree that it is necessary to clearly locate impairment in the heart of the discussions about disability. I would suggest also deepening the understandings of oppression in view of those individual needs which might be seen as a social demand and a societal responsibility, similar to how my then child friend shared in taking responsibility for my brother's need to be carried. I concur with Crow (2003, p.139-40) that there is a need to reconceptualise impairment and to think about it in three related ways, that is 1) the objective concept, 2) the individual contribution to the concept based on their interpretation of their own experience, and 3) the social context that upon impairment creating disability. Finally, I am convinced by Crow's argument that "we need to take a fresh look at the social model of disability and learn to integrate all its complexities" (p.143), and recognise how impairment

and disability influence each other. Furthermore, I am convinced by Goodley and Rapley's (2001, p.231) argument that a social theory of impairment is necessary, and that we have examples of resistance of people with learning difficulties that enable the re-socialising of impairments as part of our political movement against disablement.

I maintain that changes have been occurring worldwide[6] in terms of the notions of dis/ability and, regardless of their timidity or contradictory actions; they belong to the same historical epoch. The social model of dis/ability is not a one-way road, where society, consciously or not, imposes handicaps on individuals with impairments. It must work the other way round, where this society, conscious of the oppression caused, acts reflexively to extinguish the socially created barriers, to promote and develop facilitators, and to regulate the distribution of justice. The interactional approach to the social model presented by Shakespeare can only make complete sense when impairment is not only acknowledged without causing oppression, but also, is taken as a characteristic of human groups, therefore, a social responsibility rather than the individual misfortune. This responsibility is part of our function as part of a "body" (humanity) that is contradictory by essence and to which normality as a synonym of perfection is nothing but misconception. Furthermore, I concur with Thomas's (1999, p.141) argument that:

> it is quite possible simultaneously to make a conceptual distinction between impairment and disability, reconceptualise the latter as a form of social oppression, understand that bodily variations classified as impairments are materially shaped by the interaction of social and biological factors and processes, and appreciate that impairment is a culturally constructed category which exists in particular times and places.

According to Benjamin (2002, p.310), "attention has been drawn to the shifts of meaning around the terms that have been used from the 18th century to designate and define perceived intellectual 'ability'", and she refers to some publications that discuss those shifts (Tomlinson, 1982, Slee, 1995, Corbett, 1996, Allan, 1999, Benjamin, 2001). Probably the most ancient notion of 'disability' or 'defect' is based on a counter-notion of 'normality' or 'perfection', which according to Barnes (1997, p.10)has its roots in the "patriarchal, hierarchical, and violent" ancient Greek society. Barnes states that the Greeks' "obsession with bodily perfection" (p.11) created a society in which there was no room for any form of imperfection. Barnes (1997) argues that the mythology was informed by a sort of idealization of perfect human beings, and a singular case of disability; Hephaestus – who was lame,

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[6] Although my research is not focused in an international view of disability/impairment, as someone carrying out a research in a different context from that of my origin, I believe to be useful a brief but broad contextualization to provide an overview of the definitions of disability worldwide and respective discrimination laws currently in force. This overview is shown in Appendix 6.

distorted, and disfigured (Homer, 1967) – reveals a clear "association between impairment and exclusion and impotency" (Barnes, 1997 p.11). He points out that the Greek legacy was then absorbed by the Romans who passed on this legacy to the rest of the known world, he advances his analysis reflecting on the influence of Judean and Christian religious conceptions of impairment as punishment of wrongdoing, and he carries on the historical developments of the status of people with impairment in different ages gradually narrowing from the ancient known world to the industrialized England.

In this study the history is not scrutinised, however, the above retrospective analysis is useful to establish some of the origins of the current, prevalent notions that can somehow affect the act of labelling and of being labelled. It is crucial to keep on challenging those conceptions that still permeate the language in use. For this reason, in this research the terminology used to refer to the social position of individuals – that is their personal circumstances together with their social role – is the dialectical duality ability/disability in the form of dis/ability, which in some circumstances may reflect the interaction of living with both disability and impairment (Thomas, 1999, p.125). Therefore, in this thesis the terminology dis/ability refers to "disability" as a dialectic concept that can be changed – from "ability" to "disability" and vice-versa – depending on the societal response rather than a static immutable concept based on individual "capabilities" or impairments. In this way it is society that adds (or eliminates) the prefix "dis" upon the lives of people with physical or intellectual impairments or difficulties in the form of disadvantages, discrimination and all oppressive circumstances that disabled people may experience. Therefore, the need to use the prefix is a result of the existence of barriers or prejudice and a lack of facilitators and enablers in a disabling society or environment. The discussion about learning difficulties within a social justice perspective of disability calls for a more in-depth analysis, which follows.

Representations of learning difficulties: seeking a conceptualisation

It is reassuring to reflect on how far the studies on disability have changed since the down syndrome was first described as "the disease entity 'Mongolian in 1866" (Engler, 1949, Preface). However, it is exasperating to realise how much is yet to be learned and how much vagueness remains in current conceptualisation of learning difficulties among a variety of competing approaches to the theme. Learning difficulties is in general a problematic concept around the world (Kozey and Siegel, 2008) due the variety of views and conceptions, and the vagueness in the discourses used. An overview of a range of definitions that a person with learning difficulties and their families can access through British sources is shown in Table 2-1 below.

Source	Definition
Valuing People	"Learning disability includes the presence of: - A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with; - A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning); - which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development"
British Institute of Learning Disabilities Learning (BILD), (2008 p.2)	"Disability is a diagnosis, but it is not a disease, nor is it a physical or mental illness. Unlike the latter, so far as we know it is not treatable. Internationally three criteria are regarded as requiring to be met before learning disabilities can be identified: Intellectual impairment; Social or adaptive dysfunction and Early onset".
Mencap (2008)	"Learning disability is not mental illness or dyslexia. People with a learning disability find it harder than others to learn, understand and communicate".
WHO	The World Health Organisation defines learning disabilities as "a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind"
RCP (2004)	"Learning disability used to be known as mental handicap or mental retardation. A child with a general learning disability finds it more difficult to learn, understand and do things compared to other children of the same age. The degree of disability can vary greatly. Some children will never learn to speak and even when they grow up will need help with looking after themselves - feeding, dressing or going to the toilet. On the other hand, the disability may be mild and the child will grow up to become independent".
Learning Disability Coalition (2008)	"A learning disability affects someone's intellectual and social development throughout their life. About 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability, so it's one of the most common forms of disability in the UK but also one of the least understood. A learning disability does not stop someone from learning and achieving a lot in life, if they get the right support".

Table 2-1: Definitions of Learning Difficulties from different public sources

In short, one of the aims of this research is to examine learners' imagery of learning difficulties through the language in use. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise the socio-educational context within which those images have been built, how this context has developed and the implications the current notions can have in future. To understand the perceptions about learning difficulties at the present time, when "an anti-discriminatory

theme has figured largely in legislatures across the world" (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004), it is absolutely necessary to look back to the status of people with learning difficulties in different periods. However, this study is less concerned with the deep roots of the current concepts, rather with the continuum of their historical evolution and with evidence that can reveal hidden or neglected aspects of what we understand as inclusion today.

In this section, I present two different approaches to learning difficulties, which relate directly to the individual medical and the social model of disability respectively. First, the self-entitled scientific discipline approach that echoes several postulates of a medical view of disability and second an approach within the social model of disability that is informed both by social justice and human rights principles.

Learning difficulties: a scientific view

Kavale and Forness (2003, p.77) argue that the goal of the "scientific discipline of LD[7] (sic) (Learning Disabilities) which they advocate is to predict and to explain learning difficulties, and that the goal of the "political discipline", in contrast, is advocacy, policy based programs and services aimed at meeting the needs and interests of students with learning difficulties. They state that "because these two disciplinary perspectives require different interpretations of the LD (sic) definition, there was little association between the goals and objectives of the scientific and the political LD disciplines" (p.77). In this sense, in the authors' adoption of a scientific discipline do not prioritise the necessity to meet the needs and interests of individuals with learning difficulties, nor envisage the possibility of accommodating the scientific effort to predict (and possibly eventually prevent) and describe learning difficulties with the advocacy movement for better life for people with learning difficulties. This arguable radical division seems to focus on the "discipline" (learning difficulties) rather than on the "subjects" (people with learning difficulties), as if their needs and interests were irrelevant.

Fletcher et al. (2003, p.30) argue that "historically, learning disability has existed as a disorder that was difficult to define". They discuss the traditional approach, which defines learning difficulties as a discrepancy between the expected from a child's development – the IQ – and their actual achievement. The unexpected "underachievement" would characterise the presence of learning difficulties, which were defined as a "heterogeneous group of disorders with a common marker of intraindividual variability, representing a discrepancy between IQ and achievement" (Fletcher et al., 2003, p.30). This is essentially a medical or deficit definition that clearly focuses on the individual while being informed by the assumption of a homogeneous normality, represented by what is "expected". In other words, having learning difficulties means (unexpectedly) achieving less than what would be considered

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[7] The authors consistently use the acronym throughout the text.

normal, therefore this is not a definition of being, but a concept of not being – in this case not being normal.

Fletcher et al. (2003, p.30) argue that the classification of learning difficulties is a central issue in learning difficulties research. Consequently within the scientific arena the major debates occur around the models of classification, the criteria of identification and classification of "learning disabilities", which lead to categorisation of subtypes of disabilities and ultimately to treatment issues. Kavale and Forness (2003, p.77) argue that the findings of a study by Werner and Strauss (1940) established the rudiments of the learning difficulties concept, and that these ideas were reinforced by the report on minimal brain dysfunction (See Clements, 1966). Through a summarised description of the evolution of the scientific discipline of learning difficulties, Kavale and Forness discuss process theories, the theoretical development of the discipline, research in this arena namely basic and applied research, philosophical disputes and finally the relationship of learning difficulties with Marxist ideology. They strongly criticise some publications (i.e. McKnight, 1982, Carrier, 1986, Sleeter, 1986, Coles, 1987, Miller, 1990, Poplin, 1995) that they believe were responsible for generating the 'sociocultural constructionism' which "placed any scientific learning difficulty in a secondary position, resulting in a loss of rationality and increasing difficulty in resolving important questions such as 'What is LD?'" (Kavale and Forness, 2003, p.80).

In addition, Kavale and Forness (2003, p.81) claim that "despite the corrosive effects of social constructions" of learning difficulties, the scientific discipline persisted in producing major research contributions to the understandings of learning difficulties, namely linguistic development, including studies on dyslexia, studies on behaviour of students with learning difficulties, investigations in mathematics area, especially dyscalculia, and so forth. The supporters of the scientific discipline criticise the social model of disability, which they call the political discipline in that "advocacy trivializes the scientific discipline". In their view, it promotes a lack of knowledge about what learning difficulty really is so an increasing number of students are "likely to be served under the label (learning difficulties) about which you don't know what you are talking about" (Kavale and Forness, 2003, p.266). It is clear that the advocates of the scientific discipline by this means reclaim the "medical gaze" (Foucault, 1973, p.61) which leads to a belief that the medical authority can diagnose problems, propose solutions, and justify everything plausibly, and consequently there is no place for challenging the historical a priori in relation to the doctor's eye's ability "to confront a sick organism" (Foucault, 1973, p.237).

Learning difficulties: a social justice perspective

The position represented here by Kavale and Fornes places a devaluation of the views of those who do not follow the "scientific discipline" tenets with regard to learning difficulties, by declaring that "you (who don't embrace the scientific – therefore correct – discipline of it) don't know what you are talking about" (Kavale and Forness, 2003, p.266). This reasoning resonates with Foucault's argument about a division between the man of reason and the man of madness when he says the "the man of reason delegates the physician to madness" (Foucault, 2008, preface, p.xii) through an abstract universality of disease, and that "the man of madness communicates with society only by the intermediary of an equally abstract reason" (Foucault, 2008, p.xii).

In my view, the advocates of the medical model, like the mentioned scientific discipline, postulate a similar division between individuals with learning difficulties and non-disabled people. The scientific discipline – possibly embodied by rehabilitation/curative agents – acting as that intermediary 'abstract reason' that knows about this 'abstract universality' of disability (which in this analogy replaces disease), which could therefore explicate learning difficulties and mediate its relation to the non-disabled world. In view of this, I start discussing the concept of learning difficulties from a social justice perspective by drawing an analogy. My analogy refers to Foucault's argument about the duality madness-reason with the mediation of the language of psychiatry, and the contemporary debate around the pervasiveness of the medical model and deficit notions in the language of learning difficulties and the silence imposed to those with learning difficulties.

Foucault argues that the "language of psychiatry which is a monologue of reason about madness, has been established only on the basis of such a silence" and he goes further by saying that he has not tried to "write the history of that language, but rather the archaeology of that silence" (Foucault, 2008, p.xii). This statement intrigues me, because while I have been discerning how the current language of learning difficulties has been built, it becomes obvious that an equivalent archaeology of the silence of people with learning difficulties is yet to be fully written. In this sense, I take this investigation as my small part in this task.

By analogy, to some extent, people with learning difficulties have been the societal successors of the madmen, and learning difficulties the contemporary madness. On the other hand, the professionals and professional bodies in the field of special needs may represent the voices of this new "man of reason". This analogy is only possible because of an odd resonance of Foucault's observations with the current refutations of a disempowering language of learning difficulties in opposition to a necessary enabling discourse. Some may take this analogy as unrelated comparison, but I consider that it resonates "age-old notions about affliction, about stupidity, about what it is to be mad or bad are at the root of ideas about specialness and what to do with people who are special" (Thomas and Loxley, 2007, p.24). This indicates that the old dialectic is somehow still ubiquitously present in the

contemporary thought and language. Foucault (2008) describes the relation between reason madness drawing a long trajectory. He starts with the time when the insane were put in a boat and sent outside the limits of the city (Foucault, 2008, p.6). Then passing by the seventeenth century with its large houses of confinement (p.35) and the foundation of the general hospital in Paris (p.36) he revisits the eighteenth century's continuity of houses of confinement and the remarkable epidemic infection of 1780 caused by poor sanitary conditions of the hospital (p.194), which created an imaginary stigma of disease upon unreason. He argues that it was in this "realm of the fantastic and not within the rigor of medical thought that unreason joins disease" (p.195). A similar trajectory of learning difficulties in our society has been largely described.

According to Foucault, "men confine their neighbours, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness" (2008, preface), this mercilessness has been also a characteristic of the language of special educational needs throughout our history, especially the unofficial labels, which had a profound and dramatic impact on people with special needs (Corbett, 1996, p.9). Although this a historical situation, currently there are still barriers to be broken in the language of special needs, as Hart (1996, p.x) points out

> this language shapes and constrains our thinking, limiting our sense of the
> scope available to us for positive intervention to a narrowly circumscribed set of
> possibilities. It has discouraged mainstream teachers from using their
> knowledge, expertise and experience as fully and powerfully as they might in
> pursuing concerns about children's learning.

She explains that the reason for this is partly because the language of special needs and special education forcibly induces to the maintenance of the paradigm that "something additional to or different from what is generally available to all within mainstream education is needed in order for some children to learn more successfully" (Hart, 1996, p.x). This is a plausible argument as the field of special education has somehow evolved from providing a remedial education, which has to be provided by specialised professionals only, to notions of individual needs that formerly were not part of the mainstream education concerns and to become so, they have been classified as special, different.

I have reviewed some literature on the language of special needs (and in doing so ultimately I have been revisiting the silence of those individuals who have been historically made voiceless. Although, in some moments, the labels may reflect the preference of self-advocacy movements (i.e. as the language chosen for this thesis) the non-disabled talking about the disabled people is dominant. This prevalence of one voice over the other, in other words, the silence of the latter, sends us back to my analogy of Foucault and the reason's subjugation of non-reason (Foucault, 2008, preface, p.xii), if we take reason analogically as

the non-disabled and in the same line of thought, the non-reason would represent the disabled.

By sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), it is possible to start from the Deficiency Acts of 1913 and 1927 – which intended to determining the lives of mental defectives and their families in considerable detail and maintaining segregation and control (Brigham et al., 2005, p.33) – to visualise how labels such as 'feeble-minded' and moral 'imbecile' had worked as historical gags for those carrying those labels and their families. Their voices were taken as irrelevant by the categorisation within which they were trapped and monitored. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that during this period some families carried out "pioneering efforts in bringing about change and improving the lives of their children with learning difficulties" (Brigham et al., 2005, p.33).

Although the above was not the beginning of the story, I regard it as the starting point of a journey towards an empowering language that reflects an intention to be inclusive and libertarian. Rolph et al. (2005, p.25) suggest that the progression from labels such as 'mental defective', 'idiot' and 'imbecile' to the label 'mental subnormality', although intended to be liberalising, was still a 'monologue of reason' because the change was determined by legislation that is the 1959 Mental Health Act. The shift to the label learning difficulties may not reveal a priori an advance or improvement in people's lives, however the major mark in this modification of labels is the end of an era marked by a "broken dialogue" (Foucault), in which one talks of and about the others who remain not entitled to have a voice to answer back. The fact that this label was influenced by disability rights and by self-advocacy movements such as People First (2005, p.25) encompasses the first remarkable answering back of those with learning difficulties, putting them within the debate, moreover making them participants of the dialogue about themselves. In order to understand the movements that have begun to break the silence and to open up a dialogue including people with learning difficulties and their families, I have drawn a brief retrospective of the self-advocacy movement presented in the next section.

The archaeology of a silence: the emerging voices of self-advocacy

Goodley and Ramcharan (2005, p.150) state that:

> after a substantial history of silence people labelled as having learning difficulties have in the last 30 years made substantial moves to have their voices heard. To reclaim their lives and to take charge of their own destiny and identity (, p.150)

Further Goodley (2001, p.211) also argues that, "disability is a societal and political concern and, hence, so is 'learning difficulties'. Moreover, a turn to impairment as a social and political phenomenon necessitates on inclusion of 'learning difficulties'".

The notions of normality/abnormality have been historically analysed through a variety of lens, such as medical sociology (Parsons, 1951), labelling theory (Becker, 1963), radical sociology (Durkheim, 1964), psychology (Freud, 1965), and from the lens of who was labelled as abnormal. Caplan (1995) questions who has the power to decide that who gets labelled and argues that "if we allow others to decide whether or not we are normal, we lose the power to define, to judge, and often, to respect ourselves" (p.1). According to Brodin and Lindstrand (2007 p.134) "what is normal in one society and in one specific situation can be viewed as abnormal or wrong in another". Additionally, the segmentation of the human condition promotes the categorization of individuals into segments, classes, groups. It seems to me that the more we create spaces for segregation the more we create opportunities for categories, norms and consequently, deviation of them. Brodin and Lindstrand (2007 p.134) contribute to this debate arguing, "those who view themselves as normal draw the borderlines for the rest of the population. The question of who decides what is normal and what lies within these curves can, however, be discussed". They also advocate that, "a first step toward a school for all must be to stop talking about normality and deviations" and to start emphasizing diversity and differences as "positive and useful" (p.144).

My research has been concerned with conceptualisations that inform stigma and stereotypes and with the oversimplification of the kind of dichotomy that ignores the complexity of human multiplicity/diversity as if it could be put into two simple categories: the normal and the abnormal. As Goffman (1990, p.36) comments:

> For the observer this is a wonderful, though sometimes disastrous, convenience. Instead of having to maintain a different pattern of expectation and responsive treatment for each slightly different performer and performance, he can place the situation in a broad category around which it is easy for him to mobilize his past experience and stereotypical thinking.

The position I adopt

In previous sections, I told segments of my personal story to explain why I started this chapter identifying myself as a socially disabled or able-disabled sister. Although I do not have any major impairment in the sense of a body-related deviation from the normal type (Thomas, 1999, p.124), on many occasions I have experienced the "disabling effects of difference (Manners and Carruthers, 2006, p.207). I have often found myself in a "disabled position in society" (Manners and Carruthers, 2006, p.208) together with my brother José,

also being silenced or limited by an existing language incapable of explicating who José was or the meaning of his 'difference'. My brother was my most regular companion in life for years and it is probably from this experience that the primary rationale for my search for more enabling definitions and person-valuing vocabulary of learning difficulties has emerged.

Franklin (1987, p.1) argues that "of the great diversity of human exceptionalities, none is perhaps more paradoxical than learning disabilities". The real problem, however, does not seem to be the paradoxes but rather the tendency to solve those paradoxes by failing to recognise this particular human 'exceptionality'. Frequently people with learning difficulties are defined and labelled in ways that devalue and objectify them (Inclusion International, 2006, p.3), for this reason, it is crucial to understand the role played by language – especially the labels – in the dis/en-ablement and ex/inclusion processes. It is also necessary to take forward the developments of new terminologies which do not devalue, segregate or discriminate against people, a type of language that explicates human experience in first-person, similar to what Derrida (2007) declares to be Foucault's desire in terms of "madness talking about itself. That is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry on madness" (Derrida and Bass, 2007p.39).

In this vein, supporters of social justice and human rights tend to advocate definitions of learning difficulties which represent – or at least include – the views of self-advocacy movements, because they "stand in direct opposition to prejudiced discourse" (Goodley, 1997, p.377). In this section, the definition of learning difficulties is analysed through the evolution of the discourses in parallel to the changes in legislation and to relevant publications, which might have affected to some extent the language, and possibly the interventions. **Error! Reference source not found.** Table 2-2 provides a visual overview of the developments in the twentieth Century including the changing labels, while Table 2-3 shows the ongoing evolution in the last decade, where the labels haven't changed significantly. Both tables are drawn from the review of the literature.

	Legislation and National Events	Changing Labels
1900	1908 Report of Royal Commission on care and control of the Feeble-Minded	Use of terms 'idiot', 'imbecile', 'feeble-minded' and 'moral imbecile' in Mental Deficiency Act 1913
1910	1913 Mental Deficiency Act 1914 Elementary Education Act	
1920	1924 Wood Committee appointed 1927 Mental Deficiency (Amendment) Act	'Mental defective' and 'mental deficiency' most common general terms 1900-c. 1950 'moral defective' replaced 'moral imbecile' in 1927 Mental Deficiency Act
1930	1930s Campaign for Voluntary Sterilisation	
1940	1944 Education Act 1948 NHS took over hospital services	
1950	1953-9 Royal Commission on Mental Health 1959 Mental Health Act	Use of term 'sub-normal' started in USA 'Backward' came into vogue as a descriptive term
1960		1959 Mental Health Act used terms 'subnormal' and 'severely subnormal'
1970	1970 Education Act made education universal 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act	'The mentally Handicapped' came into use 1972 BILD formed as Institute of Mental Subnormality
1980	1981 Education Act laid down that children should be educated in mainstream schools classes wherever possible 1988 Disabled Persons (Services Consultations and Representation) Act	1985 'People with Learning difficulties' adopted by self advocacy group and sympathisers
1990	1990 National Health Service and Community Care Act 1995 Disability Discrimination Act	c1990 Department of Health officially adopted term 'people with learning disabilities'

Table 2-2: Learning Difficulties in Britain Part 1

	Legislation, Relevant publications and National Events	Changing Labels
2001	Valuing people a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century (Department of Health, 2007) Nothing about us without us: the Service Users Advisory Group report (Department of Health, 2001) Special Educational Needs and Disability Act	Learning disabled children People with learning difficulties Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabled pupils used
2005	Disability Discrimination Act (2005) Improving the life chances of disabled people – Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report (2004)	Disabled person/people People with Disabilities also used
2006	Disabled Persons (Independent Living) Bill DRC's revised Definition of disability Equality Act FE Reform White Paper Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances The Disability Equality Duty (DED)	Disabled person/people
2007	The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) closed and its duty was transferred to the new Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services The children's plan: building brighter futures	Disabled people
2008	Framework for a fairer future - the Equality Bill	Disabled child
2009	Further Government response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights report: a life like any other? human rights of adults with learning disabilities (2008)	People with learning disabilities
2010	The Equality Bill became an Act, the Equality Act 2010 "The Equality Act 2010 provides a new cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all; to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation; and to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society" (Government Equalities Office Website, 2010).	Disabled person still in use Person who has a disability

Table 2-3: Learning Difficulties in Britain Part 2

In response to the literature my position is that people with learning disabilities face major challenges due to a medicalised view of their individual development and communication circumstances. Based on this view, their abilities are under-valued or even disregarded, even in matters that concern their own interests. The medicalised view remains widespread causing a general misconception of learning difficulties, moreover, a misconception about the humanity and individuality of those who are labeled as so. Therefore, I argue that

educational researchers need to develop their abilities to listen to people's unusual ways of voicing their views or feelings, to become "able-equipped" to be enabling listeners/readers/observers/tellers/re-tellers/interlocutors, rather than disabling inquisitors. In this vein, I have wanted to create enabling situations to listen to my participants' voice, to learn from them and to by this be able to turn up their volume (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007), by disseminating my learning experience.

Context matters: the relationship with representations of dis/ability

A central aim of my research is to examine participants' perceptions of themselves and of their peers in relation to their educational experience through the language they use. Therefore, language is a key issue in this study, which demands an effort to clarify the terminology used, that is, the terminology of a continuum of inclusion/exclusion. First though, I examine the arguments in the literature that context (in terms of inclusion/exclusion) matters.

There are varied concepts of education and in learning, and the processes involved in them, making important to be transparent about which concepts and principles drive this investigation. My personal experiences as a student have convinced me of the truth of Collins, Harkin and Nind's (2002, p.1) assertion that learning is a "process that is active and interactive, set within the context of warm and nurturing relationships and rich in communication". Subsequently, my personal engagement as an educator is strongly marked by a discordance with the postulates of behaviourist theories, and all approaches that can be regarded as "banking education" (Freire, 1970b). Additionally, working as a primary school teacher and later as a sort of 'teacher of teachers' allowed me to develop my praxis as an "empowering set of practices, which stress the learner as a critical investigator, rather than the passive recipient of knowledge" (Collins et al., 2002, p.4). In short, my perception of an educative process is the one that encourages significant learning through the legitimating of individual agency, both of learners and teachers, encouraging active collaborative construction of knowledge and development of meanings, surrounded by an environment of social interactions, which promote critical consciousness, social justice, equality and freedom. In my personal perspective, genuine education is essentially inclusive that is for all.

The legacy of special education: A less inclusive past

One major issue when researching past and present special education is that a vast majority of the information available is a result of a practice of ignoring the voices of those who are/were in special schools. In general terms, much of the research on disability, including

disabled children, has ignored the views and experiences of disabled people themselves. […] Histories of segregated schooling are, for the most part, the official histories of non-disabled people and professionals, documenting such things as changing numbers, and types of schools and official rationales for changing policies" (Cook et al., 2001, p.104).

Thomas & Loxley (2007, p.23) recount the less inclusive past in UK education noting that the first special school was established in the eighteenth century, while the great expansion of special education took place in the beginning of the twentieth century, when "there was a jump in the special school population" (p.23). This increase was a result of ideas related to a new worldview that emerged by the end of the nineteenth century, which

> gave strength to the notion that not simply those with conspicuous disabilities – the blind and the deaf – should be educated separately, but that those who where, more prosaically, just different could and should be educated separately, for their own benefit and for the benefit of the majority (Thomas and Loxley, 2007, p.23).

According to Oswin (1971, p.47), this separate education of handicapped children in the nineteenth century was largely pioneered by voluntary societies, whose work was influenced by the educational theories of Itard (1828) and Seguin (1846), and later by Montessori (1909).

Thomas and Loxley (2007) reflect that in early twentieth century Great Britain, there was an expectation that in the council schools set up in 1904, there should be no difficulties imposed on the majority of children by those who were 'imbeciles' or 'unworthy'. They argue that those ideas originated from the increasing scientism based on the "reification of science's methods"; together with Darwinism's growing respectability due to its surpassing of religious criticisms, which in turn gave credence to beliefs in biological dogmas such the eugenics of Francis Galton (1989) and some resulting ideas as those of Karl Pearson – Galton's follower – that intelligence was a hereditary gift based on the idea that "good stocks breed good stock" and that "it is the stock itself which makes its home environment, the education is of small service, unless it be applied to an intelligent race of men" (Pearson, 1903, p.206).

Thomas and Loxley (2006, p.36) further argue that it was this social Darwinist thinking combined with a fondness for psychometrics – which was being developed mainly by Binet – that led to the psychologist Cyril Burt's fraud in presenting fabricated evidence about the heritability of intelligence from non-existent identical twin studies. However, the fraud was only alleged after Burt's death, so while he worked as the first psychologist to London, Burt published his ideas about the genetics of intelligence. Supported by his growing reputation, those ideas gave "great stimulus to a segregative education system based on the

categorization of the child" (Thomas and Loxley, 2007, p.33). After the disastrous results of the Second World War together with the evidence available in the psychology literature the arguable tenets of the eugenics movement started to lose its adepts. However, Thomas and Loxley (Thomas and Loxley, 2007, p.36) maintain that "the momentum gathered by the eugenic cause has enabled the arguments to be put again and again through this century" (Thomas and Loxley, 2007, p.36) .

The achievements of inclusive education: is it a more inclusive present?

According to Oswin (1971, p.48), although in its origins special education played a crucial role in preventing a greater number of children from being in long-stay hospitals, the persistence of such a segregative approach to education became increasingly questionable. The role of special schools in relation to the role of mainstream schools present similarities to the "total institutions" (Goffman, 1961) where they fit at least one of the four main aspects described by Goffman - the enforcement of activities that are brought together into a single rational process supposedly intended to accomplish the official objectives of the institution. Special schools showed some other likeness to total institutions in the relations of power. Goffman states that the inmate in the total institutions "is considered to be of insufficient ritual status to be given even minor greetings, let alone listened to" (p.45), which resonates with Cook's (2001, p.117) discussion of insider voices from segregative schooling, that "it is a subjugation in a context of unequal power relations between disabled and non-disabled people". (This again echoes my earlier analogy with Foucault (2008, preface, p.xii) and the reason's subjugation of non-reason.

One major critique of special education has been about the model of provision that consists of the segregation of pupils with special needs, rather than on special educational practices or pedagogies. Barton (2003, p.59) argues that this is because "special education entails a discourse of exclusion and this is seen as a particularly offensive aspect of such provision". Something less offensive needed to take its place.

Booth (2003, p.253) defines inclusion in education based on two interrelated processes which he describes as "the process increasing the participation of learners in and the reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of neighbourhood mainstream centres of learning". Booth points out the need to keep the two processes, inclusion and exclusion, in mind when discussing inclusive education. The development of more inclusive schools thus has parallels with the reduction in less inclusive schools, but the literature also tells of transformation in the whole education system. (Daniels and Garner, 1999 p.15), for example, maintain that, "inclusive education is not a reform of special education. It is the convergence of the need to restructure the public education system, to meet the needs of a changing society, and the adoption of the separate special education".

Authors such as (e.g. Florian, 2005, Topping and Maloney, 2005b, van Kraayenoord, 2007) argue that inclusion is a theme in the educational agenda all around the world. For (e.g. Thomas and Vaughan, 2004, Armstrong and Barton, 1999) it has its roots in the human rights movement. This perception of inclusion is shared largely among most of the contemporary scholars. However, at the same time that "inclusive education has become part of the discussion on developments in education at an international level" (Ballard, 1999 p.1) there are different perceptions and understandings of what inclusion is. Additionally, as Daniels and Garner (1999) remind us, these are different conceptualisations globally, lead to different patterns of influences and developments and different discourses becoming dominant. For this reason, it is important to understand which conceptions and conceptualisations of inclusion underpin this study.

According to Benjamin et al. (2003, p.547), their study of two schools with a stated commitment to work towards inclusion "revealed the processes of inclusion and exclusion to be complex ones, renegotiated moment-by-moment by pupils and teachers". Therefore, this thesis focuses on identifying those moments of inclusion and exclusion through the stories told by the learners to ultimately relate their perceptions of themselves and peers to their experiences of inclusion and exclusion, also bearing in mind that at times a moment of inclusion for a child can be a moment of exclusion for another one simultaneously (Benjamin et al., 2003, p.554). If schools are more inclusive, or have more moments of inclusion, what is meant by inclusive? It is necessary to elicit the major features of the conceptualisation of inclusive education for this study. This includes the idea that "the pursuit of 'Education for All' will entail engaging with questions of social justice, equity and participatory democracy" (Barton, 2003, p.57) making it different to one of inclusion's major predecessor ideas, integration.

In the emergence of a discourse of inclusion, other terms such as integration and mainstreaming refer to ideas related to practices involving children with special needs. Some authors (e.g. Lee et al., 1996, Clough and Corbett, 2000) acknowledge the contribution of integrative initiatives to the inclusion movement even before the term 'integration' was introduced in the UK in the Warnock Report in 1978 (DES,, 1978). Clough and Corbett (2000) acknowledges the contribution of scholars like Mittler (1973) and Wedell (1975) to integration before the term 'special needs' appeared, Similarly, Thomas and Vaughan (2004 p.2) argue that although "there are significant differences between inclusion and the ideas that have preceded it: mainstreaming and integration", inclusion means much more than those earlier ideas. They recognise that it is equally true that "inclusion has its roots deep in the integration/mainstreaming movement" (2004 p.2). Therefore, it is of some usefulness to understand the ideas behind integration.

The term 'integration' is analysed by some authors in opposition to segregation, that is, a bringing together rather than a separating out. However, Thomas *et al.* (2005 p. 22) also note that "segregation and exclusion are currently thought of as somewhat different processes: segregation is usually associated with children with learning difficulties, sensory impairments or physical disabilities, whereas exclusion is usually of children whose behaviour is found difficult". This, however, is a historical legacy, in that children with impairments were thought of as being placed in special schools for their own benefit and therefore not as excluded as such. In contrast, children with behavioural difficulties were excluded more for the benefit of other children whose learning opportunities were damaged by their presence. Integration and segregation focus on the child and their location; while inclusion and exclusion focus on the school's ability to respond to diversity among pupils. The discourse of inclusion "shifts the focus onto the school rather than the child when thinking about excluded pupils" (Thomas et al., 2005 p.22).

The discourse of integration is largely associated with the model of "defect or within-child" causes of difficulties in coping in the mainstream (Mittler, 2000 p.3), based on the postulation that the genesis of learning difficulties lies in the child. This assumption leads to approaches that aim to promote "adjustment", which locate the "maladjustment" (Kolvin, 1981) within the child and place the onus for change on the child rather than the education system or school. The challenge to "adjust" is put onto the child who must adapt and accommodate to an unchanged mainstream and a largely undifferentiated curriculum. Similarly, Culham and Nind (2003) argue, integration shares some rationale with the ideas of normalisation, which is also about fitting in.

Armstrong and Barton (1999 p. 214) argue that the basic distinction between integration and inclusion lies in a fundamental distinction between their 'rationality', contrasting integration and inclusion based on the notion of 'right'. They argue that
integration is based on a particular kind of 'rationality', referring to the 'right' of disabled children to attend their local schools provided the 'rights' of others are not threatened (1981 Educational Act). It is contingent, provisional, dependent upon the 'efficient use of the resources'. Inclusive education is concerned with the human right for all children to attend local school (Armstrong and Barton, 1999, p.8).

According to Armstrong et al. (2000 p.1) "inclusive education is not an end in itself. Nor ultimately is the fundamental issue that of disabled people. In educational terms it is about the value and well-being of 'all' pupils". In broader terms the move towards inclusions is about notions of rights, participation and social justice. (Barton, 2003, p.59) makes this argument:

Inclusive education is part of a human rights approach to social relations and conditions. The intentions and values involved relate to a vision of the whole society of which education is part. Issues of social justice, equity and choice are central to the demands for inclusive education. Disablist assumptions and practices need to be identified and challenged in order to promote positive views of others.

However, despite (apparent) international consensus in the urge for inclusion (e.g. UNESCO,Unesco, 1994) and the emerging development of strategies to make the educational shift (e.g. EFA-UNESCO, 2004), there are few examples across the world of a radical change in the school system in order to meet the needs of all learners. In some countries, such as Sweden in the 1960s, "institutions and special hospitals were closed, and children and young people stayed in their family homes and went to regular schools" (Brodin and Lindstrand, (2007 p.133). In the UK change has been more gradual and more local, making more inclusive schools about changes in "children's micro-cultural world" (Benjamin et al., 2003, p.544).

Critiques and warnings about moves to inclusion have emerged from both inside and outside of the inclusionist advocacies. Daniels and Garner (1999 p. 49) have argued that there is "a real danger that inclusion will become the prison that confines inquiry and practice, rather than the key that releases them. If a dialogue of 'inclusions' does not take place, inclusion may become an empty slogan, reduced, perhaps, to a basic concern with 'place'". This warning presupposes that there is not a unique model of inclusive practice, moreover, that the range of practices is not definite or complete. These "inclusions" are different processes towards similar or cohesive goals, through educational practices that can be more or less coherent, more or less contradictory. The multiplicity of 'truths' and 'realities' need to be acknowledged Amongst the process of changing/shifting socially constructed paradigms is changing language. Wilson (2000 p.818) points out:

> such vagueness [in the use of terminology] may lead to abuse, because it leaves it open to us to import our own prejudices and values into terminology. This has a direct effect upon practice, not only by 'negative stereotyping'—that is only the most obvious case—but by a revision of our basic conceptual structures that may have very profound, if unseen, results. What we do with words like 'Disability', 'disadvantage', 'poverty', 'socialist', 'discrimination' and many others—the interpretation we (consciously or tacitly) put upon them— guides our thought and behaviour (and our research) in many different ways.

The above statement calls for a kind of active reflexivity which anchors an intentional deconstruction of old concepts, such as those related to success and failure for example.

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Brodin and Lindstrand (2007 p.144) argue that we may need to start thinking about the models for explaining children's problems, and thereby to move towards a new, more radical approach. For this reason this study is concerned with the labelling of children and young people, as well as with the labels they use amongst themselves. If "inclusive education, above all else, is about fostering a learning community which treats individuals with dignity and respect and it is about celebrating difference" (Clough and Corbett, 2000, p73), then we must encourage the deconstruction of stereotyped language which encompasses stigma and discrimination.

Concluding remarks

I have engaged with the literature partly to help establish the criteria applied in the study to distinguish more inclusive from less inclusive settings. Inclusion goes beyond concepts of time and place. However, for analytical purposes, the conception of 'more inclusive' is oversimplified and reduced to two single aspects: (1) the presence of a significant number of students recognised as having special educational needs together with students without such categorisation in a diverse environment, and (2) the predominance of moments of inclusion over moments of exclusion. Schools that fail to meet at least one of those criteria classify in this study as less inclusive ones. Which includes special schools because they fail the diversity criteria and some mainstream schools where the moments of exclusion are still substantial, or the school population is not representative of a diverse community because of the absence of students with special needs. I agree that "inclusion should mean more than the mere physical presence of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools" (2005a p.5), however, for this study, the mere placement of a child in a certain type of school may affect their perceptions of self and others regardless of the pedagogy applied. Therefore, the physical presence here counts as a factor or component that determines the degree of inclusiveness.

As Rorty (1989, p.8) points out:

> the trouble with arguments against the use of a familiar and time-honoured vocabulary is that they are expected to be phrased in that very vocabulary. They are expected to show that central elements are 'inconsistent in their own terms' or that they 'deconstruct themselves'. But that can never be shown" (italics in the original). In the arena of the inclusive education the issues related to terminology are central and determinant. The use of "time-honoured vocabulary" is no longer unarguably the case when this vocabulary renders traditional ideas that are developing, changing and creating new developments.

The above review of the literature, which I claim to have carried out as a dialogical act, was also a creative act in essence, because it has contributed to a significant part of my research journey. This was never a linear route, nor a short way to reach the planned destination. However, with every one of its twists and setbacks, the process of addressing the literature with my questions, and reflecting on the answers available, and then answering back to them with my writings, has given this thesis a consistency that I could not have achieved with a more traditional monological approach. I complete this review with the belief that what comes next is sound and relevant; furthermore, it is respectful to my participants' contributions, it is also a way to similarly to Lather (1988) engage in the feminist efforts "to empower through empirical research designs which maximize a dialogic, dialectically educative encounter between researcher and researched" – which are my foremost and ultimate concerns.

Chapter 3: Designing the methodology: the emergence of the dialogical inquiry

> *Researching life stories is very much a challenge to taken-for-granted orthodoxies of social scientific research. In telling stories we want to suggest that researchers may have to leave their well-used methodological and analytical tools behind.*
>
> *(Goodley et al, 2006, p. 177)*

Introduction: the re-encounter with Freire and the inquiry design

In Chapter One, I described a series of encounters between my different selves during the process of looking for my voice in this research, and those encounters resulted in the four episodes presented in that chapter. The chapter and episodes embrace my personal journey on my way to become a research student, which is told by my distinct emerging voices and which articulates the main pillars on which my research is founded, that is, the research aims and consequent questions. The pursuit of the research aims is the basis of my literature review, which I claim to be the beginning of a dialogue. Although "the term 'dialogic' is now widely applied to studies of educational dialogue in a way that implies that this is a specialist technical term, an impression frequently reinforced with supporting references to the work of Russian philosopher, Michael Bakhtin" (Wegerif, 2008, p.348), I prefer the Freirean approach to the term which I discuss next.

In keeping with previous chapters, this methodology chapter continues and furthers that initiated dialogue, by presenting my approach to methodology as a "creative act" as argued by Clough and Nutbrown (2007, p.x). They maintain that "we must patiently learn the tools of the trade, which materials are fit for which purpose and how best assemble structures". This argument has encouraged me to present how I have been designing my methodological approach and to provide justifications for my decisions in the search for what Clough names the "methodology of ourselves" (2007, p.xi). My methodology has its roots deep in the principles of the libertarian education proposed by Freire (1967). Throughout his theory of the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (1970b) – which consists of "the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (p.35) – he advocates that the liberation of the oppressed can only occur by conscientização[8] . He describes an empowering process aimed

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[8] The term *conscientização* refers to the act of realising the social, political, and economic context with their injustices and consequently taking action against the oppressive components of that given reality. *Conscientização* refers to learning as reflection and action simultaneously.

not at helping the oppressed to be freed from oppression but at enabling them to free themselves.

The main premise of this pedagogy is dialogue, which has been the main premise of my methodological concerns as well. Therefore, in conjunction with the idea that storytelling could be a natural form in which learners would express their perceptions and that life story would then be in the heart of my research, there has always been the awareness that I needed to propose a methodology that would enable me to capture those stories through dialogue. For this reason, open-ended interviews and the notion of interview as conversation have been my preferred methods of inquiry from the very beginning. However, the process of reviewing the literature raised some questions regarding ethical and methodological issues related to researching children and young people (e.g. Christensen, 2004, Fraser, 2004, Heath, 2009) with/without learning difficulties (e.g. Booth and Booth, 1996, Clough and Barton, 1998, Sheehy et al., 2005), and also in researching more/less inclusive cultures (Nind et al., 2004).

Those issues became the methodological challenges, which I needed to be aware of and to be prepared to face and make efforts to meet. That was the starting point of my methodological quest process. Another crucial moment in this process was the decision to put the research questions in the centre of the methodology. The next sections intrinsically explore those questions as I present my proposal for a methodological design intended to address them.

The dialogical inquiry: an alternative to the banking approach

The central foundation of my approach to the inquiry resonates with a two-folded principle that researchers must see "children primarily as fellow human beings" (Christensen, 2004, p.165) and that no educational act which is authentically "liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates" (Freire, 1970b, p.36). It is this fundamental principle that is incorporated in all my efforts to understand and apply methods that take this premise into account. In addition, as Griffiths (1998, p.38) states, "research can be on/for/with human beings, and the categories 'on', 'for' and 'with' are ethical categories". As she argues, ethics have methodological implications especially where the research is explicitly intended to improve social justice. As a person who was persuaded by the libertarian ideas of Paulo Freire since late adolescence, I feel totally compelled and motivated to engage in educational research for social justice. In fact, it would be hard for me to imagine another way to engage in any sort of educational endeavour. Having learnt at first hand that "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (Freire, 1970b, p.29) it is natural to

responsibly generalise this principle and design a methodological approach that takes into account the participants agency and also the realisation that those with learning difficulties constitute an oppressed group.

Therefore, my intention is to do research with children with/without learning difficulties rather than on children or on learning difficulties itself. As Freire (1970b, p.29) states:

> to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of fuller humanity. But the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation.

In this sense, it is crucial to critically think about methodology in terms of power and empowerment, collaboration and consultation with participants, reflexivity, and taking responsibility. Taking into account that "a research focus on voice/s emanates from concerns about equity and social justice" (Thomson, 2008, p.6), I realise that that is the case in my research, because, as Freire (1970b) interrogates, "who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressed society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?" (p.27). If we have not found any other reason to give voice to the voiceless, this would suffice because it is the oppressed that better knows about oppression, it is in their experience of oppression that resides the knowledge about it and the answers for questions in regard to liberation/emancipation. However, when doing research with oppressed groups it is crucial to recognise that "their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression" (Freire, 1970b, p.27).

Therefore, developing a research methodology for social justice that presupposes a clear understanding of what social justice is and which principles underpin such agenda in research, is the central concern here. For this purpose I take the ten principles presented by Griffiths (1998) as the basis of my reflections on the paradigm of the research I am developing. The ten principles are applied here as a sort of template or checklist to help me to explain my claim for this research being for social justice. I summarize my 'social justice checklist' that unfolds into brief reflections in relation to this research as follows (Table 3-1).

Social justice principles (Based on Griffiths, 1998, pp.95-97)	The present research characteristics
Improvement	The effort to understand children's views is aimed at improving the ways schools (and the community) interact with differences to encourage human solidarity instead of alienation or exclusion
Knowledge and learning	The ultimate objective of this research is to learn about methods of capturing a wider range of voices through dialogue.
Radical change of any of the beliefs and values is possible	This has been a challenging journey full of unexpected events that reinforced my conviction that I need to question everything, including my assumptions.
Collaboration and consultation with the immediate research community	This principle is the foremost aim and the biggest challenge of a research committed to facilitate a dialogical encounters.
Openness to a wider community	I am convinced that the research has benefited from other perspectives as well as from the participants.
Openness to political groupings and perspectives	Although the research is primarily focused on schools, the views from different groups added value to the study.
Reflexivity about own position and interests	I have voiced my concerns and values from the very beginning, plus my personal perspective on some of the themes and on research as a process itself. My position is explicit throughout this thesis.
Reflexivity about own understanding and values	Due to my cultural and educational background, this reflexivity becomes a natural consequence. Studying a different culture demands constant self-questioning and self-re-shaping of ideas and "truths"
Perfection in research is not to be found	I have already learned this lesson. It has not been a straightforward experience but a continuous learning from mistakes and from naivety.
Taking responsibility as part of the wider educational community	The ultimate aim of this research is to make a contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of educational research. It is also to take part in the collaborative effort to make education for all a continually humanizing reality.

Table 3-1: Principles of Social Justice and present research's core values

Reflecting on the epistemological and methodological implications of this research, I realise that my recent empathy for social justice is interconnected with my long-established commitment to the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (Freire, 1970b), which is the core basis of my methodological choices.

The first Freirean argument that led me to re-think my approach to methodology is the duality that the oppressed suffer. According to Freire (1970b, p.30) "the oppressed suffer from a duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically". Although for children with learning difficulties this realisation may not be as articulated as in other categories of oppressed, I believe that some of them experience this duality to some extent. Freire argues that the oppressed are simultaneously themselves (self) and the oppressed consciousness, which they have internalized. They then have to choose "between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account" (p.30). Where the oppressed are children with learning difficulties, it is hard to tell how much they actually have the choice between speaking out and being silent, because as is widely known, historically people with learning difficulties have been silenced without choice. Having been made voiceless they also have been made powerless. Even inside the disability movement(s), where there have been remarkable advances in promoting the improvement of the lives of disabled people, people with learning difficulties form a sub-group that is more voiceless than the greater group. This may be due to the characteristics of learning difficulties and their effect on people's autonomy and even consciousness/awareness. In my interpretation of this, I do not divorce my views from the libertarian ideas of Freire, rather the opposite is true as I discover that one of his principles may serve people with learning difficulties as well as it serves anyone. This principle is solidarity. According to Freire (p.31):

> solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture. True solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them those 'beings for another'. The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor – when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love.

In a similar vein, Thomson (2008, p.7) argues that "one response to the problems arising from doing research on marginalized and vulnerable groups has been for researchers to consider how they can work with research participants, rather than on them". This, Nind (2008, p.5) also argues is "one of the first methodological decisions to be made" when the research involves people with learning/ communication difficulties. Children are considered part of one of those vulnerable groups and children with learning difficulties are part of both the vulnerable and marginalized ones. Taking this into account, doing research with children with learning difficulties demands a conscious effort to respond to those issues in the most just and most empowering manner possible. Furthermore, "it is evident that while seeking to

value the experiences of people with learning difficulties, traditional qualitative research is likely to encompass substantial barriers between the powerful researcher and the less powerful researched" (Nind, 2008, p.4). Even back in the 1970s the sociological trend was to promote "'cooperative experiential inquiry' with research 'subjects' becoming co-researchers" (Nind, 2008, p.5), supporting a position which echoes that ideal. Christensen (2004, p.166) draws attention to three themes about conducting research in which children participate. Firstly, she argues that:

> key aspects of the research process are understood as part of a dialogue. Ethnographic field illustrations are used to suggest ways in which a dialogical research process can be accomplished through entering into what elsewhere I have called children's 'cultures of communications'

The second theme that according to her must be considered, is the processes of working through notions of who we (researcher and participants) are to each other. The third theme is that notions of power as inherent to research highlight that research is a practice that is part of social life rather than an external contemplation of it. "This requires that the researcher pay attention to broader issues of social and cultural life that are, or can be, sensitive to the issue of power" (Christensen, 2004, p.166).

Therefore, these three themes reinforce some of the methodological principles that underpin this study, such as (1) a search for a dialogical method of inquiry, which entails all voices involved being listened to; (2) the dialogical inquiry being a reflective process which embraces the praxis of naming the world collaboratively; and (3) the pursuit of methods that could enable a more balanced relation of power between researcher-researched. Moreover, in my approach, like Christensen (2004, p.167) I move "from seeing power as residing in people and social positions towards viewing power as embedded in the process".

The 'contradictions'[9] that reside in the unbalanced power between oppressed and oppressor denounced by Freire are consonant with the conflicting powers between reason and madness, in other words between the man for reason and the madmen, presented by Foucault which I discussed in chapter two where I draw an analogy to perspectives of learning difficulties. In all those historical contradictions, there is a common thread, which remains unchanged: those who have power regulate the lives of those whose power has been impaired. The voiceless groups do not take part in the dialogical task of naming the world. They are at times seen (and treated) as part of the world to be named, due to the

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[9] Freire uses the term contradiction to denote the dialectic of the conflicting forces in society such poverty/welfare; alienation/participation; voice/silence; oppressed/oppressor and so forth.

objectification of human beings into categories that result from an unequal state that "dehumanizes the oppressed" (Freire, 1970b, p.26).

Doing research for social justice is a challenging enterprise, because it means ultimately being committed to promoting change, some of this change comprising radical social transformations that consequently find resistance on those who benefit from or do not see themselves as disadvantaged by the status quo. However, another relevant challenge to be considered when doing research for social justice with children with learning difficulties reside in finding comprehensive methods to reach those children, to invite them to the dialogue, to listen to their voices, to re-present and represent their voices, and through all the above, to promote improvement and change which may benefit them. In order to undertake this challenge, I have revisited my understanding of banking education and having engaged in the research journey hand-in-hand with my metaphorical thinking, it was amazing to re-examine such a powerful metaphor. The central idea in the 'banking' metaphor is that of the student as a passive receptor and the teacher the active investor. I believe that research can resemble the banking education when the research process is like getting money from a cashier or cash machine. Researchers go with their "codes" – such as questionnaires, interview questions, observation checklists and so on – which they use to obtain the available amount of what they request, and leave. In this metaphor, the participants are the cashier and the data gathered through their participation is the money. The customer has a punctual and impersonal relationship with the cashier, based on their capability to provide what they need without demanding any further interaction once the operation is complete.

This revisit to the banking metaphor developed by Freire provides me the reflective tools for the advance of my methodological approach, which I name the dialogical inquiry, and which in a bolder position could well be called the inquiry of the oppressed. The dialogical inquiry that I have been developing is founded on libertarian principles, together with the ideas of emancipatory and participatory research, based on human rights and social justice. In view of this, I introduce the Freirean conception of dialogue which comprises ten basic tenets, which permeate all stages on my proposed dialogical inquiry life cycle. Using Freire (1970b), I summarise in the ten fundamentals of dialogue as follows.

1. The word is the essence of dialogue
2. Praxis means the articulation of reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.
3. Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world (p.69)
4. If one's voice is denied, dialogue is not possible (p.69)
5. Dialogue is an existential necessity (p.69)
6. Dialogue cannot be one naming the world on behalf of another (p.70)

7. Dialogue cannot exist without humility (p.71)
8. Faith in people is an a priori requirement for dialogue (p.71)
9. Dialogue cannot exist without hope (p.72)
10. Dialogue needs critical thinking (p.73)

Freire (1970b, p.68) argues that "as we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word". However, I do not see this statement as a negation of the non-verbal possibilities of dialogue, but rather a matter of metonymy. The essence of dialogue is the partitioning of voices between interlocutors. The verbal voice that is word-based representation usually predominates in the partitioning, but it does not exclude partitioning based on gesture-based or image-based voice, for example. However, it would be naïve to deny that the more verbally articulate voices make the dialogical inquiry easier and more straightforward.

To engage in dialogue with less articulate individuals certainly demands broader ability. Owens (2007, p.304) reminds us that:

> when an informant lacks the necessary articulation to answer in this way then the skills of the interviewer become increasingly important. The interviewer needs to be adaptable and posse a high degree of flexibility and experience to be able to use different tactics to secure meaningful narratives wherever possible. Multiple voices may emerge as a result, but the main voice would, in the case of people lacking verbal articulacy, be that of the author. The alternative would be to deny the existence of people lacking verbal articulacy and suppress their stories.

The solution suggested by Owens is a rhetorical formulation to highlight that because those stories could not be suppressed without denying their very existence, the response for this must be a conscious effort to capture those less articulate voices. The challenges posed by lack of verbal articulacy is not an excuse to perpetuate the existence of the "culture of silence" (Freire, 1970a, p.57) restraining those individuals who have long been left outside the debate concerning their own lives. It is fundamental that the researcher understands the structural relations between the oppressed and the oppressor to understand how silence emerges. "Understanding the 'culture of silence' presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon which gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression, those of the 'culture of silence' and those of the culture which 'has a voice'" (Freire, 1970a, p.57). Nind (2008, p.5) argues that "qualitative research can access the perspectives and experiences of oppressed groups lacking the power to make their voices heard through traditional academic discourse". Therefore, the major concern in terms of a dialogical research which follows a social justice agenda is the issues related to voice,

namely attempts to "find ways to bring previously unheard voices into scholarly and associated professional conversations – 'giving voice to the voiceless'" (Thomson, 2008, p.3).

My conscious effort to realize that project of giving voice is translated into the model of dialogical inquiry that I propose and develop here and that I applied in this study. Nind (2008, p.5) conducted a methodological review asking "how can qualitative researchers conduct research with people with learning/communication difficulties", and presenting an overview of how key questions about emancipatory research have been responded to. She thus provides guidance for conducting research from the initial stage of developing the ethics protocol to issues related to the dissemination of the findings. Based on that methodological review, I was convinced that there was much I could learn and attempt in this arena. I felt comfortable to amalgamate what I had learned so far and to propose my own version of a qualitative inquiry with participants with/without learning difficulties, which hopefully can be useful also for future research.

The dialogical inquiry life cycle

Pragmatically, the dialogical inquiry can be described as a cycle for which the starting point is the researcher's humility and faith in the participants' capability to actively contribute to the research, but above all is the openness to the participants as the basis of the dialogue. The beginning of the dialogue is this openness as an attitude that is a result of a cognizance of our unfinishedness as humans. Freire (1998) beautifully explains this openness toward others as an essential part of the educational practice:

> To live in openness toward others and to have an open-ended curiosity toward life and its challenges is essential to educational practice. To live this openness toward others respectfully and, from time to time, when opportune, critically reflect on this openness ought to be an essential part of the adventure of teaching.

With those basic tools in hand and mind, the researcher is ready to inaugurate a dialogical relationship with their research in which "restlessness, curiosity, and unfinishedness are confirmed as key moments within the ongoing current of history" (Freire, 1998, p.121).

The dialogue consists of a cycle that should develop as a series of encounters where significant conversations take place. The conversations then shape the dialogue, adding content and form to it. The major characteristic of the dialogical inquiry is the series of paired encounters comprising an interview activity followed by a respective consultation activity. For each interview activity carried out a consultation must follow before any other questions are proposed to participants.

The consultation activity is an opportunity to listen to the participants' own analysis and interpretations, their perspectives of what has been said and done so far, and for collaborative sense-making of common issues. However, this is also to be an exploratory activity, where new ways of researching with participants with learning difficulties may emerge. It is also an ongoing data analysis process integrated within the process of collecting data. Analysing while collecting is a dialectical approach to making sense of the perspectives of 'others' with the collaboration of those others, and collecting data while analyzing is part of the same dialectical approach that follows the principle that 'we make the road by walking'. This approach resonates with the principles of grounded theory, crucial to the data analysis process.

It is from the consultation activity that the research leads to the next steps. After each consultation I, the researcher, would immerse in critical reflection on what was to be discarded for a while and what needed to be deepened in the next encounter for the interview activity. It is out of the reflection on the first two encounters that the plan for the following interview would emerge. The reflection process is a key element of the data analysis generating data in the form of field notes, written reflections, insights for future coding and categorizations, and moreover the actual map for the next journey of interviewing. The cycle consists of a series of at least six encounters comprising three interviews and their respective three consultations. An overview of the dialogical inquiry life cycle is shown in figure 3.1.
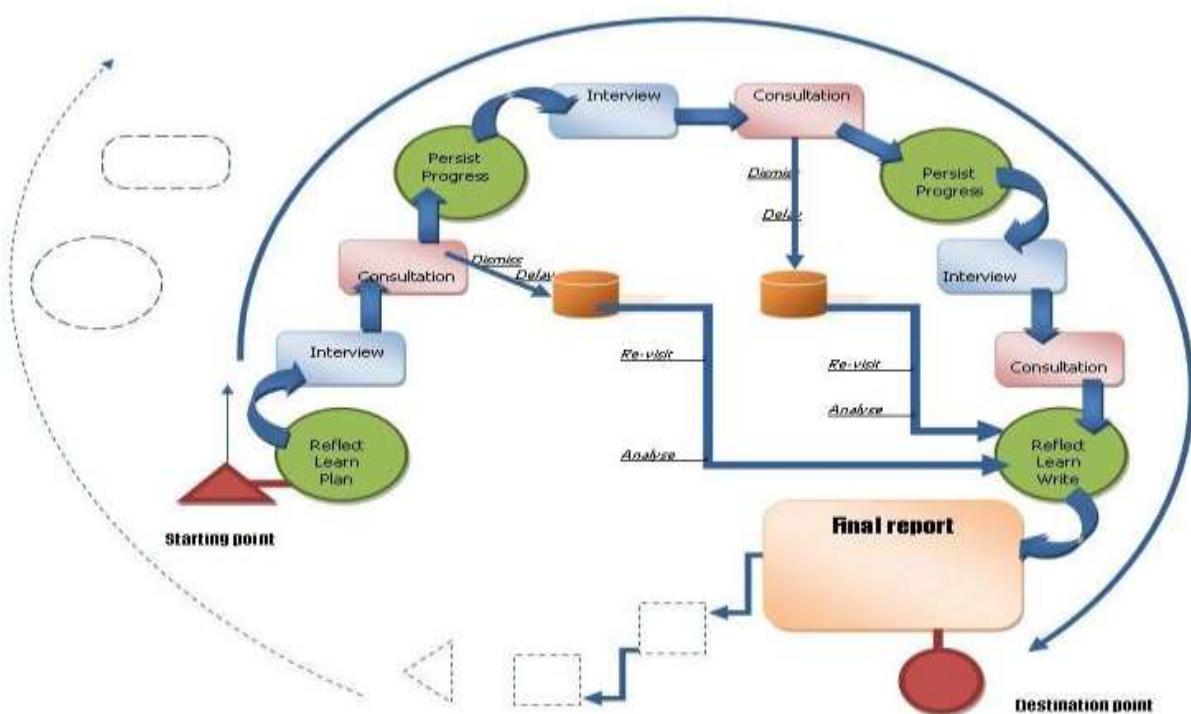
Figure 3-1: The dialogical inquiry life cycle

The cycle comprises a series of action-reflection activities as part of the dialogue between researcher and participants as partakers of an inquisitive conversation in search for meanings. The activities are described as follows:

Starting-point

The starting point is the moment when the researcher has already carried out all the preparations for the data collection activities. After that stage, having written the ethics protocol, contacted the participants, found volunteers or nominations from gatekeepers, gained consent from participants and their carers (in the present case as they are all under 16) the researcher is ready to embrace the task of meeting her interlocutors with an open heart and open mind.

Interview activities

I have chosen the terminology interview activities to embrace the whole spectrum of dialectical actions that would occur during my interaction with the participants. However, as Atkinson (1998, p.22) argues, "it is impossible to anticipate what a life story interview will be like not so much for how to do it but for the power of the experience itself" and "just witnessing, really hearing, understanding, and accepting without judgement, another's life story can be transforming". Therefore, it is with this spirit of openness to the other and disposition to listen without judgement that the interview activities were carried out. Although in this study I did not conduct life story interviews as such, I believed that I must observe the principles regardless of the extent of the life story fragment that each participant would be sharing during my encounters with them.

Consultation activities

The principles of life story interview are also the framework of the consultation. Although I am aware that "doubts about the possibility of people with learning difficulties being involved in data analysis and generation of theory have been widely expressed" (Nind, 2008, p.15), I was determined to challenge those doubts and invest time with the participants in a consultation process. The consultation consists of an attempt to include some elements of participatory research in the data analysis as well as to capture the participants' perceptions, understandings, interpretations, translations, and perspectives. These consultation activities can be a key moment not only for the research topic itself, but as critical reflection on the methodology with regard to participation and voice. As Rodgers (1999, p.25) reminds us, "the inclusion of people with learning difficulties as direct respondents does not mean that emancipatory research will be carried out". For this reason, the consultation stage became an attempt to encourage children to participate directly in research, generating knowledge,

and providing their own interpretations, rather than having their participation totally translated by the researcher into the research's language. Thus I wanted to avoid the game of translation into academic jargon and by doing so, avoid following a tradition of research that, according to Walmsley (2001, p.188), until the late twentieth century has left the views of people with learning difficulties outside the analysis of research dominated by "eugenics, psychology, educational studies and medical investigations".

Interval for reflection

After two encounters with the participants – and in some cases with their carers or nominated support workers – I anticipated that I would need to carefully consider the data so far gathered as this data would define the next interview activities. Erben (1998) argues that the majority of the time spent in presenting qualitative research is dedicated to interpretation of data, which is carried out with the employment of imagination, in order to speculate upon, link and assemble ideas. He emphasizes that "imagination is the vehicle the researcher employs to aid recognition of significant moments in the data, to relate those to each other and to the overall lives of the subjects under study" (Erben, 1998, p.11). It was in the interval between one encounter and the next, that I planned for imagination to be this vehicle to interpretation in the dialogical inquiry. However, Erben warns us that during the whole process "the researcher is required to fix imagination in empirical sources" (1998, p.10). Taking this advice into account for the dialogical inquiry the primarily fixing of the imagination would occur in the consultation meeting, together with the participants.

Completing the cycle

The inquiry was planned to continue the interview-consultation-reflect cycle preferably for at least three times, making up a minimum of six encounters. By the end of them, the last reflective activity would consist of revisiting all the elements that were dismissed, to analyse the decision of not progressing with them and inferring possible connections with the other results.

Writing up the findings

Although writing is a solitary task for the researcher, it is also a crucial point in the commitment to give voice to the voiceless, or rather to turn up the volume (Clough and Barton, 1998, p.129) of their possibly timid voices. The voices that participated in the dialogue are present throughout the report. In addition, I am confident that there is a significant part of the report, namely the fiction, which can be made accessible outside academia.

I have been strongly encouraged and motivated during my journey toward a qualitative study by the powerful statements of Nind (2008) in her methodological review:

> Conducting qualitative research with people with learning/communication difficulties is challenging but achievable. The synthesis of research literature by academics and researchers with learning difficulties shows how shared knowledge in relation to addressing the challenges is developing. This is a rapidly developing field and a couple of decades ago the practical guidance contained in this review would not have been available. The synthesis shows how the practical, political and ethical challenges and sensitivities are interwoven with each other and across all stages of the research process. These challenges are being taken up now, not just by pioneers in the field but by a whole raft of researchers in a range of disciplines who would no longer consider conducting research on people with learning and communication difficulties without, first and foremost, addressing them as human beings with something to say that is worth hearing.

For the sake of clarity in this section I purposely divide the storytelling modes into two separate categories even though the distinction between them is less evident in practice, but as Larson (1997) argues:

> narrative inquiry in education has the potential of deepening our understanding of the human condition and making our research more successful and useful. However, the objectivist assumptions that prevail in many of these projects hinder our efforts to tap into the power of narrative as an epistemological tool. If narrative inquiry is to deepen our understanding of the lives of others and lead to better ways of responding to the social and educational problems plaguing us, then we must use the processes of inquiry that enable us to enter the lives of those who share their stories. However, entering other people's lives and representing their stories is far more complex than many assume. If we are to understand the stories we are told, we will have to value clarifying and interpreting the meaning of stories as much as we value gathering them. Further, we must value interpreting these stories with the people who have lived them.

Therefore, to address this challenge when researching participants with communication difficulties, it is imperative dialectically to incorporate facilitators into the inquiry process, according to the participants' abilities, potentialities, and preferences. This necessity emerges not only from the quest for the production/collection meaningful and diverse data, but equally for the clarifying and interpreting process. If the analysis consists of the

collaboration with the participants, the use of other form of expression may be elucidative rather than the mere clarification of transcripts. In this vein, Larson (1997) argues that:

> to tap into deeply rich and meaningful narratives and to understand the lived experiences of those who share stories with us, we must take seriously the need to move beyond traditional, empiricist practices, such as asking story-givers merely to confirm "the accuracy" of linearly generated transcripts. Turning transcripts over to story-givers for the purpose of assessing "accuracy" is clearly better than not sharing transcripts at all. However, if we believe that social inquiry can help us to understand the experiences and circumstances contributing to human, social, and educational problems, then we might do well to experiment with inquiry processes that move beyond polite approval of transcripts to ones that recognize the abundant wisdom that story-givers have about their own lives.

Therefore, the narrative that is at the heart of my research includes different modes, formats, and voices. This diversity is part of the attempt to incorporate different forms of inquiry and expression, to follow Larson's advice to go beyond traditional empiricist practices. The objective here is explicit, it is to apply well established methods but also go beyond them and take the risk to try something new or less traditional. The major modes of expression that are incorporated in the inquiry process are the verbal and visual voices, which I discuss next.

Word-based representations: verbal voice

According to Usher (1998, p.18):

> experience figures as a key concept in educational theorizing, practice and research. Although constituted with many different significations, the common thread is a set of powerful assumptions that the experiences of the self are a source of knowledge and a valuable pedagogic resource which can be harnessed to learning, personal development and the liberatory giving of 'voice'.

He also states that "actual autobiographies stand at the intersection of the individual and the social, of agency and culture" (Usher, 1998, p.21). In view of that, researching life stories embraces a complex political and methodological effort to capture the richness of lived experiences in a liberating/libertarian approach. Even though this methodological effort is a complex challenge, "one of the advantages of biographical research is that the variety that is the life of the subject will guide researchers against to rigid a view of methodology" (Erben, 1998, p.4), that is, the very nature of the biographical research entails the methodological flexibility as a means to capture the variety of lived experiences.

However, the a priori characteristic one may expect for a life story is the textual or oral account of the experiences of an individual or group. This a priori can be erroneous if life story equating to verbally articulated narrative is taken as a self-evident universal. In order to break this mould, here I refer to verbal voice to remind us that other kinds of voice in the telling one's story exist, such as visual voice, which I discuss in the next subsection. Although I present the two kinds of voices here separately, in real life they are significantly interrelated. On the one hand, the presence of verbal articulation does not imply that visuals are not necessary; on the other hand, the lack of verbal articulacy does not indicate that visual voice stands alone without any verbal support. Therefore, the two stances of voice can complement each other in the process of storytelling. The modulation of each type will depend on the teller's preferences, communication styles and familiarity, even though none of these are fixed, therefore, may vary during the inquiry process.

Image-based representations: visual voice

> Since the 1970s, partly inspired by the critical pedagogy legacy of Paulo Freire, a number of adult educators, visual sociologists and anthropologists have placed visual methods at the heart of their practice in order to illuminate the familiar and release the voice of previously unheard and allow different stories to be told (Burke, 2008, p.26).

Although "for some people whose learning difficulties are more profound, no amount of visual or other structure will make the interview method possible" (Nind, 2008, p.11), for others the use of visual artifacts or the making of images can have a positive effect in helping them to express their views. However, it is crucial to understand that "views are different from reactions, they are opinions, beliefs, standpoints, notions, ideas and they require the person to be an intentional communicator rather than at a pre-intentional stage in which communicative intent is inferred by others" (Nind, 2008, p.11). Taking this into account, it is imperative that the use of visuals are enabling means of giving voice, rather than pictorial prompts for researchers' inferences and inquisitive imagination. The choice of the type of visual method to be applied and the type of visual materials to be used must comprise this notion.

The visual method of cue cards has been successfully applied with children who face some communication barriers. "Cue cards provide highly specific structured visual prompts, ideally free of verbal leads from the interviewer, when eliciting children's versions of events" (Lewis et al., 2008, p.27). Each card needs to be explained to the children who need to learn how to use them and practice before the card can be used to support interviews. According to Lewis et al. (2008, p.29)

the use of the cards does not, in itself, increase a child's vocabulary. Therefore supporting (extension) activities may need to be used alongside or before the Cue Card work (particularly for 'feelings', 'action' and 'time') in order to maximize the child's response. Otherwise the child may understand the 'cue' and have ideas to express but not be able to put these into words.

The use of cue cards is seductive as it seems to provide a significant outcome for verbal interview, however, I decided to investigate a different approach that, like cue cards, might help to elucidate children's perspectives, but which is also a means to meaning-making in itself. The main objective was to use the visual constructions as a form of communication in its own right, as "an alternative means of expression" (Thomson, 2008, p.11), because I agree with Thomson (2008) when she reminds us that "images communicate in different ways than words" (p.11). For this reason, I am among the researchers adopting image-based methods to elicit different responses rather than methods based uniquely on word-based techniques or on visuals merely as a prompt to speech or written words.

The main rationale in incorporating visuals in this research was my confidence that "visual methods offer accessible, flexible, and inclusive tools fit for purpose" (Burke, 2008, p.25). In addition, children are generally interested in image making playing, which may be a factor to help to build their interest in the activities and feel motivated to participate (Leitch, 2008, p.51). According to Thomson (2008, p.8) "there are two ways in which social scientists approach the visual: the first is to take visual artifacts and to investigate their production, uses and interpretations; the second is to manufacture visual artifacts as part of the process of doing research". She correlates the two ways to what Chaplin (1994) calls "the sociology of the visual" and "visual sociology". The former includes researchers that analyse and interpret visual artifacts, while the latter involve their participants in making images.

Although I was open to use both kinds of activities, the methods applied were based on a predominance of "visual sociology". Similar to life stories, the making of images in research is not a recent event. Chaplin reminds us that photography has been used in anthropological research for a long time, and Pink (2004) states that "now, more than ever before, ethnographers are using visual and digital images and technologies to research and represent the cultures, lives and experiences of other people" (p.1). She also refers to an emphasis on reflexivity, which "has been the singular most important strand in recent visual anthropology literature and interdisciplinary visual methods texts" (Pink, 2004, p.4). In connection with this reflexivity, she argues, "are collaborative and participatory approaches to research and representation" (Pink, 2004, p.4).

In addition to the reflexivity that the use of images may involve, my recent experience with the participants of the pilot study made me realise that I agree with Banks (2007) in relation

to a valid motive to incorporate visuals in my research. He argues that a good reason why the social researcher might wish to incorporate the analysis of images is that "a study of images or one that incorporates in the creation or collection of data might be able to reveal some sociological insight that is not accessible by any other means" (p.4).

Banks argues that there are two main strands to visual research in the social sciences. The first consists of the creation of images by the researcher and the second "revolves around collection and study of images produced or consumed by the subjects of the research" (Banks, 2007, p.7). In my research the latter predominates but does not extinguish the occurrence of the former, because "the two strands are not mutually exclusive, nor are they exhaustive of all visual research within the social sciences" (Banks, 2007, p.7). The ultimate rationale for using visuals with children was the potential to enable them to also show rather than only to tell of their experiences (Nind, 2008).

Language, communication and metaphor in action

In chapter two I presented the epistemological discussion on language and metaphor, which I depict as questioning epistemologies. Based on those epistemological aspects, I have developed the methodological approach to metaphor as one of the means available to answer the question about children's imagery of themselves, others and also of learning difficulties. Methodologically, metaphor research can take two different approaches, either investigating proposed metaphors or spontaneously emerging metaphors. My methodological decision to do narrative research was more connected to the second type. Similarly, any other feature of language was expected to emerge from the participants' discourse rather than from leading questions, promptings or prescribed texts.

Bearing in mind that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, and that we think metaphorically, I anticipated that some metaphors would emerge and allow their analysis as part of the attempt to capture children's perspectives. Although metaphor may reveal new understandings and uncover subtle meanings or reveal comparisons and contradictions that children may have experienced, metaphor is not the ultimate question, but one of the ways to accomplish understanding. Therefore, the methods of data collection were open opportunities to metaphor emergence, but not part of the strategies. There was no directive activity in the inquiry designed to encourage/prompt metaphor use or metaphor interpretation. In the dialogical inquiry, any form of expression was welcome to help to elucidate children's views, and there is no preferred outlook. However, metaphor pervasiveness can camouflage its occurrence as the familiarity with some of them may cause us to take them as literal terms rather than comparisons. To avoid this, the search for metaphors in children's discourse is intentional and systematic. In short, in my conversations

with the children during the interview activities I did not purposely investigate metaphor, while in the data analysis process the search for metaphor was purposeful.

Voice modulations and tone variations in context

"The concept of voice spans literal, metaphorical and political terrains" (Britzman quoted in Thomson, 2008, p.4). Primarily, my concerns with voice are rooted in political grounds. I am concerned with the historical silence imposed to people with learning difficulties and their struggles in a society, which create spaces for oppression. Those concerns brought me to conduct qualitative research with the manifest intention to take the side of children with learning difficulties to contribute to their liberation from the oppression imposed by labels and lack of understanding about their difficulties and potentialities as individuals. Taking into account Britzman's stances of voice, my research is concerned mainly with the political connotation of the term. However, I am not sure if we can draw a "hard" line between the metaphorical sense of the term and its political implications. The term 'voice' can signify inflection, tone, accent, style and the qualities and feelings conveyed by the speaker's words. It can be useful to use those meanings in the political sense as well, because giving voice to the voiceless involves acknowledging that individuals speak in more than one voice (Thomson, 2008, p.4), that even young children modulate their voice according to the listener, and that once given voice, the oppressed will learn how and when to use their voice. They need to identify their own voice among the oppressor's consciousness that they have adopted and so forth. Therefore, the concept of voice can have political-metaphorical connotations.

Taking into account that previous research with children has shown that the presence of an adult, such as an assigned support worker can affect the children's "performance" (Goffman's sense of the term), which I signalise as a modulation of their voice accordingly to the audience or the context. Once given 'space' (Lundy, 2007, p.932), it is still necessary to provide the reasonable mediation and translation to find the best balance possible in terms of "voice as function of power" (Clough and Barton, 1998, p.128). In a dialogical research, where the practice of dialogue is a political act, the issue of voice as political concept is consequently self-evident, since it pre-supposes an interchange of interlocutors' voice. If dialogue cannot happen where the voice of some are denied, its very existence is a political act in itself as much as the negation of its existence by the silencing of the oppressed.

In the situation of interview, participants may modulate their voice according to the environment, in terms of the physical characteristics including their familiarity (or lack of it) with the place, their like/dislike of it, previous experiences that took place there, and also in terms of interpersonal characteristics. The presence of a particular adult or peer may cause the modulation to a passive mode or a non-responsive one, or even a conditioned mode.

Also some form of uncertainty or discomfort can interfere with the choice of which voice to speak with, such as the knowledge that the conversation is been recorded, or that someone passing by the door can hear what has been said and so on. The task of the researcher is to ease the way as much as possible, to encourage the participants to speak their legitimate voice/s.

Narrative and experience

Bruner (1990, p.77) argues that "one of the most ubiquitous and powerful discourse forms in human communication is narrative". He also argues that narrative structure is intrinsically present in the ways social interactions take place, even before narrating becomes linguistically expressed. The term narrative has various applications and uses, but here the term is used in the sense used by (Polkinghorne) (1988, p. 13), that is, narrative is "the kind of organizational scheme expressed in story form". Narratives are powerful means of making sense.

> We create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for others about our own past actions, and we develop storied accounts that give sense to the behaviour of others. We also use the narrative scheme to inform our decisions by constructing imaginative 'what if' scenarios (Polkinghorne, 1988), p.14).

Narratives are so intensively present in every stage of human development, and in every situation in human life that the broadest description of this presence is given by Hardy (1968, p.5) when she declares how ubiquitous narrative really is. She argues that, "we dream in narrative, day dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative".

This is not a particularly sophisticated statement; in fact it would be quite ingenuous, if it was not so ingenious. The idea of an omnipresence of narrative in our everyday life may signal that Bruner's claim that the need to construct narrative drives the mastering of grammatical forms by the young child. He argues that it is this positive pressure to "narrate" life that determines the mastering of the grammar in contrast to the more usual claim that it is the syntactical or computational simplicity that guide the learning progression. For Bruner, narrative requires some crucial grammatical constituents to be effectively carried out, so the young child would seek to complete these requirements when mastering the grammar and even the order of the acquisition of grammatical forms should reflect those requirements.

According to Clough (2002, p.8) "narrative is useful only to the extent that it opens up (to its audience) a deeper view of life in familiar contexts: it can make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar", and this potential to deepen the view of life is one of the characteristics that

makes narrative a unique means of making sense of lived life. On the other hand, "as a means of educational report, stories can provide a means by which those truths, which cannot be otherwise told, are uncovered" (Clough, 2002, p.8). In short, we live immersed in narrative from birth to death. Life itself is made up of various stories that are interrelated, interdependent, and personal, at the same time that they are, in some aspects, disunited, isolated events and social constructs. According to Dewey (1997, p.43), "an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his (sic) environment". Environment is understood as whatever conditions that "interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1997, p.44).

However, the mere co-existence of individual and environment is not a guarantee for ideal educative situations, because "relationships with significant others, including teachers and learners, have a major role to play in shaping the way we think about ourselves and how we construct our achievements and aptitudes" (Collins et al., 2002, p.43). Similar to the need for educative experiences, is the need for educative interactions: "People need other people to learn in an intrinsically motivating, social process in which challenges are faced, mistakes made, helpful feedback given and new attempts made leading to success" (Collins et al., 2002, p.168).

Underpinning all interactions there is communication. As human beings, we interact through communication in a wide range of forms, using a variety of signs, symbols and languages. "Language is not to be seen as being 'about', as 'referring to', but as creative of objects" (Clough, 2002, p.16) equally, we do not only use language to speak about things, but the language we use speaks about us (Ball, 1990). There is interplay between the interaction styles and the ways language bonds them. The most significant form of bonding interactions is through dialogue, which is a form of communication based on a "relation of empathy between two poles who are engaged in a joint search" (Freire, 1983, p.45) that is, the conversations based on mutual virtue of values such respect, humility and trust are the basic construct to meaningful interactions.

The dialogue is also present in the narrative act. However, written narratives can reveal new possibilities of conversations, in different levels of interactions. "A text opens up an audience, which is unlimited, while the relationship of dialogue is a closed relationship. The text is open to whoever knows to read, and whose potential reader is everyone" (Ricoeur and Valdés, 1991, p.442). In addition, the reader may develop a direct connection with the text through lived experiences that are recollected through the reading. In this sense, there is an encounter between the reader's memories with the writer's, rather than an encounter between reader and writer, or listener and teller – since the similar identification can occur during oral accounts.

According to Bruner (1990, p.35) "narrative organizes experience" and it is on the basis of this postulate that narrative is discussed in this section. A central concern in this study is the role played by social interactions, the effect of these social encounters in learners' perceptions. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how these interactions, which are the constructs of experience, are organised in the participants' accounts. Taking into account that "our culturally adapted way of life depends upon shared meanings and shared concepts and depends as well upon shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation" (Bruner, 1990, p.13), it is necessary to situate the language used by the teller within the actual context and in time at which the experiences organised in narrative form have taken place. This is because "we always live at the time we live and not other time" (Dewey, 1938, p.49) and analogically we live in the context we live and not other context.

Analysing the meanings behind the language of personal accounts requires awareness that those meanings may not be only an individual expression, but rather part of the collective construction. They are possibly shared by those who are part of the same group – school, classroom, friends group – because "we live publicly by public meanings and by shared procedures of interpretation and negotiation" (Bruner, 1990, p.13). In short, "public meanings are negotiated" (Bruner, 1990, p.13).

Multimodal data collection: combined approaches to capturing narrative

In section 1 of this chapter, I presented the use of verbal and visual voice in terms of representation. In this section the emphasis is on how to capture the lives lived by those who tell their stories in whatever kind of voice. In view of that, I present next the methods intended to operationalise the research design and theory.

The pragmatics of the data collection takes into account the literature in this area, together with the lessons learned from the pilot study. The data collection process encompassed three major elements as follows:

- The interlocutors (researcher and participants) and partakers (i.e. advocates or assigned support workers) of the dialogue;
- The place where the dialogue takes place and where some of the interlocutors are immersed; and
- The dynamics of the dialogue.

Firstly, I explain who would take an active part in the dialogue as agent interlocutors (the participants and I), and subsequently I discuss the role played by assigned support workers whose voice was not invited to the dialogue but whose involvement consciously or unconsciously emerged. For this reason here they are referred to as "partakers of the dialogue", in other words illegitimate voices that need to be distinguished from the voices of those whom they are expected to support. The presence of such professionals needed to be not merely acknowledged, but more importantly, predicted and strategically taken into account and critically analysed as differentiated from the participants' voices. Some scholars have voiced concerns about the impact of such adults in participants' behaviour in interviews.

Secondly, I present the settings investigated. Gaining access to schools has been a challenge. In view of this, some children were reached by means other than via schools only. Thirdly, I specify the structure of the encounters, the kind of interviews carried out, which echoes the dialogical inquiry life cycle presented in section 1.

Participants: voices of the interlocutors

Although previous sections and chapters already point out that this research involved children with/without learning difficulties as participants, that participant focus has not always been the case. Initially my focus was on others' perspectives of experiences of inclusion, where "others" meant those who were originally entitled to have a place in mainstream settings regardless of inclusive policies. I was concerned about their views about inclusion, and my unintended bias was my hope that they could reveal how they benefit from those experiences. However, my naïve hopes and "ingenuous curiosity" (Freire, 1998, p.35) were replaced by a deeper understanding of how important and necessary it is to give voice to those who are still somehow marginalised, those who however officially included might not be listened about their experience. I have reached the stage of "epistemological curiosity" (Freire, 1998, p.35), which can be explained as a more methodologically rigorous curiosity. One important source of insight for the progression of my thinking was Frank's (1995) book about illness and storytelling. Frank (1995) claims that:

> the idea of telling one's story as a responsibility to the commonsense world reflects what I understand as the core morality of the postmodern . Storytelling is for another just as much as it is for oneself. In the reciprocity that is storytelling, the teller offers herself as guide to the other's self-formation.

In view of that I started reviewing some literature on students' perspectives (e.g. Allan, 1999, Norwich and Kelly, 2004, Lawson et al., 2006, Thomson and Gunter, 2006, Crowther, 2007, Jones, 2007, Owens, 2007). This reviewing process challenged my initial plan for the

sampling and the whole discussion led me to reflect upon whose voices I should include. I was especially cognisant of what Winter (2002) suggests in terms of taking collaborative work as a basis of the whole research process emphasising the plurality of voices as a means of self-questioning.

Within the process of literature review I considered an article on a nationally publicised case of the discussion over inclusion in the USA (Dorries and Haller, 2001) after a legal battle between the parents of a child in the autistic spectrum and the local authority about whether or not schools must include severely disabled children in regular classrooms. That reading was an "illuminative epiphany" (Denzin, 1989, p.145), a moment of insight, that had helped me to somehow redefine my assumptions. Despite the focus being the media coverage of that particular case, and the data consisting of the narratives collected from that coverage not primarily data as I intended to seek out, the analysis provided me with useful insights for educational research, and highlighted key aspects in the use of narrative and the relevance of giving voice to the 'oppressed'.

Once again I had to think about whose voices I would listen to and would represent in my research as well about the relationship between reclaiming and voice, as Frank (1995, p.71) explains:

> the postmodern phrase that complements 'reclaiming' is 'finding one's voice'. Here also a significant truth underpins the cliché: people who are written on from outside have lost their voices. Speaking in a voice recognizable as one's own voice becomes increasingly difficult, so speech proliferates in search of that voice. Self-stories proliferate.

Therefore, if this research was committed to reclaiming the voices of those who once segregated or excluded were made voiceless, it could not aim to be anything else but inclusive. Regardless of the still openness of the outcomes of the ongoing literature review on methodology; I was by now convinced that this study must look at different perspectives in terms of:

- **Social differences:** learners within diverse educational contexts, environments and backgrounds
- **Individual differences:** learners with different abilities

Hence, the scope of settings chosen to invite to get involved in the study would comprise both primary and secondary schools, so the participants ages would range from around 6/7 years to 16. In addition, my intention was to include participants who had no stated learning

difficulties and participants with learning difficulties. This scope of the groups included in this study is shown in figure 3.2.
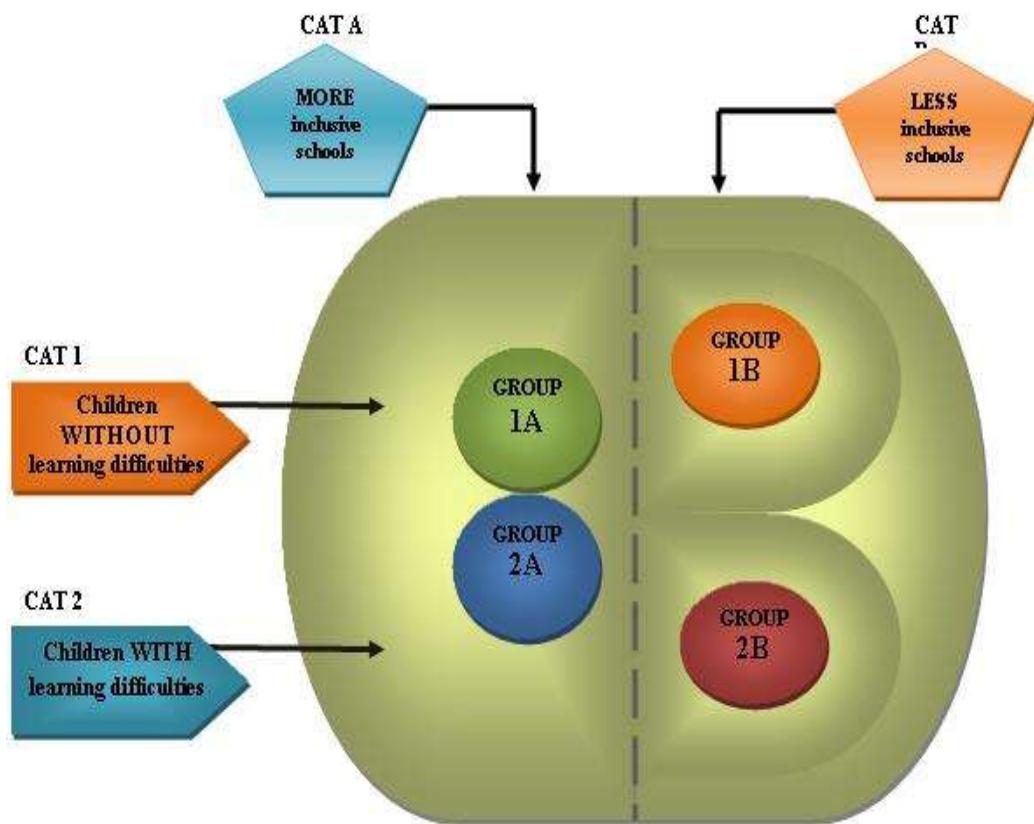
Figure 3-2: Participants

Although this study was intended to be as inclusive as possible, this was still a delicate task because the study involved narrative/storytelling and therefore there some uncertainty regarding the degree of severity of communication difficulties that would allow children to express their view. At the same time, the research needed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the children's needs and capabilities, to promote their participation. To help with inclusion criteria, I considered Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that it is necessary to assure "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UN General Assembly, 2002).

This meant potentially including participants who were verbally less articulate but who were able to form 'their own views'; they not only had the right to express these views but also to make a valid contribution. However, it was crucial to bear in mind that "there are dangers, though, in seeing capacity as fixed and difficulties with it as static or permanent impairments located with the individual. This neglects the fact that researchers can take positive action to

increase capacity" (Nind, 2008, p.7), especially in a dialogical process where the progressing of the inquiry is guided by the previous interview and consultation activities. In this sense, the follow up of each activity could be more enabling and therefore make the participation more reliable. Furthermore, as Flutter and Ruddock (2004) argue, I considered it crucial that the views of diverse children would be sought and that participation would not embrace only the verbally articulate. Lundy (2007) suggests a model which provides a new form of conceptualising Article 12 of UNCRC. Her model is based on the findings of a Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People large-scale audit of children's rights, aimed to identify areas in which children's rights were not satisfactorily complied with. In this she suggests that decision-makers should focus their acts on four elements of the provision: as space, voice, audience and influence. In Figure 3.3, Lundy shows these concepts and their relationship with the two main strands of Article 12 and other relevant UNCRC provisions:
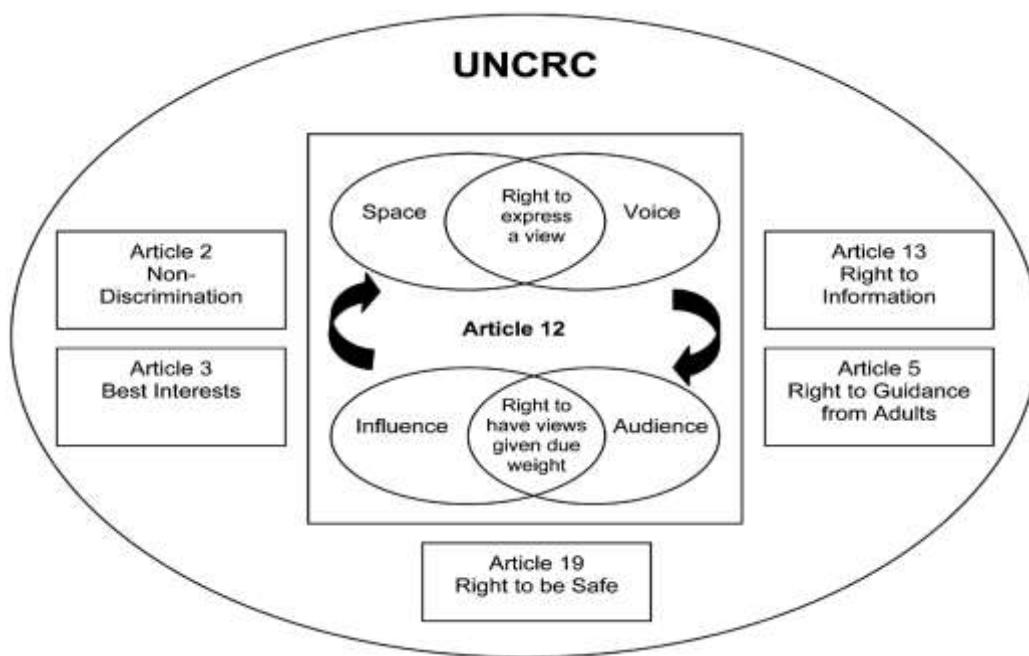
Figure 3-3: Conceptualising Article 12 (Lundy, 2007, p.932)

According to Lundy (2007, p.932) "the model reflects the fact that these elements are interrelated. In particular, there is a significant degree of overlap between: (a) space and voice, and (b) audience and influence". In the dialogical inquiry, those elements are addressed as shown in Table 3-2.

	Lundy's conceptualisation	Putting the concepts into practice in the present research
Space	Children must be given the opportunity to express a view	Giving opportunity to the participants to express their view in different ways, verbally and non-verbally
Voice	Children must be facilitated to express their views	The chosen approach facilitates children's expression by: the use of different methods and techniques to fit different abilities and preferences – including the use of visual methods; having flexibility to adapt whatever method accordingly to the responses during the process of data collection.; responding as promptly as possible to the participants' suggestions and requests
Audience	The view must be listened to	Being a firsthand audience for them and also making efforts to have their voice heard by a wider audience within and outside academia
Influence	The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.	The consultation activities provide opportunity for paying special attention to their views and the subsequent reflection moment takes their views on board as a direction for next activities and analysis.

Table 3-2: Putting Article 12 into action

Björnsdóttir and Svensdóttir (2008, p.1) sum up that "it is important for people with learning disabilities to have the opportunity to tell their story". They believe that "it can help others; both people with learning disabilities, carers and researchers". Based on that principle, they present their collaborative research conducted by Björnsdóttir, a university student in partnership with Svensdóttir, a self-advocate with learning disabilities. Although their research differs enormously from my research in terms of the participants' age, their experience has proven insightful for my methodological choices as well as the criteria they used that have been developed by Walmsley and Johnson (2003, p.64), which are as follows:

- the research problem should be owned by disabled people, but can be initiated by nondisabled researchers
- the research should further the interests of people with learning disabilities and nondisabled researchers should be their allies
- the research should involve people with learning disabilities in the research process
- people with learning disabilities should have some control over the research process and outcomes
- research questions, the research process and reports should be accessible to people with learning disabilities

Taking into account these criteria, it would be inaccurate to claim that my research is fully inclusive, mainly because I may fail the first criteria, due to the complexity of my question and its relationship with my subjective views, which make hard to attribute its ownership to the children. However, it may suffice to state that this research has been developed in view of inclusive research principles, and that the dialogical inquiry is an explicit attempt to meet these criteria, especially in regard to the last four criteria, as the first may not be so realistic.

Settings: small worlds where interactions take place

Taking into account Freire's words:

> The fact that I perceive myself to be in the world, with the world, with others, brings with it a sense of 'being-with' constitutive of who I am that makes my relationship to the world essential to who I am" (Freire, 1998, p.55)

the major aim of this research involved contrasting perspectives of children in relation to the environment and the others with whom the participants had been. Consequently, it was necessary to listen to learners experiencing different educational environments, which in my study reflected the degree/level/model of inclusiveness. The range of settings involved in this investigation was intended to allow some analysis of the relationship between the types of environment where the participants experience being 'with the world' and 'with others' and their perception of 'who they are'.

In chapter two I have established criteria for distinguishing more inclusive from less inclusive settings. Although I am aware that inclusion is about much more than place and attendance, for data collection and analysis purposes, I have purposely oversimplified the conception of 'more inclusive' here and reduced it to two single aspects: (1) the presence of a significant number of students with learning difficulties together with students without such categorisation in the same setting, and (2) the predominance of moments of inclusion over moments of exclusion. However, the second criterion would not serve for the data collection because those moments could not be identified a priori; their identification would depend on the children's accounts.

During the data analysis, this categorisation was likely to be re-shaped according to children's narratives. For this study I therefore classified schools that failed the diversity criterion as less inclusive ones, which includes special schools, and some mainstream schools where the school population is not representative of a diverse community due to the absence of students with special needs. While concurring with Topping and Maloney (2005a p.5) that "inclusion should mean more than the mere physical presence of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools", for this study, I was looking for the outcomes of

interactions based on contact with differences. Therefore mere placement of a child in a certain type of school could potentially affect their perceptions of self and of each other regardless of the other effects related to the pedagogy applied. For this reason, the physical presence here counted as a factor or component that determines the degree of inclusiveness. Taking that into account, the settings were categorised as follows:

- **Less inclusive settings:** Special schools (excluding children without learning difficulties) and mainstream schools with a special educational needs population much lower the current national average (excluding with learning difficulties).
- **More inclusive settings**: Mainstream schools with a special educational needs population above the current national average or purposefully bringing together children with and without learning difficulties.

Methods: content and form of the dialogue

The procedures I have been discussing to gather the stories are mainly founded in the method of life story interview (Atkinson, 1998), combined with visual methods (Thomson, 2008) together with my insights during the pilot study. Therefore, what I describe here is the resulting outline of the data collection. "Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.645). Moreover, "interviews are the very heart of qualitative research. It is through interviews that we elicit people's views and perspectives on the world" (Nind, 2006, p.10). For this reason, the dialogical inquiry consisted of a series of encounters named as "interview activities" and "consultation activities". The emphasis on activities was due to the dialectics of these encounters, the relationship between the two kinds of activities and their rationale, and the function of the whole cycle, which i have described earlier. Here I present a detailed description of the mechanics/dynamics of those activities, how they connected to each other in terms of practicality and how they generated data and provided opportunity for preliminary participative analysis.

Interview activities

The major basis of the interview activities was the method of life story interview (Atkinson, 1998), with some necessary adaptations to the context and participants. However, in essence, these activities consisted of a dialogical interaction and an ethnographic attitude of making the strange familiar, through natural conversation style. The interviewing process encompassed a series of encounters because one single interview would reinforce the

banking model of inquiry and would not create possibilities for genuine dialogue and collaborative analysis. Furthermore, as Christensen (2004) argues:

> one-off interviews with children, whether these are qualitative or quantitative, or with the use of task orientated tools or not, are at risk of not providing the context within which children can respond in accordance with their own views. This is so because children will have been left little scope for engaging in a critical manner with the research questions and the research practice, despite the fact that children may have given informed consent.

The major difference between the interview activities and the consultation was the fact the former were driven by some activity I had previously planned as the researcher, as a stimuli to open the dialogue and to create opportunities to storytelling, while the former had to depend on the dynamics of the previous encounter. These interview activities comprised two kinds: verbal-based and image-based activities. The verbal-based ones consisted basically of open-ended unstructured interviews, while the image-based maintained the open-endedness, though the process of manipulating the images applied a semi-structured approach, taking into account the experience gained in the pilot study. The same configuration of the activities was applied with children with learning difficulties and those without. However, the response of each group or child would determine the degree of verbal-based expressions that would be incorporated to the visual-based tasks. The series of interviews consisted of a sequential cycle as described below:

First interview: In this first encounter the major objective was to build some rapport and to introduce the 'interlocutors', that is, the participants and researcher. The main focus was on getting to know the participants and letting them know the researcher and what the study was about. It was mainly an open-ended interview, in which the introduction to the children of the research purposes was expected to be a prompt to their first accounts about their schooling experiences. Where the children were verbally articulate and able to write, they would be encouraged to write about events, memories, and stories.

Second interview: The second interview was to take place after a consultation activity, which means it would be the third encounter between participants and researcher. By this time the rapport was supposed to be established, and some views, understandings and interpretations exchanged. In this activity the main focus was on creating self-portraits and portraits of significant others that is peers at school, friends, and family members. Depending on the verbal articulation of the participants, additional textual descriptions would be requested to support the images. Even short narratives were to be encouraged at this stage.

Third interview: This was to be the fourth encounter, which would take place after at least two consultations where transcripts and visual productions may have been discussed as part of the collaborative analysis process. Therefore, by this point in time the participants were anticipated to have a good understanding of the whole process in which they were taking part, and the researcher was anticipated to be more equipped with a good understanding about the participants as well. The main focus was on putting together what was discussed so far and the images (and descriptions), in some activity that could help to elucidate previous topics, and also to encourage the emergence of new elements. Once again, the amount of written activity would depend on the participants' characteristics and preferences.

To sum up, the three interview activities are presented in terms of the dialogical inquiry life cycle in **Error! Reference source not found.**. In addition to these activities, the second and third interview might incorporate activities or elements on demand, responding to participants' suggestions or requests. Also, based on the outcomes, during the process any planned activity could be changed accordingly to the requirements of the actual reality.
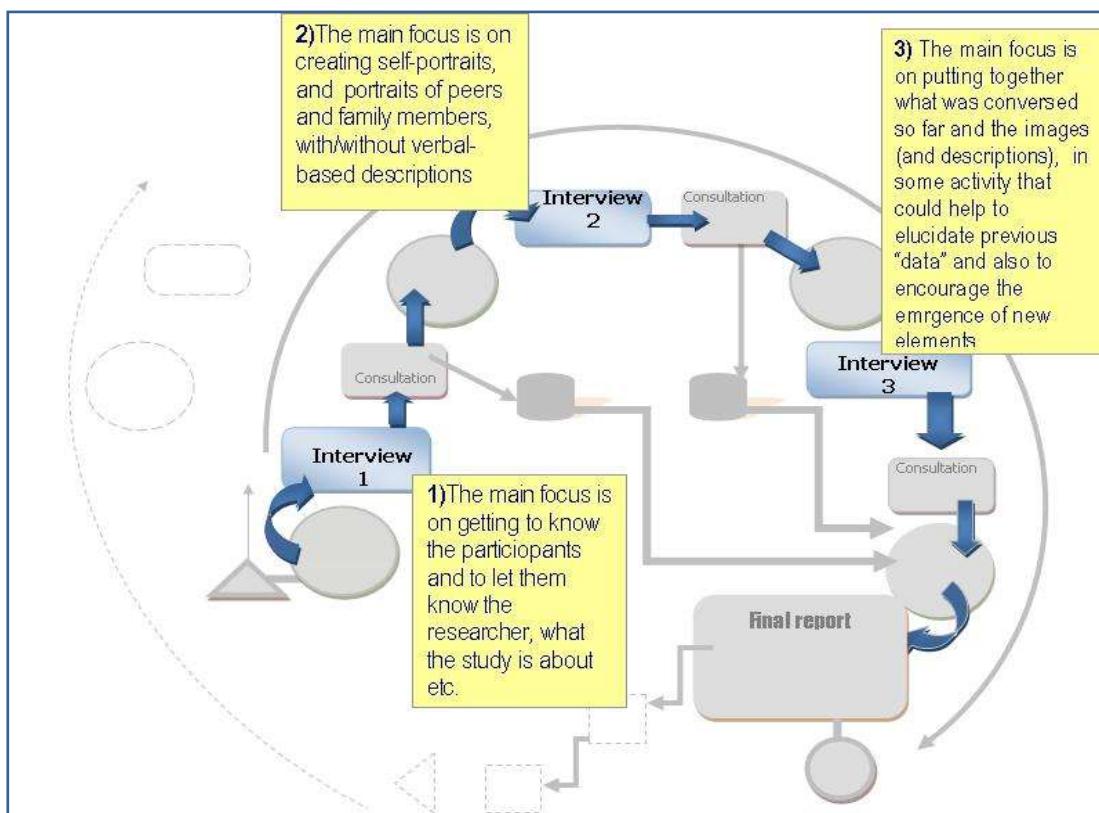
Figure 3-4: Interview emphases

Consultation activities

In light of the desire for a dialogical inquiry aimed at encouraging participation based on principles of inclusive research, the consultation activities were key features of this inquiry. The fundamental principle on which the consultation activities were based was that "critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage of their struggle for liberation" (Freire, 1970b, p.47). In view of this, regardless of being aware of oppressive forces or not, regardless of being engaged in some sort of (self-)liberating action or not, having the possibility to express their views, children would contribute with the researcher in the task of giving voice.

The consultation consisted of a crucial moment in the dialogical inquiry, when participants would re-visit their own participation. The format of the consultation was adapted to fit each individual or group. Therefore, depending on the participants' characteristics and preferences, they had the opportunity to respond to researchers' questions to clarify words, phrases, expressions, and any other kind of doubt that emerged from the interview activity. Also, participants had the chance to listen to parts of the audio record, read parts of transcripts, and so on. These activities would shape themselves during the process rather than following a rigidly prescribed plan. However, some activities were predicted to emerge, such as: handling previous constructions (texts, drawings, pictures etc.), reading excerpts from transcripts of previous meetings; listening to audio recordings of significant parts of conversations, and clarification questions formulated by the researcher. My attitude as the researcher in this activity was that of constant radical listening and openness to deal with participants' questions, whether addressed to the researcher or to other participants, either spontaneous or researcher-directed.

Walmsley (2001, p.189) argues that "the inclusion of people with learning difficulties in research projects has led to some creative, even empowering projects" and I hoped to contribute to this with the assistance of the participants. The focus of the consultation activities was providing significant active participation as a means of liberation and emancipation, because I was convinced that

> attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation, is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (Freire, 1970b, p.47)

Following this line of thought, Freire argues that true reflection leads to action and that authentic praxis becomes object of critical reflection. He warns us that "to achieve this praxis, however, it is necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason"

(Freire, 1970b, p.48). I believe that it is also necessary to trust our own ability to capture their reasoning. Although there is broad agreement among inclusive scholars that people with learning difficulties should be included in participative research, there is still a need to enrich and develop a wider range of alternatives of methods to enable researchers and researched to collaborate reciprocally. I am inclined to advocate that a correct approach to inquiry, similarly to education, also "lies in dialogue" (Freire, 1970b, p.49).

Binary data analysis: two takes in listening/seeing/reading, and showing/telling the data

Freire (1970b) postulates that "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers" (p. 61). Analogically I argue that through dialogical inquiry, researcher and participants cease to exist (even though briefly due to the timidity of the enterprise) and a new terminology emerges: researcher-participant and participant-researcher. Although previously the function of participants as co-researchers have been advocated, I was not convinced that this would be the case in my research, as the participants would not act as interviewers of other children or carry out any other research activity other than taking part in the data analysis process, during the consultation activities. For this reason, I empathise with the idea of the analogy to the duality student-teacher and vice-versa, as it seems to not go so far as to claim that the participants are 'researchers'. Also, due to the newness of my experience as a researcher, and the complexity of the issue of inclusive participatory research, together with the realisation that collaboration involves researcher and participants being jointly responsible for the process (Freire, 1970b, p.61) I prefer to modestly claim that in certain moments, the collaboration of the participants was possible and feasible. Reflecting on the review she carried out, Nind (2008) concludes that:

> finding literature relevant to a review of data collection with children and adults with learning and communication difficulties is not difficult as the above synthesis shows. Much less is written about the process of data analysis implying that this stage is unproblematic or under-explored, yet there are two central challenges. Firstly, in relation to participatory approaches, the politics of participation does not stop at the research planning and data collection stages, leading to the question of how people with leaning difficulties can be involved in the analysis stage. However, even checking with participants the validity of the data can pose practical challenges. Secondly, the data collected may not be the traditional form of written transcripts; the very nature of the data may lead us to over-interpret and lose authenticity in a desire to draw out theoretical issues or practical recommendations. Often a narrative needs to be built from pictures, symbols and single words. (p.15)

Factual/literal descriptive analysis

Long before starting the fieldwork, I was inclined to use fiction to disseminate the findings of the study. However, this was an embryonic idea, in need of development and maturation. Throughout the first half of the study, the idea was incubating while I was learning from the literature and from the field. After that period, it became clear that I needed to contemplate the use of fiction in combination with a more conventional mode of analysis that is the factual/literal analysis. Therefore, the factual/literal analysis here is the first part of the full analysis; it is the starting point and also the foundation.

In the factual/literal analysis I present the participants, the settings and the outcomes of my encounters with them, in a straightforward manner, introducing each participant as an individual and as a member of a group, and each setting where the interviews took place as the research setting and the context of the dialogical encounters. Although I am calling this portion of my analysis factual and/or literal, I have no intention to claim it as more truthful than the second part, nor more precise or accurate, never mind freer from my interpretation. Factual and literal here refer specifically to the modus operandi of my approach to the knowledge generated by the study. It refers to the way I have presented what I have learned. It is also one of the viewpoints I have taken to learn from the data. In that sense, the factual/literal analysis is organised in a format that data could be displayed and understood in their unity and also in their specificity in context. Although only qualitative analysis was employed, the quantitative aspects of the data are preserved, as the size of the sample, the number of participants and settings, the length of the interview activities and other factual information. This is a clear-cut distinction between the factual and the fictional approaches I employed.

Fictional/metaphorical reflexive analysis

The incubation period not only determined the need to combine factual and fictional, but it also drove the design of the fictional analysis. Prior to the fieldwork, my intention was to use fiction to tell the data, to re-present the findings in a more accessible way, as a means to make research findings more enabling. However, working with the participants revealed that I needed fiction to read the data and to understand them. By looking at the actual participants and their interrelations with each other, with the adults and with the environment, I envisaged aspects that could only be read through a metaphorical viewpoint, thus a fictionalisation of events started to seem necessary. My fictional analysis finds its roots in the political role of testimonio as defined by Beverley (2008, p.258), as a way to bring the participants' experiences to the attention of an audience that they normally do not have access.

Chase (2005, p.651) argues that "narrative inquiry is a field in the making", and, therefore, "researchers new to this field will find a rich but diffuse tradition, multiple methodologies in various stages of development, and plenty of opportunities for exploring new ideas, methods, and questions", which coincides with my experience. Metaphorical images and somehow fictional writings emerged from my field notes, and gradually became central in my understanding of the whole process. Having started this thesis using fictional devices, it may seem obvious that fiction would be used at some stage of the study, but the way it ended up emerging was not obvious for me, until the facts became too realistic to be re-told only literally, because as Chase (2005, p.657) points out, different from scientific reporting, which can also embrace an interpretation of actions and events, narrative reveals the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than possible shared patterns. Chase (2005, p.657) outlines five analytical lenses which, she argues; contemporary researchers approach their empirical data, and a summarise as follows:

1. Narrative is a distinct form of discourse, which differs from editorials, policy statements, or scientific discourse, because "narrative highlights the uniqueness of human action";
2. Narrative is verbal action, therefore actively creative, as by telling a story, the teller shapes, constructs and performs their selves, experience and reality;
3. Stories are empowered and limited by the societal circumstances, so they can draw analytical comparisons across narratives;
4. Narrative is a kind of interactive performance and socially situated;
5. Narrative researchers are narrators who break from traditional social science practice, by making their own voices audible in their studies through those analytical lenses.

In view of the fifth lens, I believe that similar to St. Pierre (1997, p.177) "foregrounding my own subjectivity in my study", which embraces "other's subjectivities" – in her case "with the help of Deleuze's image of fold", in my case with the help of Freire's banking metaphor – also to some extent "enabled me to make intelligible the imbrication between the inside and outside of the research process" (St. Pierre, 1997, p.177).

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented my proposed dialogical inquiry and its rationale. This was a remarkable stage in this study, a decisive step towards my personal development as a researcher. My re-encounter with the Freirean principles represented a reencounter with my roots as educator, which became the foundations and guidelines of my research route. The fieldwork was also a re-encounter. I revisited my teaching approach while building up my approach to inquiry in a dynamic dialogical process. Therefore, this chapter offered me the

possibility to connect the literature reviewed with the inquiry, which came into action based on this methodology.

The next chapter presents in detail the dynamics of the fieldwork which generated the two-fold analysis and I hope the voices and the silences that were part of these dynamics is perceptible through the amalgamation of the two. Therefore, the fictional/metaphorical analysis is my "verbal action", as Chase (2005, p.657) points out

> when researchers treat narration as actively creative and the narrator's voice as particular, they move away from questions about the factual nature of the narrator's statements. Instead, they highlight the versions of self, reality, and experience that the storyteller produces through the telling.

Therefore, the fictional/metaphorical analysis is the reading of "transgressive data" (1997, p.180) which may reveal different voices and silences, making them intelligible in combination with the factual/literal analysis. However, it is also my pursuit to achieve what Richardson and St.Pierre (2005, p.965) call our task "to find concrete practices through which we can construct ourselves as ethical subjects engaged in ethical ethnography – inspiring to read and to write".

Chapter 4: Presenting and representing voices: findings through the dialogical inquiry

> *The ultimate gift of story is twofold; that at least one soul remains*
> *who can tell the story, and that by the recounting of the tale, the*
> *greater forces of love, mercy, generosity and strength are*
> *continuously called into being in the world. (Estés, 1993, p.3)*

Introduction: the descriptive and reflexive perspectives

I claim this study as narrative research because it was based on the participants' accounts, even if those accounts were not linear and did not always present the structure of a plot as a unit as defined by Aristotle (1961, p.15). Although my main interest is in the language used, I am not developing a discourse analysis, but rather a narrative description, and in so doing I provide an analysis and interpretation simultaneously with re-presenting the data. In this study the data are essentially the voices of the participants and co-participants[10]. The analysis is the echo of these voices, which may unintentionally distort them, but purposefully retains the essence of the lives spoken through those voices.

In practical terms, the process of analysis consisted of a systematic listening and re-listening to the participants' contributions to achieve the best understanding possible of their content in context to capture their messages. Meanwhile, as a result of this hermeneutic process, the need to re-interpret my perceptions in a metaphorical and fictional manner emerged. Therefore, alongside an attempt to realise the meanings of literal words spoken by the data, a symbolisation of those meanings/findings allowed them to speak for themselves. In other words, my analysis was intended to amplify the participants' voices such that readers could listen to them, as if at first hand, and come to know the participants as individuals as opposed to abstractions, and draw their own meanings and conclusions. The dual perspective analysis embedded three foci as follows.

1. The first and major focus of analysis is on the possible answers to the research questions. Therefore, the analysis considers the verbal and visual language used by participants to portray themselves and others. It is via this focus that I analyse

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[10] The term co-participants here designates the adults (i.e. Mrs Bell, Miss Green and Sandra) who accompanied some of the participants, and due to their impact on the outcomes, I have decided to highlight their co-participation

the presence and context of metaphors, the relationship between different concepts and any similarities and dissimilarities emerging from different settings.

2. The second focus of analysis is on the methodology itself and the contribution of the participants to the evolution of the methods used. Here I reflect upon the process as a whole.

3. The third focus that gradually became relevant during the data collection was the role of power relations, mainly the interference/impact of the adults who accompanied some of the participants and therefore took part in the interviews as co-participants.

With the above foci in mind, I have developed the combined examination of the outcomes that involves the factual/literal analysis, which is essentially a description of the data, alongside the fictional/metaphorical analysis, which is a self-reflexive interpretation of the data. The descriptive analysis, however, is informed mainly by visual methods, shaping the verbal analysis accordingly. Therefore, the narrative analysis serves as the starting point and thread for the course of the narrative analysis of the verbal voices.

Although the corpus of analysis is presented in two distinct genres (factual and fictional), both embrace the dialogic nature of this inquiry, which can only possibly make sense when the interlocution actors/agents and the context in which the interactions take place are made explicit. Therefore, prior to the analysis per se, I introduce the participants individually and in context.

Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2010, p.39) argue that "any major analysis should begin and end with open-ended processes, with more structured investigation taking place during the mid-section of this circular journey". This resonates with the dialogical inquiry, and the description in chapter 3 represents the open-ended stage. Now, I return to the cycle and to its development in action, how the data analysis has been structured and conducted. Once I started the process of gaining access to potential participants, the dialogical cycle had been initiated and it gradually developed with the contribution of each group of participants. Table 4.1provides a summary of the cycle, the original purpose of each stage, and how that stage turned into action.

The cycle comprises a series of action-reflection activities developed as part of the dialogue between researcher and participants as the agents of interlocutional acts in significant conversations. The fieldwork has shown the cycle to be feasible and effective, as the dialogic essence was evident throughout the inquiry process, with adaptations based on the participants' contributions and styles. The starting point involved the preparation for the data collection activities, such as writing the ethics protocol (Appendix 1, pp. 184-90) contacting prospective participants, and gaining consent from participants and their carers. At this

stage, the bigger challenge was accessing the participants. One major change that was necessary was accepting that the special school would nominate the participants instead of providing them with the opportunity to volunteer. A second change was reaching other groups through means other than schools, accessing two participants via their mother, and another participant through his informal volunteering later endorse by his parents.

Predicted stage	Original design/plan	Major points of cycle in action
	The initial encounters consist of activities aimed at creating rapport, promoting interaction, and encouraging dialogue.	All groups have shown an immediate interest in participating and a openness to dialogue with the researcher.
	The first consultation is aimed at checking significant points of the previous encounter and working towards the next one. At this point the work consists of verifying the researcher's inferences against the participants' responses and discarding any misunderstandings from previous meeting.	The consultation was shaped according to the dynamics of the group. In the mainstream school it was the hardest interaction as the participants did not show as much interest in this activity as they did in other activities, explicitly expressing their discontent.
	After the initial encounters it is crucial to have a reflective time, to consider the participants' contribution when working in preparation for the next stage.	In all cases this was a significant part of the process, contributing to the achievements of the process as a whole. It was extremely helpful to keep the flexibility and open mind for the changes which were always necessary.
	The main characteristics of this stage is that the researcher talk is kept at a minimum, and the intervention is aimed at clarifying information given and providing significant feedback to keep the dialogue alive.	It was at this point that most of the participants worked with the visuals to make self XE "self" -/portraits. In the mainstream school participants worked in pairs, and in he family home the mother was involved to some extent, as she made her self-portrait.
	The second consultation is aimed at checking the visuals developed in the previous encounter. At this point all photos of images are presented to the participants for identification and discussion/analysis.	This stage was adapted for all groups, including proposed activities using drawings and/or making other images using the body parts. This adaptation took into consideration the outcomes of the first consultation when the participants expressed some boredom at just discussing/interpreting their previous production. In the special school group an activity focused on a second take of making pictures was conceived to address contradictions in the reading of the first set of images.

	In view of the development of the images and the discussion about them, planning begins for the next step, always taking into account the contribution provided by the participants. .	In all groups this activity included a look at pictures created so far, which were printed out in colour and given to their authors. In the family home the use of drawings during the verbal activities was recurrent and helpful for keeping Teresa engaged in the conversation.
	At this point the researcher already has a good knowledge about the participants' interactions XE "interactionism:interactions" in the group, therefore, a more spontaneous approach is possible.	Participants were encouraged to tell stories freely, make drawings about them and so on. At this stage each group was driven by the dynamics that was already in development, with little intervention by the researcher.
	The final encounter consists of a review of what was done, a simple assessment of the activities and of what the participants believe to have contributed to the researcher learning experience. It is also the time to acknowledge their help and to complete the cycle with them.	This last meeting was an opportunity to give something meaningful to the participants to remember our encounters. At this point they were made aware that our work together was completed. They were informed about the possible outcomes and that their school (or parents in two cases) would be informed of the end result of the research.
	The final reflective action is a longer lasting and more sophisticated one, which comprises a systematic revisit of all stages and a systematic listening and re-listening of the encounters to deepen the understanding to permit a more appropriate retelling.	This stage comprises the whole data analysis, which is detailed in the present chapter.
	The writing process is a result of a dialectic reading of the data and of the knowledge available elsewhere to make sense of what the participants taught us.	The completion of the thesis marks the full cycle and a reflective look at the whole process and prospects for future research.

Table 4-1: The stages of the dialogical inquiry cycle in action

Agents and settings of the dialogical act: the interlocutors in context

The production of any category of data starts from the people involved in the creation process, passes by the context in which the production has taken place to finally include the content produced. Therefore, following the order of the three sites of the image, I start with the participants and co-participants, including the context and highlight aspects such as the setting, type of environment, and the social interactions that characterised the micro-cultures/contexts. The outcomes of the dialogical inquiry have proven insightful regarding all groups in this study, but each group tells a different story. Therefore, I introduce each participant individually, grouping them accordingly to the setting of the encounters. I use the visual self-portraits they have created to illustrate my descriptions with the purpose of preventing a disembodied abstraction of the individuals.

In addition to predictable discrepancies between individual performances and my perception of them, the length of time spent with each participant was distinct, owing mainly to the access provided by the gatekeepers. The special school allocated four hour-long meetings, which provided a significant time to engage the participants in the conversation. The meetings involved two participants at a time. The mainstream school made available two chunks of three meetings, making six half-hour meetings. Seven children volunteered and took part in the encounters in this group. The third group comprised two siblings who I interviewed in their home with the support of their mother across five meetings each lasting between forty minutes an hour. The last interview activity, lasting two hours, was with a single participant without any other adult present. This was a peculiar activity, where I tried to engage the participant in a brief analysis of the data gathered so far.

Setting 1: Special school

Participants: Carl and Lynne (pupils)
Co-participant: Mrs Bell (support worker)
Gatekeeper: Ms Frost (Assistant headmaster)
Total of encounters: 4
Total time spent together: 4 hours

 I met Carl at the special school he attends, together with another pupil from his class, Lynne, and a support worker who accompanied her. Carl was a quiet fourteen-year-old, who seemed to understand Lynne's language remarkably well and who was always willing to translate whenever needed. Carl told that he appreciates arts and enjoys painting. He described himself as an artist and said he did not like to copy anyone's work, preferring to create by himself. Carl transpired to be an intriguing

participant due to his portraits and self-portraits and the ways he dealt with their identification. According to the information he provided, he is the only child with learning difficulties in the family, and he has two adult brothers, one a painter-decorator and the other moving to live on his own while attending college. Carl was tranquil and showed a constant willingness to participate and to help. He showed some interest in my personal life, asking me where I would go, things I would do when I was not there with them. He also expressed some discontent when was told that the interviews were about to end.

I met Lynne at the special school, together with Carl and accompanied by Mrs Bell, a support worker appointed by the school to help Lynne to communicate with me. Initially I had some difficulty in understanding the way Lynne articulated some words, but gradually our communication became smoother. Despite my difficulties with understanding her, Lynne was extremely talkative and prone to discuss personal subjects that affected her. Disappointingly, her attempts were systematically frustrated by Mrs Bell who would interrupt her to correct her posture or to re-direct the focus of her talk. Several opportunities were missed by this interference together with my inability to stop Mrs Bell or to encourage Lynne to keep on talking regardless.

Lynne was the only child attending special school in the family while her three sisters attended mainstream school. She showed some awareness of her sexuality by an acute interest in one particular boy, to whom she referred very often. Mrs Bell added that, "Lynne has an obsession on this boy". Lynne also highlighted her breasts in a self-portrait drawing, making sure I could recognise them, and by this allowing me to infer that she saw them as important to her body image. Overall Lynne presented herself as an intelligent girl, sensitive to abuse by peers who upset her by calling her names or excluding her from their groups. Her accounts of these facts were manifestly emphatic/emotional, but usually discontinuous because of the interventions of Mrs Bell (See appendix 4)

As part of the access negotiations the special school had asked me to bring an assistant to support the activities. However, at the last minute they indicated that this was not necessary as they had a support worker who would accompany the participant with communication difficulties. That person was Mrs Bell, whom I did not have chance to meet prior to the encounters with the participants. Although I had discussed the research in detail with the assistant headteacher, the information did not seem to have been passed on to Mrs Bell. Therefore, her attempts to help were instead undesired interferences. At the end of that first session, I briefly explained the methodology I was applying and the importance of letting the participants express themselves freely, that there was no right or wrong in their responses. Her interruptions became less frequent in the subsequent meetings, but never totally stopped. Mrs Bell was a significant presence in this group, affecting the outcomes to some

extent with her interference together with the effect that her presence had on the participants and myself.

Setting 2: Family home

Participants: Teresa and Lidka (sisters)
Gatekeeper and co-participant: Sandra (mother)
Total of encounters: 5
Total time spent together: 5 hours

I met Teresa in her home together with her older sister, Lidka, and their mother, Sandra. As soon as we started the activities, Teresa was talkative and agitated; she was cooperative but would withdraw for a few moments as she seemed to get bored very easily. Making drawings while we talked was an effective way for her to stay content and interested in the conversation. She was articulate and she indicated discontent about her [special] school from the beginning, trying to convince me that she was attending her sister's [mainstream] school. She mentioned that she did not like some of the children in the special school, because of their behaviour, and that she was transferred from one class to another and was not quite sure which year she was in now. Her mother informed me that she did not approve of the change because some of her favourite friends stayed in the other group.

Teresa had a few outbursts during the interviews, which were managed by her mother. She presented as an able eight-year-old, who attended special school probably because of her behaviour. She showed some prejudice in the language used when referring to children with Down syndrome; she seems to have a clear notion of the separation between "normal" and "abnormal" children, which she referred to as 'spaz'. Teresa was very keen on doing her homework while I was there. Apparently she wanted to show me she was starting to read. She always showed a strong willingness to write, even to copy whatever her sister wrote. She was keen to learn and interact. However, her most salient behaviour was her dominance over her sister's will, constantly demanding to have what Lidka had chosen or dominating the conversation and interrupting Lidka.

I met Lidka in her home together with her younger sister, Teresa, and their mother, Sandra. Lidka showed interest in helping me from the very beginning and seemed very keen on encouraging her sister to participate as well. Overall Lidka's behaviour was accommodating and somehow submissive to Teresa. Sandra had told me that Lidka was supposed to go to a special school, but after being assessed she was placed in a mainstream school.

Lidka wrote a few short stories and made several drawings spontaneously during our conversation. She was always willing to withdraw her own choices in favour of those of Teresa. She seemed to believe that Teresa could not be contradicted, or that she would not understand that she should not demand her sister's things. Lidka was keen to show affection to me, constantly saying that she liked me and that she was very happy to have me in their home. The main theme of Lidka's stories was bullying and a quest for friendship.

 A mutual friend introduced Sandra and I. She told me she had four children, three of them with some special educational need: one girl was placed in a special school, the other in a mainstream school and the boy in another special school. Sandra had agreed to ask her children if they wanted to take part in my study. Teresa and Lidka volunteered. I knew a bit about Sandra's personal story and family struggles, and prior to the interviews I had an opportunity to discuss with her the purposes of the study and my methodology. When we met for the interview activities she was extremely helpful and supportive. Her presence was highly significant although her support did not represent any perceptible interference. As Sandra engaged with the girls in the conversation and seemed excited about the visuals, she spontaneously made her own self-portrait.

Setting 3: Mainstream school

Participants: Andrew, Adeline, Arthur, Edwina, Chloe, Catherine and Scott (Year 2 pupils)

Co-participant: Miss Green (learning assistant)

Gatekeeper: Mrs Blossom (headmaster)

Total of encounters: 6

Total time spent together: 3 hours

 I met Andrew in the mainstream school, together with other two children from his class and four from other two classes. Andrew constantly volunteered to talk and told several made-up stories, in which invariably he was the main character. Very often Andrew would start talking using a baby-like voice, which he gradually would shift to his own tone. Andrew told funny stories for much of the time and seemed very pleased with the reactions of others. Although very talkative, Andrew did not tell any personal stories or give away any information about family life.

 I also met Adeline in the mainstream school, together with other six children, none of whom were from her own class. Adeline seemed slightly timid in this group, and even withdrew her participation in one occasion when she forgot to bring a book I had given them in the previous meeting, wanting to return to her

class. Following my commitment to voluntary participation expressed in the ethics protocol, I did not insist on her staying. However, on the next day she returned.

I met Arthur in the same mainstream group, together with two children from his class and four from other two classes. I was previously informed that Arthur had a statement of special needs, due to his behaviour. The headmaster told me that he had been excluded from two different schools previously. She added that she wondered how he would behave with me and so appointed a learning support assistant to accompany Arthur during the encounters and offered to intervene if we needed extra help. Despite all predictions, Arthur never presented any inappropriate behaviour and participated very enthusiastically.

Edwina was also part of the mainstream group, together with two peers from her class and four from different classes. Edwina was not among the most talkative in this group, and talked mostly only when addressed directly. Although apparently shy, she showed interest in all activities and at the end was the only participant in the group to bring some feedback to me – a thank you card for the time we had together.

Chloe was another participant of the mainstream group. She was identified as having a statement of special educational needs due to learning difficulties, but her participation did not show evidence of this. Chloe was extremely responsive to all proposed activities and seemed to enjoy telling stories. The recurrent themes in her accounts were accidents, illnesses – particularly cancer – and death. However, her approach to all these themes was humorous.

Catherine was part of the mainstream group and also identified as having learning difficulties, namely communication issues, though she was not statemented. However, she communicated very effectively both with me and with the group. Catherine was attentive to all activities and positively responsive to them, although less talkative than the average in the group. She seemed to be the most influenced by the dominant Andrew.

Scott

I met Scott in the mainstream school with other two children from his class and four from other classes. Prior to meeting him I was informed that he had mild learning difficulties. Scott was quieter than the other boys in the group, but showed interest and responsiveness to all activities. He seemed to be less led by the dominant Andrew and keen to do things his own way.

Setting 4: Church

Gatekeeper and participant-analyst: Joshua (member of the community)

Total of encounters: 1

Total time spent together: 2 hours

I met Joshua informally prior to his participation in this study, and he started a conversation about people with learning difficulties. Due to his apparent awareness about the subject and his views on how his school dealt with it, I invited him to participate in the study. However, Joshua was not involved in the interview activities like the other participants. Instead, I invited him to help me to analyse the data that I was already working on. Joshua's contribution added value to this process by providing an alternative perspective.

Findings through the factual/literal descriptive analysis

The descriptive nature of the factual/literal component of my analysis revealed a set of findings that resonate with the facts shown on and by the data. I termed those findings "primary" to underline their chronological surfacing and also a certain degree of authority above the subsequent set that is the "secondary findings", which the reflexive analysis entailed. This section embraces this first analysis.

Summary of primary findings

The twelve participants have engaged in the interview and conversation activities dynamically and enthusiastically, therefore providing a set of valid visual and verbal data which allowed me to infer that the participants:

- were capable of expressing their perceptions both verbally and visually;
- visually portrayed differences between able/disabled people that were not explicitly verbally expressed;
- when asked about differences in terms of learning difficulties have not shown any particular idiom;
- sometimes visually portrayed perceptions of differences/difficulties negatively; and
- occasionally visually and verbally expressed their perception of difficulties by other negative variables (i.e. ugliness, sadness, etc.)

There was no significant dissimilarity between the engagement of participants with learning difficulties and participants without learning difficulties or between those in special schools and those in mainstream. The distinctive discrepancy was solely the exercise of authorship

and agency that was partially denied to one participant from the special school (Lynne), as discussed in this chapter. The special school helper displayed a style of support that seems to be informed by a perception of learning difficulties which, as discussed earlier, makes people with learning difficulties voiceless by monitoring their actions and expressions.

The above inferences were made possible by a descriptive analysis of the data, and a reflexive analysis of my perception of those data, initially by separating the visual and the verbal productions. However, as the analysis grew in depth and structure, I felt the need to reconnect the two modalities which were generated together and intrinsically interdependently. One strong characteristic of the twofold narrative analysis that I have developed is the notion of data as a unity, a whole. Although breaking down the data was necessary in the initial stages of analysis, it was evident that the pieces when separated lost their meaningful entirety. Therefore, after separating the parts, the whole body of data was reassembled in the factual/literal and the fictional/metaphorical analyses. Due to the significance of the images created by the participants both as visual data and in connection with the generation of verbal data, I present my initial examination, which prioritises the visual component of the analysis.

Approaches to analysis: the pathways to the findings

I have presented a summary of the findings addressing the main foci of analysis. I now present the process of looking at the data in search for responses to the research questions. Having in mind the three foci mentioned above, I engaged with the literature on qualitative analysis, seeking the best approach to the purposes I had. Although it was natural to focus on "narrative analysis, which involves a preference for emphasizing the flow in what people say interview" (Hardy and Bryman, 2009, p.4), I began with a brief content analysis, which is based on a quantification of qualitative data.

Content analysis of visual images: a short variation on the route

Before immersing myself in the narrative analysis, I did some quantifying to organise the data and my perceptions of them. Although I consider content analysis appealing in terms of its practicalities, objectivity and empiricism, it is not persuasive in terms of its application to the study, which has some nuances of comparative analysis but it is not aimed at testing "comparative hypothesis by means of quantification of categories" (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2010, p.13). Silverman (2006, p.163) argues that, "the theoretical basis of content analysis is at best unclear", therefore, the outcomes unreliable, though he acknowledges the usefulness of categorising the content as a helpful way to organise it. I concur and therefore drafted a group of categories based on the research aims and questions to organise the visual voice. This led to the choice of four variables: 1) the learning difficulties status of the person

portrayed in the image; 2) the absence/distortion of face features in the portraits; also 3) the absence/distortion of body parts (which in the case of facial portraits the face was considered the body); and 4) the expressed correlation between learning difficulties/abilities to other categories of variables such as aesthetics and behaviour. Each of these four variables entails a range of values, as shown in table 4.2. Based on those values I carried out an analysis by quantifying the instances of each category (value). The outcomes using a scale of relevance[11] of low[12], medium[13] and high[14] are presented in Table 4-3 and Table 4-4. However, this quantification has simply organising purposes, only partially informing the narrative analysis that follows it.

Variables			
Learning difficulties (LD)	Absence or distortion of face features	Absence or distortion of body parts	Correlation with other values
with	Absence	Absence	Beautiful/ Proportional
	Presence	Presence	Ugly/ Disproportional
without	Accuracy	Accuracy	Happy/well behaved
	Distortion	Distortion	Sad/badly behaved
2	4	4	8

(left margin label: Values)

Table 4-2: Learning difficulties (LD)[15] depictions in self-/portraits: values on four variables

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[11] In the above content analysis, the relevance of each value was established taking into account the research aims and questions, external intervention, and the interference of the medium.

[12] Instances that were prompted by the research (e.g. the request of self-portraits, the participant did not have a choice to choose to portray someone else, so it is not much relevant if the individual portrayed had LD or not), also the instances that are not widely spread as a component of a certain stereotype (e.g. able-bodied individuals being considered happy and disabled sad).

[13] Instances that were not prompted by the researcher and related to the research purposes, but that the limitations of the medium (the material used to create the visuals) have likely influenced the end result (e.g. the disproportion among the face features as the offer was not accurately scaled).

[14] Instances that were not prompted by the researcher, related directly to the research aims and questions, and that the end result was not defined by the medium (e.g. the absence of nose in a face where nose was available).

[15] For the purposes of the tables the dichotomy dis/ability embeds the research aim of listening to participants with and without learning difficulties and the representations of self and other also with and without learning difficulties.

Content	Occurrences	% (31 images)	Relevance
Absence or distortion of face features	27	87	**High**
Absence of distortion of body parts	27	87	**High**
Ugly	05	16	**Medium**
Well behaved	25	81	**High**
Disproportional	16	52	**Medium**
Sad (or not smiling)	05	16	**Medium**
Bad behaved/naughty	26	84	**Medium**
Nice/good looking	06	19	**High**
Proportional	15	48	**Medium**
Happy	26	84	**Medium**

Table 4-3: Depiction of dis/ability– focused on participants with LD

Content	Occurrences	% (16 images)	Relevance
Absence or distortion of face features	4	25	**Medium**
Absence of distortion of body parts	3	18	**Medium**
Ugly	2	13	**High**
Disproportional	3	18	**Low**
Sad (or not smiling)	4	25	**Low**
Bad behaved	0	0	**Low**
Nice/good looking	8	50	**High**
Proportional	8	50	**Medium**
Happy	11	68	**High**
Well behaved	15	94	**Medium**

Table 4-4: on depiction of LD - focused on participants without LD

Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2010, p.25) argue that, "the explicit definition and quantification that content analysis involves are no guarantee, in themselves, that one can make valid inferences from the data yielded by such an empirical procedure". I concur with this argument in relation to this study and favoured a narrative analysis, which consists of an account of the production of the images by each group of participants and a search within the images and their underpinning situational and factual context for answers to the research questions.

The site of the image and its modalities

Rose (2007, p.13) argues that "interpretations of visual images broadly concur that there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences"

(emphasis in original). Rose also maintains that each of these sites has three modalities. The analysis I present here foregrounds the three sites such as 1) technological, 2) compositional, and 3) social. These sites and modalities correlate to my three foci analysis, but their significance is differently weighted. The site which best envelops the research question is that of the images themselves. Therefore, this is the central site of analysis, within which the three modalities presented by Rose interrelate in a hierarchical order of relevance that is made explicit in Table 4.5.

The site of the image itself		
Taking into account the centre of the three foci analysis (Focus 1), the site of the image itself must have the greater weight in the task of making sense of the visual data.		
Technological modality	Compositional modality	Social modality
The chief modality in the dialogical inquiry analysis is the compositional, which embraces the processes involved in creating the images. However, the technological aspect of the images themselves is relevant to study them. Therefore, these two modalities interrelate with each other in the task of making sense of visual voices. In addition, the technological modality is applicable to the aim of analysing the methodological response (Focus 2).		The social modality is usually a central aspect in visual studies that focus in the site of the audiences that the image is seen. However, in the dialogical inquiry the social modality develops in its relevance since the verbal voices incorporate meanings to the images themselves. Also, it is from the verbal voices that the power relations (Focus 3) become more perceptible, therefore, more analysable.

Table 4-5: The three foci analysis in relation to the site of the image and its modalities

Having taken what I saw as an intentionally more objective look at the visual data and identified specific meaningful outcomes, I started the narrative analysis from the perspective of the visual production. However, the reassembly of verbal and visual emerged and consolidated my narrative approach to analysis, which consists of a description of the visual production and the verbalisations of each participant during the encounters. I developed a set of body parts which later were drawn by a cartoonist. Figure 4.1 shows a thumbnail of the full set (See larger version in Appendix 3) used as the initial visual prompts for the participants to create their portraits. The self-/portraits were created using that set of body parts (printed and cut out), and once finalised, I took photographs of the production - metapictures (Mitchell, 1994) - for recording and subsequent analysis.
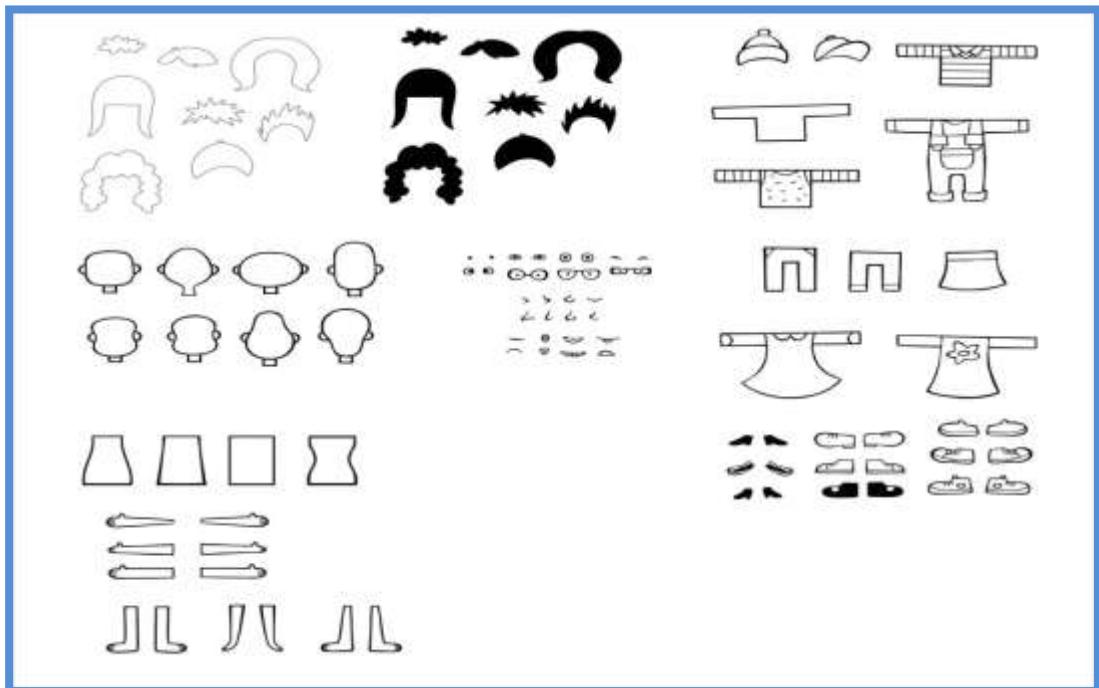
Figure 4-1: Set of body parts used to create self-/portraits

The above set was then printed three times, each to a different scale, to provide the possibility of creating images which were not necessarily proportional in scale. All the parts were completely independent, allowing each participant to make a unique composite. The portraits were not fixed on the paper and each participant would use a sheet of coloured cardboard as canvas, where they would create their images without permanently fixing them. The rationale was to allow a flexible construction that could develop in a series of attempts until the desired result was reached.

A second reason for avoiding sticking the pictures was an attempt to avoid a replication of fixed labels or stigmas in the format of their representation. I wanted the participants to experience the possibility of changing their self-expressions freely at any time, in hope that this freedom would also allow a representation closer to the real self, which I understand to be in constant evolution and change

The body parts were used as visual prompt and common starting point for the participants from where I could analyse how each of them would develop and structure their images. The visuals produced by the participants were primarily of two kinds: 1) self-portraits and 2) portraits of others. To accomplish the analysis of the self-/portraits, which encapsulate the research questions, I start with describing quantitatively through a brief content analysis of visual images, before turning to the narrative analysis, which is the core essence of this chapter. However, the dynamics of the interactions and the diversity of each group

determined the uniqueness of each encounter and consequently of the data generated and gathered. Two major factors determine the thickness of the description:

- the depth of the interview process, which was influenced by the amount of time I spent with each participant and the level of one-to-one interaction that took place in accordance to the size of the group; and
- the relation of the production with the research purposes.

In terms of the first factor, the description of the mainstream school group's production is at one end of this spectrum (less thick) while the special school group's production is at the other end (thicker); while in terms of the second factor the description of the production of self-/portraits is thicker than that of naturally occurring drawings.

The weight of each modality

Rose (2007) proposes that even though multiple modalities can be found in each site of production of images, they must be pondered against the focus of the investigation. She also draws a correlation between each site and the three modalities, explicating the debate around which modality works better for each site. I have chosen the site of the image as most likely to elucidate the meanings of the self-/portraits, and in the same vein the modality with more weight for that analysis is the compositional, followed by the social and the technological in this order. However, for the sake of the narrative, the technological modality is the first to be addressed as it is intrinsically related to and also the basis for the compositional modality. In addition, the technological modality is addressed in general terms, while the other two are also part of the individual analysis of each visual collection. The social modality is the last in the course of the narrative – even though it is the second in relevance – because it incorporates the verbal voices that are also vital to the interpretation of the images and to the fieldwork response to the dialogical inquiry.

This section is organised in the same vein as other parts of this thesis, where I present the participants as individuals in context. Therefore, the collections represent the corpus of visual data created individually and in the social event of the dialogical encounters. The four collections are *collection 1*, authored by Carl, *collection 2* authored by the mainstream school group, *collection 3* authored by the two sisters, and *collection 4* authored by Lynne. The analysis of the collections is based on the site of the image itself and its intrinsic modalities, as source of sense/meaning making of visual representations.

The technological modality: the basis of the compositional one

The main reason for the technological modality to be considered of less relevance in the interpretation of the self-/portraits, is rooted in the research design and methodology. The visual element of dialogical inquiry was conceived based on my interrogations of the literature. Therefore, the use of the set of body parts as the raw material for the portraits cannot be taken into consideration when seeking to make sense of the participants' production, because they have not chosen this "technology". Yet even if the selection of this material was pre-determined it remains necessary to understand the apparatus designated to communicate the perceptions of individuals in visual form.

With the purpose of giving some power of choice to the participants in the production of self-/portraits I provided several options of background colour, enabling unique personalisation to each participant's production. A second relevant feature of the self-/portraits is the mutability characteristics they incorporate. Every image created was an embodiment of the ever-changing identities represented. Their essential ephemeral existence was only countered by the existence of the metapictures in which a certain moment was frozen in the form of a photograph. This aspect is relevant when analysing the self-/portraits because on several occasions this physical volubility allowed multiple tentative images until a preferred one was reached. On occasions the possibility to turn the parts over and over again, to swap between options, even to give up on them and try to draw revealed something about the person in the portrait and the author.

Finally, the technological modality entails another important role in the analytical process when the metapictures return to the scene of the dialogical inquiry encounters in the form of full colour large printed portraits. The impact of the re-encounter with images consistently revealed amazement due to the surprising permanence and solidity of those once volatile and ephemeral images. I offered the printed self-/portraits for the participants to keep if they wanted to, an offer that was promptly and enthusiastically accepted by all participants. The impact of this experience is manifest in the social modality section, when the verbal voices are analytically described in narrative.

The compositional modality: the search for meanings

The above description of the technological modality is a starting point for the compositional analysis of the images produced, as it elucidates aspects that are crucially important to inform the analysis of the final product, as seen in the metapictures. The narrative that follows encompasses an analysis of the images organised in three categories that make up four collections of self-/portraits: a) the individual collections of Carl and Lynne; b) the joint

collection of sisters Teresa and Lidka, and c) the collective collection of the images created by six of the seven participants from the mainstream school. Ten participants[16] and several "others" are portrayed in these collections.

Before turning to the collections themselves, I need to make the epistemological framework of my "eye" explicit. Silverman (2009, p.249) argues that "one of the difficulties in working with images is the range of complex theoretical traditions available", semiotics being one of the most influential among them. According to van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) social semiotics emphasises the syntax of images as a source of representational meanings. This syntax, they argue, can be found in the "time-based semiotic modes", which are concerned with sequencing order, and in space-based semiotic modes, which are concerned with spatial relationships. The latter relates to this research because the images created are not sequential narrative structures. The spatial syntax contributes to the pursuit of representational meanings, which is the matter of the dialogical inquiry in terms of analysis of the visual production.

Despite my overall narrative approach and my analytical narrative of the visuals most of the data produced consist of conceptual images rather than visual narratives. I define the self-/portraits as "conceptual structures" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.109) because they visually define, analyse and classify the individuals they portray. Therefore, the analysis consists of the identification of the syntactic structure used by each author-participant and symbolic structures they produced, that is, the self-/portraits themselves.

Bearing in mind the contributions of iconography for the interpretation of images, the symbolic attributes are recognized through one or more characteristics, such as they are made salient in the representation by their size, position, color, relation to other images and so on (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). In addition, my analysis also takes into consideration the argument of Kress and van Leeuween (2006, p.177) that composition relates representational and interactive meanings of the image to each other through three basic elements:

- Information value: the placement of elements in a given image indicates the values attached to the different areas of the image (i.e. left-right, bottom-top, centre-margin)
- **Salience:** the elements in the image are used to attract the viewer's attention in different level to different elements, making some more appealing to the eye than others

[16] Two of the twelve participants are not portrayed in any of the collections: Tom, who did not attend school on the occasion that the self-/portraits were created; and Joshua, whose participation was limited to analyzing the already created images.

- **Framing:** the association or dissociation between elements in a single image is indicated by the presence or absence of connectors, such lines and frames.

This social semiotics framework proposed by Kress and van Leeuween (2006) provides some indicators from which meanings can be made from images. However, I have considered that this framework can be useful for my analysis but cannot fully inform my interpretation of the self-/portraits. Therefore, taking into account the images that I witnessed being produced to which I was simultaneously an interlocutor and audience, apart from being the person who suggested their creation, I develop an alternative version of that framework.

First of all, I consider the notion of information value as a whole rather than considering the detailed values proposed by the authors (i.e. given-new associated to left-right, real-ideal associated to bottom-top, and centrality-marginality associated to center-margin of the image). In that sense, I relate to the notion that the positioning of the elements that compose an image reveal the values of those elements, that is their meaning or representational rationale. However, the strict correlations left-right, top-bottom and so on do not seem to apply when looking at the self-/portraits themselves. They seem to assign value to information more in relation to the correspondence between the placement of body parts in the images and the typical human body. Therefore, it is the placement of the elements in the image, but differing from the specifications of the framework.

A second point is the notion of framing, because in the particular case of self-/portraits, it is possible to address the research questions by looking at the ways the representation of self and other as a body – of a whole person or just the face. Therefore, in our case the frame – as the element that unites or separates the parts as belonging together or apart – is played by the representation of the body or face as a whole or as a disjointed entity.

Taking into account the apparatus used for the creation of the self-/portraits and the final product itself, the salience is the major factor and it is determined by subjective reactions to the images. Therefore, in images that portray human bodies, distortion (e.g. upside-down mouth), absences (e.g. faces without eyes or nose) and excesses of qualities (e.g. disproportional large mouth or nose) or quantities (e.g. four arms) of typical parts appear to catch the eye and consequently become salient. With these notions in mind, I turn to the four collections of images themselves.

The social modality: the verbal response of the audience

In this analysis, the social modality is evidenced in the production and, more relevantly, the "audiencing" (Rose, 2007, p.22) of the self-portraits. The audience here is composed by the authors themselves; the peers, where the collaborative analysis was possible; me the researcher; and the participant-analyst, Joshua. Consequently, the role of language in this study comprises the use of verbal expression to interpret the visual representations.

Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1976, p.16) argues that "by speaking to somebody we point towards the unique thing we mean", and that the language with its public shared devices allows us to share our meanings with others. However, this mutual understanding is not unproblematic and the dialogue plays a decisive part in overcoming the non-communicability of experience. In dialogue the interlocutors exchange understandings and can solve ambiguities and clarify doubts. Based on this thought, the verbal voices in this analysis are the result of this dialogical context, in which the "impression" that the participants had of events that they succeeded in transcending into "ex-pression" (Ricoeur, 1976, p.19) in the form of visual and/or verbal voice. The major purpose of the dialogical inquiry was to engage with the participants' perspectives regarding their school experiences and the ways they identify themselves and their peers. The interview and consultation activities were successfully used to promote the atmosphere for conversation, encouraging the participants to express themselves freely and to actively interact with each other's expressions. I opted to use semi-structured and unstructured interviews with open-ended questions and prompts to talk. My questions were mostly around school experiences, likes and dislikes, friendships and difficulties. The activities using the visuals to create portraits and self-portraits offered new opportunities for participants to address questions related to their views on dis/ability, although their preferred terminology was the duality clever/unclever, usually also associated with more negative wording.

When proposing his dialectic of event and meaning in discourse, Ricoeur (1976, p.9) argues that "only the message gives actuality to language, and discourse grounds the very existence of language since only the discrete and each time unique acts of discourse actualize the code". In this sense we may infer that the content of communication extrapolates its form, its structure. Therefore, it would be pertinent to think of an analysis of verbal expression as the analysis of the message transmitted through language, using a certain code, which depending on the speaker style and ability may only be understood within the event that is in the context of the delivering of the message. Ricoeur proposes a notion of speech as an event, which he argues, "provides the key to the transition from a linguistics of the code to a linguistics of the message" (p.9).

Taking into account the above postulate, I reflect upon my search for the messages that my participants provided in conversation with me at that particular time and space, beyond an analysis of the language. In so doing, I try to avoid an abstract reduction of language as

code to focus on the message. This seems particularly relevant when listening to my participants' voices and the variety of ways they each communicate. Although this study is concerned with *how* the participants represent themselves and others; the core impetus for this concern is *what* they imply, that is the meanings of their identities. It is more to do with the value attached to the words and images rather than to the actual denotation of words and style of discourse. In this sense, my analysis fits with the proposition that "if all discourse is actualized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning" (Ricoeur, 1976, p.12)(.

Taking into account the principles of the dialogical inquiry, the interview activities took shape in accordance with the participants' responses to my propositions. Therefore, in each group the conversation circulated slightly differently, even if the main focus was the same: stories and images about school, self, peers and significant others. In the analysis of the verbal voices, the dialogical act, which is the centre of the study, can be identified as the "interlocutionary act" (Ricoeur, 1976, p.14). But, as well, it is the social modality. The descriptions in this chapter are intended to actualise the participants' accounts of their experiences entailing the search for meaning. Therefore, bearing in mind the situation/context in which the discourse emerged becomes crucial, because

> the event is not only experience as expressed and communicated, but also the intersubjective exchange itself, the happening of dialogue. The instance of discourse is the instance of dialogue. Dialogue is an event which connects two events, that of speaking and that of hearing. It is to this dialogical event that understanding as meaning is homogeneous (Ricoeur, 1976, p.16)

Ricoeur (1976, pp.20-1) postulates that:

> language is not a world of its own. It is not even a world. However, because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we orient ourselves comprehensively in those situations, we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language.

Thus, there would be a relationship between the ways an individual comprehends the world and the ways their experience transcends into language. Consequently, for dialogue to be an exchange between interlocutors it is necessary that a mutual faith exists that both have something to say. This relates to faith in the other, seen by Freire as a condition of dialogue. I infer from my experience with them that my participants had a lot more to tell about their experience than the situation was able to foster. However, the most relevant messages raised shed some light on the participants' perceptions of their identity and of others.

The messages came in the form of verbal accounts, through which each participant told something insightful about their school experiences, most of them are tales of distress and embarrassment caused by others. These accounts only make sense in context and so does their analysis. With the purpose of bringing these accounts and their inherent messages into this thesis, I have selected the parts of our conversations in which I made sense of what the participants articulated about their experiences.

Each of the four different settings (special school, mainstream school, family home, church) had its own dynamics, determined by the nature/function of the setting and the characteristics of the group. These provide vital context for the data. The four interviewed groups were unique in shape, size and location precluding direct/explicit comparisons or analogies of their dynamics. However, the purpose here is not to compare or measure, but rather to learn from each group alone and from each participant as an individual with their distinctiveness and uniqueness, and also their situational performance in each specific group, space and time. Next I briefly describe the background of the four interview activities, their situation and dynamics.

The thickness of descriptions and the depth of analysis of the four collections

Following the degree of thickness of the description (as explained earlier, p.116), the visual analysis also presents different levels of depth and of diversity of perspectives as specified in Figure 4.2.

Carl's production, as it was in this instance that the research questions and the method of inquiry were covered at best.

The second level embraces the analysis of the mainstream school participants' production. It is the second higher level because in this instance the consultation activity was made possible.

The third level includes the analysis of the sisters' production, which I consider being closer to the lower level due to the significance of the visual production of self-/portraits and the low engagement of the participants in the consultation activity.

Figure 4-2: The thickness of the descriptions and the depth of the analysis

Therefore, taking into account the above four level hierarchy and the three basic elements of social semiotics outlined, I present the four instances of analysis, organised into collections,

ordered from the top (Carl's) to the lower level (Lynne's). Each of these four stances presents a sequential structure including a description of each collection of self-/portraits, followed by A) a chart showing the relationship between the categories of visual representation; and B) a table explicating how the author identified the self-/portraits, together with my perception of them and that of the participant-analyst (Joshua).

Collection 1: the production of Carl

Compositional modality

When invited to create a self-portrait, Carl did so gladly. His final image consisted of a head and a pair of legs with twisted, turned-in feet. No facial features or any other body parts were included, although there was a full range of options on offer on our workspace. After Carl had said that his picture was complete, I took a photograph of it for the record and asked him to confirm who that image represented. At this point he said that it was a friend. I was intrigued by both the shape he had given to the representation and by his identification of who he was representing. To clarify the latter, I reintroduced the activity in a later encounter, repeating the request for a self-portrait and making sure that Carl had clearly understood my request. The result of the second take on the same activity was another image with resemblances to the first dubious self-portrait. The most visible distinction between the new image and the previous was the use of some facial features in the new. At this time Carl clarified that this was "him" and he seemed very pleased with the result. When he saw the photo of the self-portrait on my digital camera's screen he visibly recognized himself.

In addition to the two self-portraits, Carl created portraits of friends from his special school and two representing his body-abled brothers. The pattern here was the secrecy about the identification of the friends and the unusual choice of body features for all of the friends, in contrast to a typical representation of his brothers. In the second take I restricted the participants' choice of whom to portray to who was present in the room. As a result, Carl did not keep the identities secret and he made portraits of Lynne and me. This diagram puts into perspective the syntax of the visuals that Carl created. The three major categories seem to interrelate through the information value present in the embodiment of each identity. The categories appear to tell us about Carl's perceptions of learning difficulties, where the position of the body parts indicates the differences between individual abilities. If we are to accept this premise without psychoanalysing the images, it is also apparent that based on this syntax, the images tell us that Carl sees himself as the most "disabled".
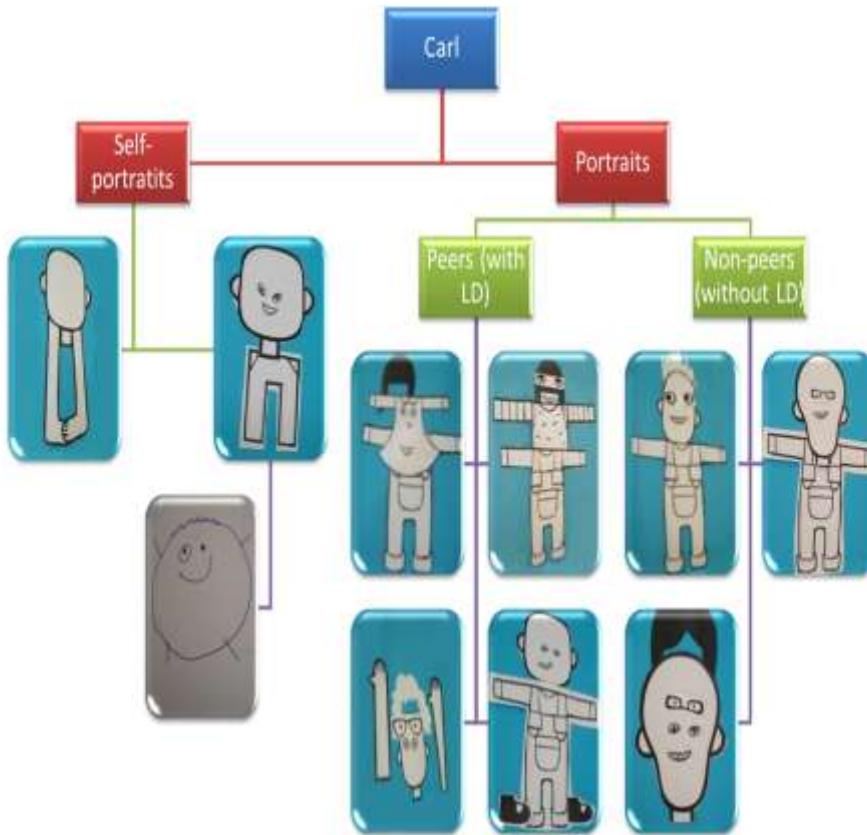
Figure 4-3: The relationship between the self-/portraits (author: Carl)

Social modality: the various readings of self-/portraits

Although the configuration of Carl's self-/portraits represented above appears to be self-evident in terms of representations of different abilities, I also have considered the information that the author had given away during the consultation activity. In addition I contrast this information with my own perceptions/inferences and those of Joshua. The result is a correlational description of those particular perceptions presented in Table 4.6.

Image	What the author said	What I have seen	What Joshua said
	I'd do me (Transc A-4, L.106) That's my friend (Transc A-5, LL. 133-4)	The missing face and the twisted feet. It is not clear if it is head and legs or arms. Back then I did not consider it being the arms.	**Might be like he's sitting down (20, L.60)** **He doesn't have anything on it (face), he only has his ears and his feet (L.62).** **(I told Joshua that Carl changed his mind about this being himself)** **Maybe it doesn't look like him, he looks different to that (L.66)**

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	Can I keep this? (Transc x) You're going to take a picture? (T) Look, that's me! (T) My eyes, my mouth, my ears, my trousers (T) Can I take it home? (T)	Similar scheme to the first one, again missing the body and arms.	**It is like the baby has arms, the legs look like arms (L.120)** **Like he walks on them (L.123)** **It looks like now he's got a face. (L.127)**
		The body that seems to be also the head or the head that is the body.	**[Joshua has not commented on this one.]**
	Carl said this was a friend from his class the special school.	A confusing figure, which could be a girl with hair bands and a funny shaped face.	**Looks like he's holding a friend up to help each other (L.73)** **It looks like two people (L.76)**
	Carl said this was also a friend from his class the special school.	Someone wearing some sort of garment that covers the face partially. Could be a Muslim girl. The face is a little disturbing, without a nose. Also the four arms are salient in the picture.	**This looks like a super-hero**
	Carl said this was the researcher.	**Here Carl represented me. At the time it seemed strange that he gave me 4 eyes. Only later, during my systematic listening of the audio I realised that he wanted to put the glasses over the eyes, but they were not cut out and he apparently ignored the eyes already on the glasses.**	**He looks like somebody helping (L.84)** **He has like four eyes but he doesn't seem happy, sad or okay. He must be like sad or something. He looks like a baby. (L.90-91)**

Table 4-6: Reading-telling of the self-/portraits (author: Carl)

Collection 2: the production of the mainstream school group

Compositional analysis

This collection consists of a portrait and a self-portrait of each participant. In this group the preferred language to name learners with/without learning difficulties was the duality "clever/unclever". However, it was evident that for this group some concepts were taken as interrelated or exchangeable, such as ugliness and bad behavior or beauty and intelligence/ability. Therefore, the syntax of this collection seems to be that in which the aesthetics of the portrait informs what conceptualisations have been represented in the visual.

The diagram shown in figure 4.4 tells the story of how this group constructed this collection. The choice of doing a portrait of someone with or someone without learning difficulties was not given to them, as I wanted to observe different representations. Therefore, I suggested the category of portrait based on the self-portrait. In other words, if a child made a self-portrait with some of the syntactic characteristics of representations of learning difficulties, I would suggest a portrait of someone without.
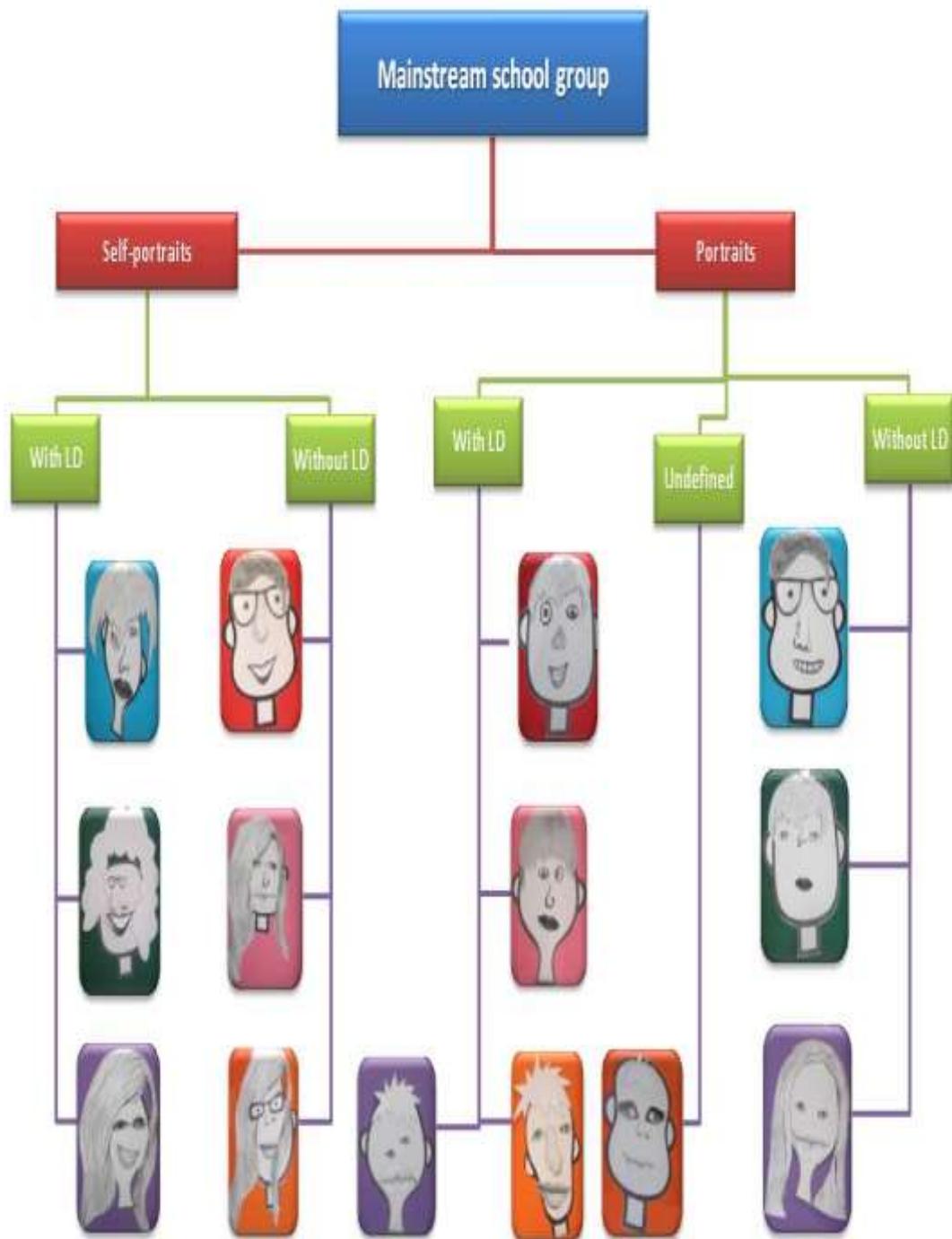
Figure 4-4: The relationship between the self-/portraits (aut: mainstream)

Social modality analysis: the various readings of self-/portraits

Table 4.7 presents the relation between what I have proposed to the participants and how the audience – the others, myself and Joshua – has read them.

Image	Author	What I have seen	What Joshua said

	And re w	This self-portrait has physical resemblances to its author. I asked him his opinion on why people easily identified the portrait as of someone "clever". He and others mentioned that this was because of the glasses. Some said that the glasses indicate that he may read a lot.	**Smart and it looks like he's got good results (L.6)**
	Ade li ne	When asked about this self-portrait Adeline sounded very confident, she said "this is a very clever person, this is me!"	**looks like she's going to cry (L.7)**
	Chl o e	One salient feature I see in this self-portrait is that Chloe does not wear glasses. The others highlighted the fact, but she ignored their complaints that her picture looked nothing like her.	**She looks happy (L.13)**
	Arth ur	Arthur made this picture as a self-portrait. However, in the consultation activity his peers analysed it in negative terms, and at the end when asked about who was in the picture, Arthur was a little reticent about it.	**He also looks happy. (L.14)**
	Cat h er in e	In the consultation activity, the other participants made negative observations about this picture. Catherine did not seem bothered as if it was not her self-portrait.	**Her face is in a weird position so she looks like she needs to go to a special school (L.19)**
	Ed w in a	During the production of the portraits, Edwina consistently refused to use any of the options of nose offered. Later in the analysis process, her sense of aesthetics became evident and gave me indications that the body parts I offered for the activity did not suffice the need in terms of variety.	**Joshua did not comment on this image**

Table 4-7: Reading-telling of the self-portraits (mainstream group)

Image	Author	What I have seen	What Joshua said
	Andrew	Andrew created this portrait when I asked a picture of someone with LD. Apparently Andrew makes use of the same syntax, as he has chosen a pair of eyes that do not match, given the portrait an unusual look.	**He gets some things right and he seems like he's happy (L.9)**
	Adeline	Adeline seemed to use the same syntax to portray someone with LD.	**Sometimes she looks smart like she doesn't always be smart (L.12)**
	Chloe	Again, this portrait shows a distinction between it and Chloe's self-portrait.	**He doesn't look clever, he can be smart but not always like he seems like he's happy that he can't be smart (L.37-8)**
	Edwina	In this picture Edwina employed the typical syntax used in this group, to signal LD. In addition, in his portrait the upside-down mouth shows the correlation between LD and negative status such as sadness or grumpiness.	**He looks like he is smirking like he has a smirk on his face (L.25)**

Table 4-8: Reading-telling of the portraits of others with LD (mainstream group)

Image	Author	What I have seen	What Joshua said
	Arthur	Arthur made this portrait when I asked him to make a picture of someone without LD. However, after the episode with his self-portrait, which the others have expressed negative views, Arthur said that this one was himself and when some others showed surprise, he added that it was in a snowy day.	**He looks happy and he has a small hat so he must be funny**
	Edwina	Edwina did not seem satisfied with the idea of making a portrait of someone with LD, especially because she realised that it looked upset or "grumpy". Therefore, she said she was doing a nice girl. She turned the mouth around, adjusted the eyes and changed the hair. It was a subtle change, if we take the final image, but the process of transformation was revealing.	**She looks happy and she must have a lot of friends**
	Chloe	Chloe made this portrait when asked to create a picture of someone with LD. However, after she completed the picture I confirmed who was represented there and she decided that it was a "naughty boy" and could not decide if he had	**He looks grumpy and he has a smirk on his face like he is happy that he did something**

		LD or not..	**wicked. (L.32)** **He thinks it is must be funny but other people don't think it's funny (L.35)**

Table 4-9: Reading-telling of the portraits of others without LD (mainstream group)

Collection 3: the production of Teresa and Lidka

Compositional analysis

This collection consists of a series of images that both participants developed in more than one stage. Although they would tell me that the portrait was ready to be recorded on my camera, later in the same encounter or sometimes the next day, they would put the portrait together again and then add features, colours and so forth. Teresa repeatedly changed the images of people with learning difficulties by adding dots or other marks on the face while she turned a portrait of someone with learning difficulties into one of someone without by colouring and making the person wear a smart uniform.

Figure 4-5 shows a diagram representing the production of the portraits and the transformations that some images underwent in the process. It portrays the location of the images within the diagram indicates other relationship, such as the similarities of some portraits of the two sisters, which was usually caused by Teresa trying to replicate her sister's images.
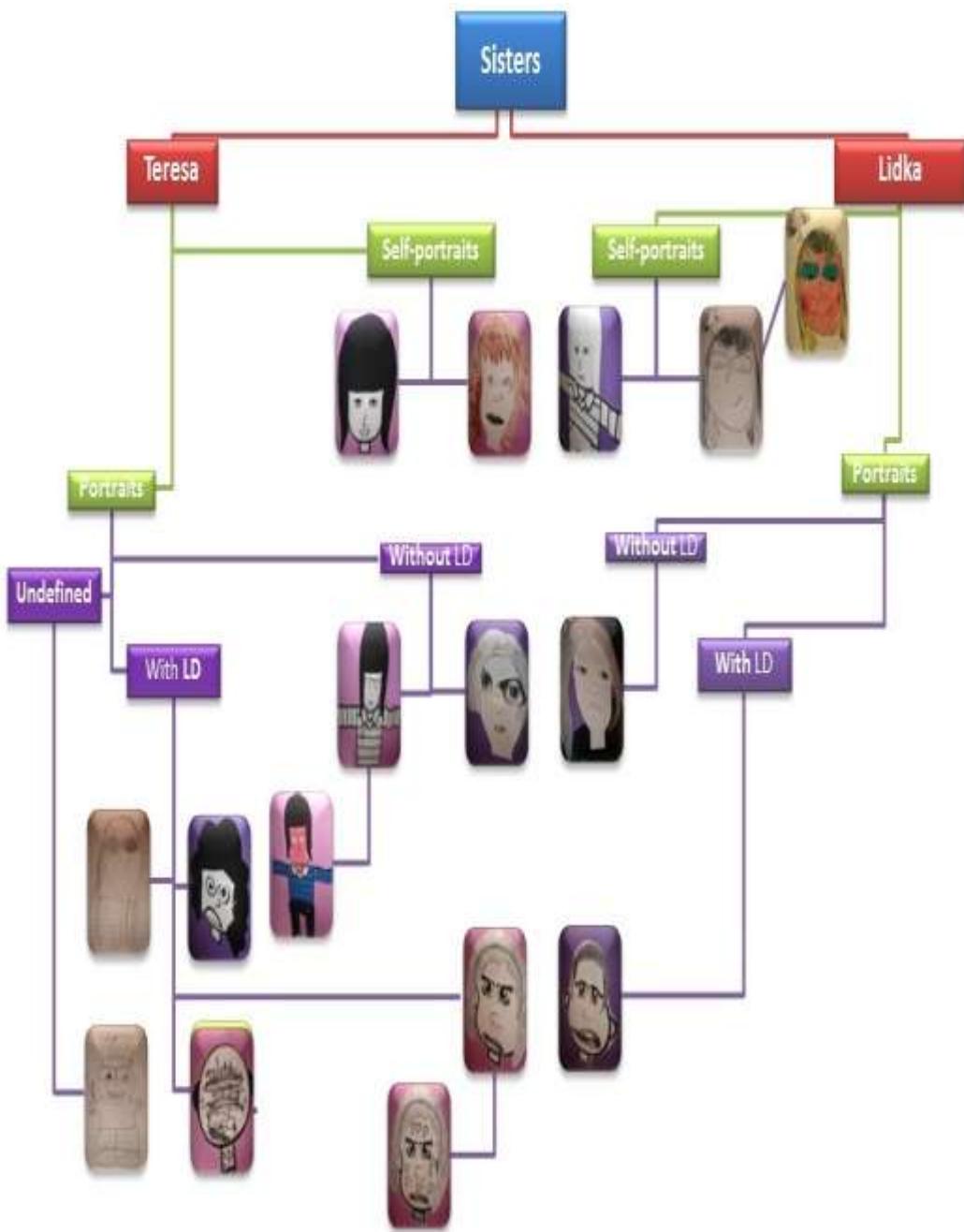
Figure 4-5: The relationship between the self-/portraits (authors: sisters)

Social modality analysis: the various readings of self-/portraits

In this group the consultation activity evidenced a thin analytical description of each image and both sisters did not fully engage in discussing the small number of portraits of others, they rather preferred to concentrate on improving their self-portraits and drawing a new one each.

Image	Author	What the author said	What I have seen	What Joshua said
	Teresa	At this stage of the creation, Teresa has identified this image as a self-portrait. However, later in the process, after she finished embellishing and colouring, she decided that it was a portrait of a friend from school who she described as very intelligent.	Teresa has started her self-portrait with just the face used here. However, she was unsatisfied with it and systematically would consider that she was looking siily and kept on trying different noses and eyes, until she finally opted for those and then started the picture. So I observed a willingness to accurately portray herself but also to not look "silly".	**She looks kind of smart because she's dressed smartly (L.44)**
	Teresa	As she had changed the identification of her self-portrait, and she did not seem satisfied with the options of body parts or face features, she decided to complete her new self-portrait with drawing parts and with colour.	During the whole process Teresa has taken the parts chosen by her sister, resulting in her self-portrait having a hair colour closer to her sister's than to hers.	**She's happy. (L.46)**
	Lidka	Lidka was quite satisfied with the result of her self-portrait.	I found had accurate resemblances with herself.	**She looks very clever. She gets a lot of stuff right.(51)**
	Lidka	This was Lidka's second self-portrait. Different from the first one, here the image is not accurate, as she gave herself dark hair. After realising this, Lidka decided to colour it to make the hair in the right colour.	Similar to the first portrait, the second was an accurate representation of Lidka.	**Happy that she has a lot of friends (L.56)**

Table 4-10: Correlational reading-telling of the self-/portraits (Family home group)

Collection 4: the production of Lynne

Compositional analysis

When invited to make her self-portrait Lynne at first refused only opting to do so following the insistence of the support worker. However, the whole process of production of images was marked by Lynne showing a certain resistance and Mrs Bell interfering in what Lynne managed to produce by correcting whatever she considered to be in the wrong place (See sample transcript, li.146). Images in red background are the result of the second take on the

activity. Although previously Lynne was not keen on doing her portrait on this occasion, when given the choice of doing someone present in the room, she chose herself. In this activity, Mrs Bell was very actively prompting and leading Lynne's attempts. In this encounter she used several imperative phrases, and frequently asked "what do you need to do next?", creating pressure on Lynne to work and take decisions faster. In the second take Lynne wanted to make self-portraits but Mrs Bell led her to do a portrait of her (Mrs Bell) and one of me. However, Mrs Bell's interference was so intrusive that it greatly influenced the result, as well as Lynne's lack of interest in doing so. I discuss her intervention on this occasion in the verbal analysis section.

Similar to Carl, the syntax present in Lynne's self-/portraits appear to tell us about her perceptions of different individual abilities. While the syntactic terms of Carl relate to proportions and quantities, the terms used by Lynne relate to connectors and face features. The information value in this collection seems to be determined by the presence or absence of those connectors in the embodiment of abilities. The most significant discrepancy that became evident was the accurateness of the portrait of the participant's father in contrast to the portrait of Carl and the self-portraits. shows the self-/portraits created by Lynne organised by category.
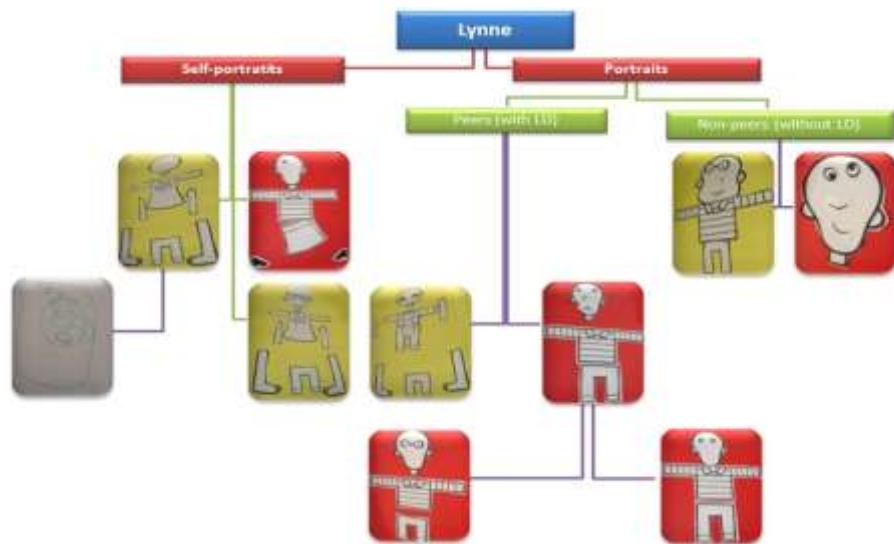
Figure 4-6: The relationship between the self-/portraits (author: Lynne)

Social modality analysis: the various readings of self-/portraits

The collection represented above incorporates the whole production of Lynne. However, some of the self-/portraits are not included in the correlational description, because of the inaccuracy in relation to their authorship. Therefore, in this collection the reading and telling consist exclusively of those images to which I could consider as the closest to how Lynne wanted them to look like, while I disregard all the others.

Image	What the author said	What I have seen	What Joshua said
	This picture shows the first self-portrait created by Lynne before Mrs Bell's intervention. After this Mrs Bell suggested that she needed a face, and prompted few changes.	The missing face and the disjointed body	**I can't really tell because like she doesn't have a face and she has parts that are in the wrong place. The feet are in the wrong place.(L.69,70)**
	In the second take of the activity of creating self-/portraits, Lynne created this image. Again, after this, the portrait was modified following Mrs Bell's insistent prompting.	The disjointed body, the face without features.	**[Researcher: Do you have any idea why she only put one eye?]** **Because there could be something wrong with her other eye. (L.117)**
	Here Lynne represented Carl.	Because of the dominance of Mrs Bell over Lynne while I was listening to Carl, I could not be sure how much of this picture was decided by Lynne. I suspect that the face was not her choice.	**She's got more detail but the teeth aren't in the right place the arms are where the feet are. She looks like a baby like in preschool (L.80-1)**
	When asked to portray her father, Lynne immediately asked for a big head. Also, it was evident that she wanted face features for this one, and also that she worked to make it look nice.	This was, together with the first self-portrait, the most intriguing image that Lynne created. I see a significant difference between this image and any other created by Lynne. This one show typical features.	**It looks like a smart person looks like he's dressed nicely (L.95).** **[Researcher: She told me that this picture is her dad].** **It looks like a dad (L.98).**

Table 4-11: Correlational reading-telling of the self-/portraits (Lynne)

Synthesis of the analysis considering the three focuses of the study

This study has been driven essentially by an interrogation about possible effects of more/less inclusive education on the participants' perspectives of self and other (focus 1), the impact of the methods on the outcomes (focus 2), and the impact of the adults involved (focus 3). The analysis took into consideration those three focuses – as detailed earlier in this chapter (p.99). The following is a synthesis of the outcomes of that analysis.

Focus 1

Although the outcomes of the investigation are not conclusive, I believe that the data showed a slight distinction between the perceptions and representations of participants with learning difficulties in more inclusive settings to those in less inclusive settings. To exemplify this inference, I quote elements of their discourse which I see as indicative of those distinctions.

Carl talking about a picture of a boy with down syndrome:
"He's a different one.
He doesn't go to school with us.
He's got a little thing"

Teresa talking about her special school peers:
"They call me little baby"

Teresa, talking about her special school:
"I don't like it I hate it."

"I'm in a different school because every time, yeah, mum thinks Green Lake is a good school for Lidka and Woodstock is a school for me. Lidka likes hers and I like mine."

"Mummy, mummy, mummy tell her why me and Lidka are not in the same school."

Lidka talking about her mainstream school and why Teresa can't go there:
"You (Teresa) would think my school is a living hell. We haven't got any playground. We get toys but you would think my school is a living hell because of the work and I know you, you can't do anything. You can't even count."

Joshua talking about children with learning difficulties in mainstream and in special schools:

"They get to know like, to know what we know, but get extra help. Hopefully, they'll get a good future, some kids do need to go to special schools because they do have major problems and it can help them a lot than a normal school can't."

"We can make friends and kids who don't have the same problem as you, so it's good for them to learn of each other. They can learn each other what's the same and what's different and play."

Focus 2

In regard to the second focus of analysis, the methods used, the outcomes have shown the following:

The set of body parts:

The visuals were meaningful and enlightened the visual analysis.
However, for future research it would be advisable to expand the set, including a larger variety of shapes. In addition, the face features did not attend the needs of the majority of the participants,

Timing:

The intervals between the encounters need to entail the possibility of transcribing the previous activity, alongside the reflexive decisions for the next meeting, and some writing up activities. The dialogical inquiry would work better probably in small groups with a maximum of three participants in each encounter, for a period of time no shorter than 40 minutes.

The cycle itself:

The dialogical essence of the cycle provided the encouragement the participants needed to engage in the inquiry. Therefore, this essence should be kept if this cycle was to be applied again, and the dynamics of a dialogical act refined. The completion of the dialogical cycle embraced an evaluation of the whole process, based on the reflections I made on the process and on the outcomes. This evaluation was already predicted when the cycle was developed, and the potential new cycle also was considered. Figure x presents the completion of the dialogical cycle, which led to the re-designing of it, taking into account this revision.

Following that evaluation, I propose a dialogical cycle in which another internal cycle happens in parallel (See Figure 4-7). One major difference between the cycle I have applied and the new I am proposing is the role of the former consultation activities and the now collaborative analysis. Previously, my approach to this collaboration between researcher and participants was modest and unsure. After meeting my participants I realized that the dialogue can only exist with their explicit and conscious collaboration. Another significant modification in this cycle embraces an effort to widen up the discussions on the process that is a more reflexive approach, including the transcription as part of this process, as well as the exercise of writing up during the processes. In short, the new dialogical inquiry requires a wider dialogue with the participants and co-participants, also with the research team and outside this group, whenever appropriate. A major consequence of these modifications will imply on the time required for the full cycle to take place, as the whole process would demand the cycle to last for longer and to incorporate a more ethnographical approach. In addition, the processes of transcribing and writing up itself, must be incorporated in the dialogue (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).
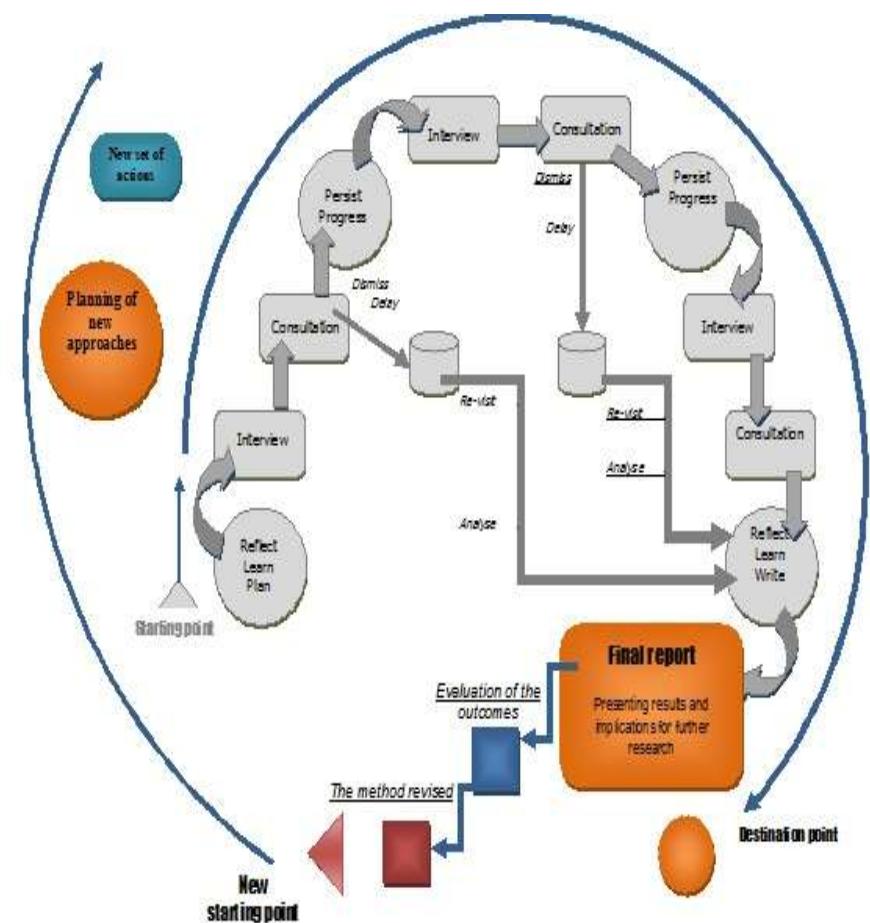
Figure 4-7: Completion of the dialogical inquiry cycle

Figure 4-8: The dialogical inquiry cycle - revised

Focus 3

The intervention of a particular adult in a particular group provided an insight on the access aspect of researching children and young people. Every individual involved in the study as advocate, learning assistant or research assistant need to sustain the dialogical posture at all times. The unnecessary interferences of Mrs Bell could have been avoided if she was sufficiently informed about the research approach and the role she was expected to play in it. Below I present a series of examples of interventions that could have been avoided, leading to a more accurate outcome of the participant's perspective.

Mrs Bell prompting Lynne:

"You put those there.
Now what else do you want then?"

"You need something in the middle
what do you need there?" (Appendices, p.4)

"You can have one of those chairs if you're really good.
I'll give you that merit because you had to have that injection
right come on then.
That way or that way?
Right.
Find a face.
Where does that go then?
Maybe that way because that's his neck,
what comes next?" (Appendices, p.4)

"Is there something else you might need, Lynne?
I guess this is a good color then.
You can choose.
You can have these and these, let's just put them here". (Appendices, p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Findings through the fictional/metaphorical reflexive analysis

The literal/factual data analysis is about presence and very little about absences; it is concerned with spoken words and silences between them and with images that emerged from the dialogue and took the form of gestures and pictures. To enrich this, the fictional analysis allows other voices to take part in the dialogue, and the absent other and the never pronounced or never heard words to come to the scene.

When negotiating access to participants, I contacted several schools (through headmasters mainly), from whom I received varied responses and reactions. Most of these were incorporated in the literal/factual analysis. However, the impact of their silent reaction (when no response was provided) and their dismissal of my request/invitation are not a matter of factual analysis. Through the fiction, those voices and silences can be heard. Another category of silence made audible through the fiction is the unspoken existence of significant others. It is about the unmentioned mother of a participant, the unspeakable labels, and the

silent blooming sexuality of other. The metaphorical/fictional analysis brings these silences to the scene, giving visibility to the invisible, presence to the absent.

The fictional account is a reflexive analysis; all elements of this fiction are related to the data and to my perception of them. It is a symbolic representation of what I was told and of what sense I made of that. Moreover, it is an invitation to reflection, to critical reading of events and to participating in the dialogue. I sum up the findings, then provide clarification of the symbols I used and my rationale for them, leading into presenting the fiction itself.

Summary of secondary findings

In this section, I present a summary of my reflexive perception of the fieldwork response to the dialogical inquiry and the impact of these findings on the research as a whole. The most significant findings reached in the reflexive analysis are that:

- The participants demonstrated interest in engaging in dialogue and expressing their voices verbally and visually;
- Negative labelling and bullying are present in the lives of individuals with learning difficulties as with others;
- Learning difficulties are conceptualised vaguely among school-age children's expressions and silences (omissions); and
- Researching children and young people with/without learning difficulties entails struggles of power relations and issues of voice.

Approaches to analysis: the scenes behind the story

In addition to the twelve participants legitimately engaged in this study, other unpredicted "actors" provided some insights on the research matter. The impact of some, like the emergence of adults as co-participants, has been discussed above. However, there are other actors/agents whose contribution is only made explicit in the fictional/metaphorical analysis in the form of characters or subject matter. When approaching the fiction, which I have entitled "Encounters", the reader needs to be aware of what to look for in terms of analysis, that is:

- Some of my participants do not have a direct embodiment through a character;
- Some participants and co-participants have direct embodiment through more than one character;
- Some of the disturbing terminology used was taken verbatim from the transcripts
- Some characters may represent more than one participant;

- Some objects may be a representation of subject matter or even of subjectivities; and

- Some characters represent an actual person who was not officially part of the study.

I claim the fictional tale Encounters as part of my data analysis because it entails genuine components of analytic methods such as 1) reduction of the data, 2) data displaying and 3) some conclusion portrayals. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10) describe data reduction as "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data", which resonates entirely with the writing up of the story. The fiction was conceived prior to the data collection, outlined during the fieldwork process, and finally shaped throughout the process of factual/literal analysis. In terms of data displaying, the ethnographic fiction embraces a metaphorical look at the themes and the use of literary language to assemble the information to permit the reader to draw conclusions simultaneously with the metaphorical interpretations and inferences. Also, I wrote the fiction Encounters embracing the same principle of Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p.970) of "writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think", above all of "writing as a method of knowing" (2005, p.973).

Encounters: the metaphorical reality of literal beings

I have come a long way before moving to the house I live in today in this friendly neighbourhood. I climbed a mountain, crossed a river, walked among strangers, crossed an ocean, changed the way I spoke my language, learned another one, and finally landed where I am. Since then I have never crossed the ocean back again, have not seen that river or that mountain again and some of what was once strange is now my familiar ground. These days, I feel like I belong here, although part of me is still far away and that far away land is deeply rooted in me.

Recently, I received a letter which brought me great happiness:

Your baby brother is coming to see you.
He will stay a week. I am sure this encounter will be
wonderful for both of you. He misses you every day and
no one could ever replace you in the job of translating his
feelings and connecting with him without mediation.
He is longing to meet your friends too.
Just please remind him that this is just a visit and that
he will have to say goodbye to everyone soon.

That was my mum, stating the obvious and being just her. Soon after that letter my brother arrived bringing with him the sounds and smells of my childhood, the laughter that has enlightened my memories, and the eyes that have guided mine wherever I have gone until this day. We knew he did not have much time, so we went about visiting my beloved neighbours who had become good friends - most of them at least. The first visit we made was to Carl. I explained to José that Carl had learning difficulties and attended a special school. I obviously did not need to say all of these words to pass the message. All I had to say was "We are going to see Carl. Carl is ER". ER is the shorthand for the special school José attended, and in our intimate idiom could mean both the place and the person who went there. We knocked Carl's door and suddenly we were inside his house, surrounded by several people to whom Carl kindly introduced us.
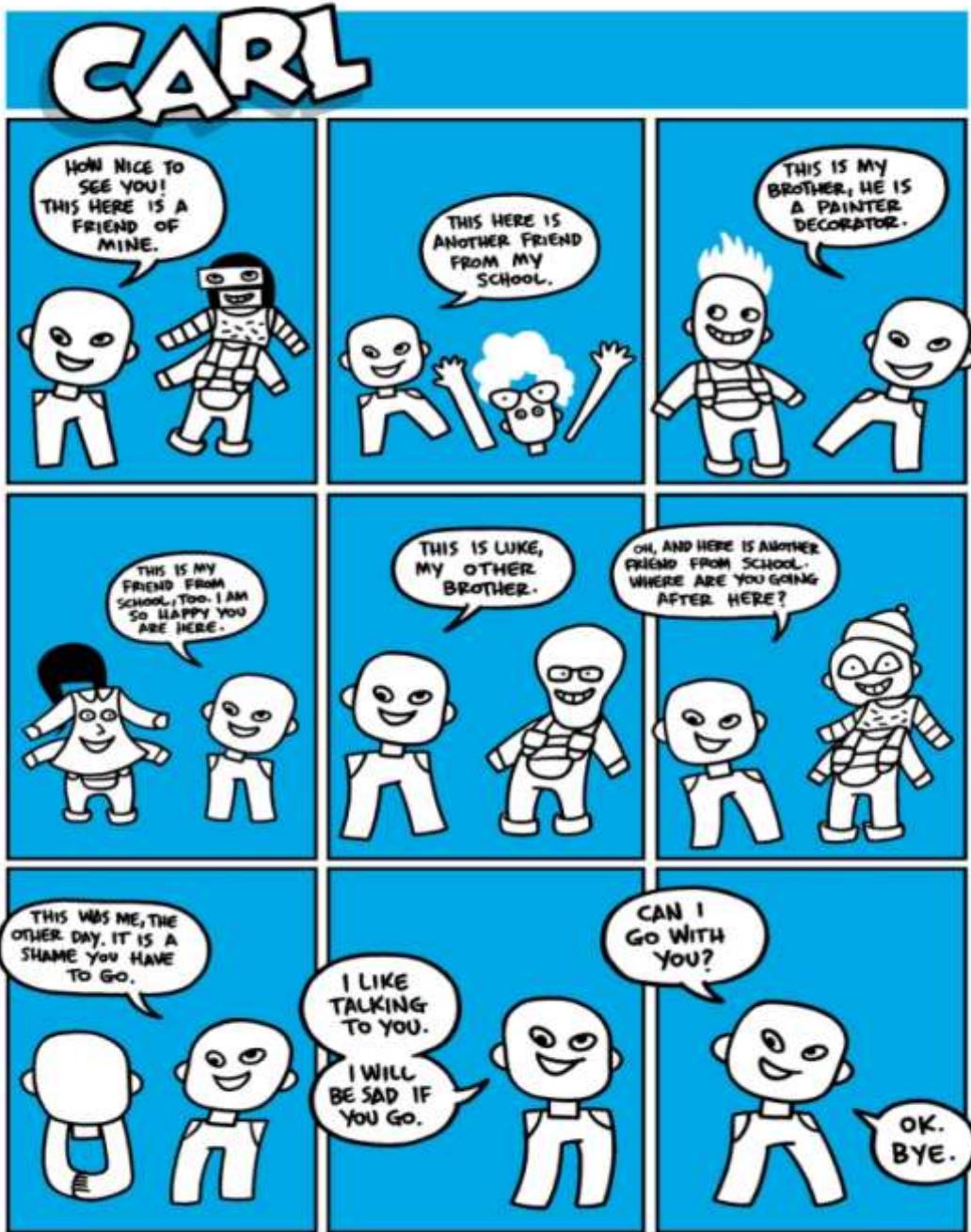
We told Carl that we were going to meet other friends and that it would be great if he could come with us. That was not possible and we all felt sad about it, but we knew that feeling well - the sadness of impossibilities - we knew it well enough to cope.

The second visit was intriguing as we knocked a door of a house that had an unusual appearance. The front façade was covered in tags, labels and signs. They had words printed on them. My brother could not read so I had to say those words aloud, which was embarrassing for both of us. I read "spaz", "stupid", "retarded", "crazy", "unclever", "bastard".

A little blond girl wearing glasses opened the door. José whispered "ER". She was wearing a sort of school uniform and over it more tags and labels, and I felt relief as my brother did not want to know what they said. Instead he wanted to know why she was wearing them. She said, "I don't really know. Most of them have been there since I can remember, and there is always someone happy to give me a new one, even if I don't ask for it. My Mum helps me to take some of them away but there are some so well glued, that we are not sure if we will ever manage to get rid of them". But there was a tiny golden tag that the girl loved. That was not even a real label - it was more like a tattoo - so tiny and hidden underneath all the labels that most people would not notice it. It read in lovely handwriting "Jessica". "That is me", she told us. That visit was disturbing for both José and I as we knew those hurtful words so well and we had also tried to get rid of them. It was hard to give the little girl some hope because we were old enough to know these labels can stick (and hurt) for life.

After meeting Jessica we needed some time to ourselves. We sat together watching TV like in the old days. We cuddled each other, and we didn't need any of the words that my brother could not articulate. We had everything that it takes to understand each other deeply.

The next day I took my brother to the house of one of my favourite neighbours. We went to see Lynne. People sometimes needed some help to understand Lynne and that always reminded me of my brother. So now I was glad to have the two of them in the same space. We did not knock the door, because there was no door. The house had an open porch with a little window floating open in the air. We had to climb the window to get to the house. We jumped directly on to the roof, where a table seemed to hang in the air while its legs stood on the floor, which was in fact the roof. I am not sure how we got to meet Lynne, but we eventually found her.
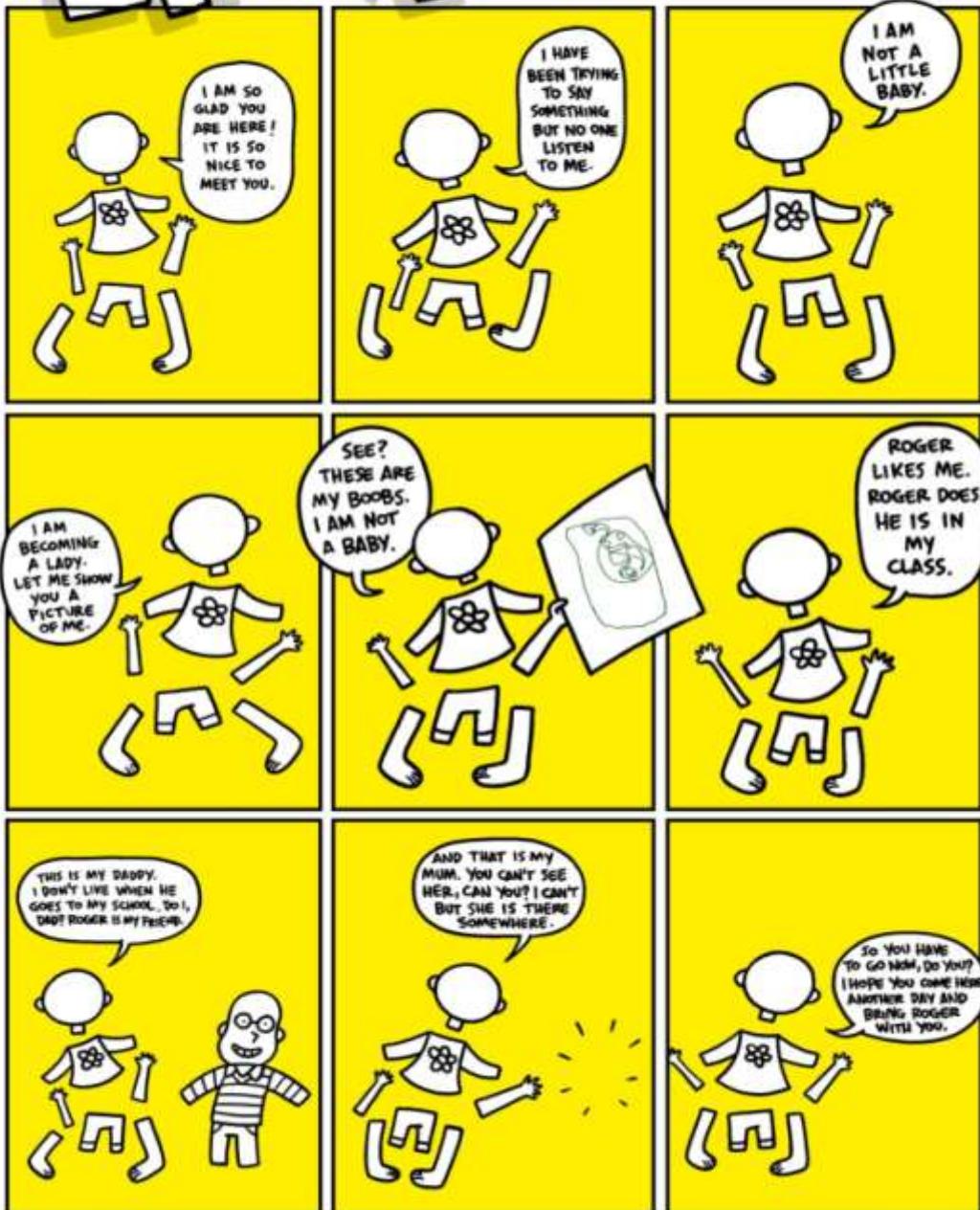
When we left Lynne's house, José kept asking about her mummy. Why we could not see her? Why was she invisible? I didn't know the answer. I also wondered why ever since I had met Lynne she never mentioned her mum. Fortunately we arrived at Louise's house and I could escape the unanswered questions.

We rang a nice doorbell and we could hear it ringing from outside. It went, "ring, ring, what do you need next? ring, ring". That sounded strange - a speaking door-bell. Louise opened the door with her usual large smile which was the beginning of something she was about to say, when another bell rang, "ring, ring, first let them in, then you can have a chat. What do you need next?" Louise meanwhile had made way for us to come in, held my brother's hands and given him that lovely smile so like her. She started to make a sound, which we could feel was about being happy to meet him, but she could not finish the sentence as we all heard the bell again, "ring, ring, put your hands down and sit nicely, then we can understand you". Louise quickly put herself in a comfy arm-chair and said, "Natalie does not like me, she always says bad things about me, she even hurts me if she has a chance". Half-way through that sentence and we could hear the automatic speaking door-bell "ring, ring, you are not supposed to talk about Natalie with your visitors. That is our business only".

After leaving Louise's house I needed to spend a long time with my brother trying to explain how that speaking bell worked. He had never seen such a modern mechanism and could not understand why it was there in the first place. It was hard for me to justify something that I was not totally convinced about, and in the end I agreed with him that it was impossible to get to know Louise well if that bell was to be on all the time.

Suddenly my brother stopped and stared at something. It was a brand new building, sumptuous in size and style. I explained that I was not sure if we would be invited in, but I agreed to ring the magnificent digital door-bell. We had a small keyboard in front of us with an even smaller plasma screen where I read: "To ring the bell, please type your name and press enter". How amazing! Two seconds later the impressive golden gate was opened and an automated voice told us to collect our ID cards on the left shelf and meet the landlady by the reception. The landlady was an extremely tall and thin woman, dressed in an impressively posh, smart uniform. She had a computerised watch hanging on her lapel and a PDA in one hand and a bunch of keys in the other.

I explained to the landlady that my brother was visiting me and wanted to meet my friends and neighbours and that I thought she would not mind letting us meet some of her tenants. She seemed puzzled by my arrogance at asking such an inappropriate thing. Her tenants were in fact her clients, customers and all VIPs. They did not have time to waste with unimportant conversations with unimportant people about even less important subjects. While she talked the woman seemed to grow and grow and grow. Each word she pronounced worked as an air-pump and she inflated until in the end she had tripled her size. She became so tall that she could not hear our tiny little voices anymore, as we were too far from her ears. Yet her voice now sounded like a thunder to us.

Off we went with sore ears and pounding heart. We did not talk or look at each other for a while, as the embarrassment of the situation was almost unbearable. When we finally came to terms with the experience we both spoke at the same time thanks to our old telepathic connection, "But maybe her clients would like to say something". We both thought that they may well not think of themselves as that important, but we would never know, as our names were now recorded on the high-tech door-bell, which would keep the fantastic golden gate locked in case we dared to knock again.

We went for a walk in the park. We played children's games. We laughed, we ran, we sat down. We never needed a lot of words. Sometimes we cry, but when we are together we don't even need tears. A silent embrace does the job.

My brother had been with me for three days now, and we had already started feeling that nostalgia that anticipates an unannounced separation. That is why I chose to see Lidka next. She had always been so caring, so kind and joyful, that I knew she would cheer us up, as she did. Lidka received us with a serenade and bunches of hugs. She told us that she was still looking for good friends and struggling with bullies. Her sweet smile, tender voice and open heart had a therapeutic effect on us, and we even forgot the imminent farewells.

Still full of joy from the encounter with Lidka, we walked to the next house. On our way we met Joshua, who does not live in this street but who likes the area and so had become a regular together with his inseparable skateboard. You cannot pass by Joshua without getting a friendly greeting, usually followed by a lively chat. We passed by him and even though he looked completely absorbed in his skateboarding manoeuvres he shouted a kind, "Good afternoon! I can see we have a visitor today". I replied that yes, I had my brother with me, who had come from far away beyond the big ocean, after the large mountain, by the river. He had come all this way to see me and meet my friends. Joshua suddenly stopped his manoeuvres, put the skateboard under his arm and walked in our direction while adjusting his cap respectfully. "Oh, so you came to see me too. Because I am pretty much a friend of your sister", I then told Joshua that we have been visiting people and that my brother was impressed with most of them. "I bet you weren't very impressed with the house with tags and labels, were you? I'm not. But I know some people who like going to other people's homes and sticking on those things. I hate it when they do that. I have one of those nasty stickers myself, the same one my mum has, and my sister and my uncle. My mum says it's a family heritage". We talked for a while with my favourite chatterbox who told so many things. It was fascinating the way he could move from one subject to another without losing us, without losing himself. For this reason, my brother could not understand it when he told us that he had a nasty sticker because he could not put his ideas on paper. "Why does he have to?" – asked my brother. But that was because my brother has never learned to read and could not find a good reason to put those vivid words onto a dull piece of paper if he could tell

everything in such a beautiful way. But again, that was my brother, who found few people who could understand parts of his speech. Even if his heart and soul were full of vivid stories, his mind could not tell his mouth what to say.

At this point we had already lost sight of Joshua and his skateboard so we returned to our original route to Mrs Bell's house. Her house was opposite mine so we had agreed that after seeing her, we would simply cross the road back home, and stay there for the rest of the day. Ironically, Mrs Bell's house did not have a door-bell, so we knock-knock-knocked, and she called "who's there?" back. I identified us, she opened the door, and while holding a shiny bell she kindly invited us in. I was going to introduce my brother when, before I could articulate a sound, we heard the bell. My brother and I both jumped. Mrs Bell told my brother to close his mouth, as it was wet. I would have told her that he could not keep his mouth closed, but Mrs Bell rang her little precious bell again, we jumped again and she said pointing to me: You should stand on the right, he should be on the left, then we may have a conversation. We swapped sides but it did not seem to fit Mrs Bell's requirements. "You look tired, so I will give the merit for that", she said, forgiving us for not doing as she demanded. I thought it would also be good manners to introduce my brother, but I could not complete the thought before the bell rang again, making us jump once more. This time she told us to hurry up, that we were snails today and we had a job to do. My brother wanted to tell her that he had been a snail all his life, and that there was nothing wrong with being a snail. He wanted to ask why we needed to hurry up, but that dutiful bell could not waste any time. Mrs Bell was about to correct something else, but before she could make a move we quickly sneaked out of the house. She is still to learn who that person was who was with me that day.

The days with my brother had gone by fast and it was nearly time for him to leave. But first we went to visit a friend who lived in another neighbourhood. It was Sandra, a friend of a friend. She was a single mother of four. I tried to explain to my brother that three of Sandra's children were ER and that two of those ER children went to ER schools, but one went to a non-ER school. But I found it so complicated that I gave up. I let him enjoy the company of the two girls who were at home instead of bothering him with such complex details. For him the world was divided into ER and non-ER people, and all ER people went to ER schools, and that was it. I did not mention to him that the children's father was not very nice, that he was aggressive, even violent, and that because of that the whole family had fled from him to find protection in a safe house. I also did not mention that it was not possible for them to bring their beloved dog to the safe house, so they had to give away their pet. My brother and the girls enjoyed so much each other's company that I could not interrupt my brother's happiness to reveal to him that those joyful, kind girls had such a painful secret, and that the silence about their father and the obsession with the dog were part of the same heartbreaking story.

After a while we went back to my street. We went past the posh big house where we met the gigantic woman with her precious keys to her clients' rooms. I then showed my brother that just opposite to that house there was another one, very different but with one thing in common: it was also a shared house with several residents and a landlady. The house had a half-opened gate, which my brother loved because it was colourfully hand painted by children. We crossed the gate and reached the equally colourful door. Mrs Blossom appeared wearing an apron and saying we had arrived at a wonderful time. We are painting a mural together, she said, and you could join us. We felt comfortable, welcome and at home. We had a fantastic time together with Mrs Blossom and her guests. We loved our painting as well. When we left, we could see the house on the other side of the road with its huge locked golden gate, and we thought how important the job of those who held the keys was. We felt happy that not all of the key holders wanted to keep outsiders outside. I knew Mrs Blossom had lost her mother a few days before my brother arrived, and that even so, she was keen to encourage him to meet her guests, because she truly cared about them and would not miss an opportunity to let them express themselves and meet other people.

In Mrs Blossom's house we had a chance to visit her guests' individual rooms. We enjoyed the peculiarities of each of them, but one in particular intrigued my brother. It was Andrew's room, which had this very name – Andrew's room – printed on a card hanging on the door; the same door which had a little label hanging on the handle where we read, "Andrew's door". Everything in that room had a name. Every name was the same, "Andrew's something". At he beginning my brother was amused, he thought that all that was a cheeky joke. But gradually he noticed that Andrew was very serious about his particular world, which my brother found extremely boring. So, we did not spend much time there, as painting the mural was much more fun.

We had by then visited all my neighbours, or rather all of those who had invited us to come in. My brother now had a good picture of where I was and of who was part of this new world and he had also found answers to some of his questions. But now it was time to return. We both knew that the distance would never really keep us apart as we have always carried each other everywhere we have been.

Not The End

Reading the fiction: in pursuit of new perspectives on analysis

The procedural modality

Procedural modality is the terminology I have chosen to establish a correlation to the technological modality within the sites of production of images. In this section the procedural modality consists of that aspect in the generation of the visual and verbal data which informed the fictional/metaphorical analysis. Therefore, in essence, it is about dialogue.

Dialogue happens when mutual exchange of ideas between interlocutors takes place. Dialogue presupposes mutual agency between the parts involved. However, in the dialogical inquiry the dialogic flux was eventually broken by conflicting power of adults over children and of more articulate/talkative children over less articulate/talkative ones. Despite that, it was through dialogue that the research questions were addressed and I found (or did not find) answers Therefore, the fiction was a representation of the dialogical inquiry in the form of the encounters between the characters.

The compositional modality: The role of research agents in the story

In the same vein, the compositional modality applied to the sites of production of images was translated in this section to frame the elements of the dataset that were analysed through the fiction, and to conceptualise the structure of the tale in relation to those elements.

The researcher

According to Scott (1996, p.19) "human action is given meaning by interpretive schemes or frameworks. It follows from this that as researchers we too seek to make sense of what we are researching and we too do so through interpretive schemes and frameworks" Therefore, researcher and researched are both interpreters. The researcher is not a neutral agent and neither is their position or their subjectivity. While, some researchers explicitly position themselves to minimise the possibility of their personal bias compromising the research, others may adopt a more positivist/empirical approach to cleanse themselves from the research, seeking to develop unbiased, neutral and hygienic science. I could not escape from declaring myself as part of this study, bringing my personal experiences into it, although with a clear purpose of seeking answers that I did not know beforehand and that I did not intend to predict never mind to [mis]lead. I am confident that my presence in this thesis, my voice and my interference has been that of a genuine qualitative researcher with a narrative

approach and a commitment to ethics and social justice. Therefore, I am not afraid of showing my selves, as I have been doing throughout this thesis. Having said that, I now introduce my position within the fiction as a critical researcher, layered together with my position as one of the interlocutors in this continuous dialogue about educational research with children, and my position as able-disabled sister.

To convey this multiplicity of selves and positions, I created two characters to interact with the characters that emerged from the participants' contributions. The first one, which is also the narrator, represents my overall position and is portrayed as an adult woman who is in dialogue with her younger brother who has some communication difficulties. The second character is this woman's main interlocutor, the younger brother, who is intended to bring my real brother to this dialogue, but who mainly represents my questions and purposes as a researcher. The interaction between the two siblings is aimed at highlighting my internal dialogue, my self-reflective attitude and some of the fieldwork dynamics.

The plot also plays a role of self-reflection and self-questioning at the same time that I want to reveal my insights from the whole process, which may not be visible through the literal data analysis. One of those insights is the punctual relationship with the participants, which I intended to be dialogical through my efforts to exchange voices with them, but which, despite all my efforts, ended up in the researcher, who was a significant other for a period of time ending up just disappearing again from the participants' lives. To show this, the character who represents my researcher-self embodied as my brother, is a visitor. He comes to visit his sister and to meet some people that are significant to her who represent the participants, gatekeepers and others who may have had some impact in the research. After learning from these people and their stories, the younger brother leaves the new acquaintances behind.

Participants

The fictional embodiment that each participant takes in the story is relatively self evident as I used the same pseudonyms used in the factual/literal analysis. However, as a type of analysis, the story requires some of its elements to be made explicit; therefore the story here gains the status of data and the following description the analysis.

A co-participant

Part of my data analysis consists of a fictionalisation of participants and co-participants, as a means to portray my perception of them, and to personify some of their individual characteristics which I perceived as relevant to the study. Here I am introducing one of the adults, Mrs Bell who played a distinct role in this study.

Mrs Bell was the support worker designated by the special school to accompany Lynne because of her communication difficulties. Mrs Bell is a peculiar character in the fictionalised analysis, as she played a powerful role and her presence was extremely significant for the outcomes. I picture her as a sort of powerful entity, who carries a hand bell everywhere. Her job is to make sure everyone speaks in the proper language and just enough to be understood. She is economic and rigorous. Language is her preoccupation. Mrs Bell's personality is also illustrated by her figure. She is a frighteningly tall woman. In the story, the presence of Mrs Bell has the function of reminding us of the institutional power that we face as researchers, and how the widespread under-valuation of children and young people with learning difficulties silence or diminish their voices. This symbolism is so strong that in several houses the doorbell is a prominent element, as if this ubiquitous power still underlines most of the relations between disabled and non-disabled individuals.

A non-participant

Jessica is a child with learning difficulties, who lives in an unusual house. This character is based on a child with Down syndrome who visited the family home during one of my interviews with Teresa and Lidka. The rationale for including this non-participant child is the language used by Teresa to explain to me who this friend was. Considering that some studies discuss the hierarchy of disabilities (ref), I considered that situation a significant moment, and the character who emerged from that moment here symbolises all children and young people who are emotionally and cognitively "imprisoned" (Fernandez, 1987).

The social modality: the role of voices and their audiences

In my factual/literal analysis the social modality was presented through the study of the verbal interchanges during the dialogic process of interviewing the participants. Here the social modality incorporates the social relations within the investigation, telling a story that embraces the conflicts, the challenges and also the role of expectations and of those who have them, against those to whom the expectations were addressed in the process. Bearing this in mind, the summary of the social modality in the light of the fictional/metaphorical reflexive analysis consists of

- the social role of each participant as interlocutor, performer and audience,
- the role of researcher as adult, interlocutor, mediator, and visible audience,
- the social impact of other adults involved in the study, and finally
- the social implications of this investigation.

Concluding remarks

This chapter represents a crucial stage in the research journey as a whole. I have presented here the results of the dialogical inquiry in action and the interactions within it, the meanings produced and gathered in this process and my subsequent conversations with the data and return to the literature to dialectically construct what we generally call "findings". As I see this study as a dialogue in pursuit of possible answers rather than the final breakthrough on the topic, I describe this chapter as some answering back from the fieldwork as I captured it, and as the telling of a story: the story of a search for ways to open my eyes and to amplify my ability to listen to voices and silences. It tells of a search for frameworks to support my desire to make sense of what was gladly given to me and to reflect on my presumptions, expectations and hopes in the light of the lives lived in the innermost of this research journey.

Chapter 5: Discussing the dialogical inquiry: reflections in hindsight and foresight

"The interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings is both artistic and political" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 23).

Faith in people is an a priori requirement for dialogue; the "dialogical man" believes in others even before he meets them face to face. His faith, however, is not naïve. The 'dialogical man' is critical and knows that although it is within the power of humans to create and transform, in concrete situation of alienation individuals may be impaired in the use of that power. (Freire, 1970b)

Introduction: the challenges of the multifaceted praxis of dialogue as method of inquiry

In this chapter I discuss the interrelationship between the original research purposes, the design and employment of the methodology, with the outcomes, which has been analysed as presented in the previous chapter. My personal struggles with labelling and vagueness of concepts around dis/ability led my search for the participants' perspectives on the subject, namely the ways they apply to express their identities. Therefore, I needed a method of inquiry to grasp that knowledge. The use of verbal and visual narrative has emerged as fit the purposes since the early stages of the investigation. Subsequently, the principles of the libertarian education with its emphasis in dialogue helped me to refine my approach. However, the type of data analysis to be employed remained uncertain for a while. I have questioned the literature available to find what could not only reveal the most valid and reliable findings, but also to integrate that continuum of dialogue that had already been started.

The response for my pursuit came from a combination of (i) narrative and (ii) visual methods of analysis. Although I am aware that much of the theorisation on "narrative assumes a verbally constituted form of expression and mode of thought" (Smith, 2005, p.330), I concur with Smith that visual narratives are as relevant as verbal, and that pictorial expressions are not qualitatively inferior. Another challenge I have faced was my urge to make the voices of my participants audible to a larger audience and if possible to speak out some of their silences. I have addressed this challenge by applying my two-fold analysis, which embraces factual/literal and metaphorical/fictional analysis. Taking the research journey as a circular or

cyclical process, in this chapter I present a discussion on the challenges I have embraced, the major pathways I have taken, and the knowledge generated by this process.

The politics of researching inclusive education

In my view, the political challenges comprise the major category of challenges that any research seeking inclusive education will face. According to Freire the liberation of oppression is a two stages process:

> In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire, 1970b, p.36).

In this sense, inclusive education would be achieved when it ceases to be a cause in favour of some, to be a reality for all. Still in this vein, the greatest challenge is to promote a socio-political transformation in society that reflects in education and vice-versa. Freire draws a close relationship between teaching and researching, he says:

> I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover (Freire, 1998, p.35)

Therefore, taking his statement as a premise, research is essentially an educational activity. However, facing this challenge may be frightening and de-motivating for some and even bring disbelief in the potential of a particular piece of research to make a difference, due to the enormous extent and complexity of the task. It is crucial to understand that however utopian the hope for full achievement of inclusion may be, , it is also helpful to understand that:

> in order for the oppressed (and those whom are solidary with them) to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting

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situation which they can transform. The perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action (Freire, 1970b, p.31).

The challenges of access: of pathways, brick walls and shortcuts

Accessing the participants was a key point, as is always the case in researching children and young people, especially those with learning difficulties (ref). I think that to discuss the challenges of accessing children and young people with and without learning difficulties, requires a reflection on the need to engage the oppressed (here represented by the participants) in the process of making their voices heard. Therefore, the constraints and limits to reach such participants will not hinder the pursuit of their inclusion. As researcher I had to persevere in seeking to reach them, and had to build up alternatives to the initial linear access plan. I call it linear access cycle, the naive idea that the logical way to reach my participants would be through schools, which in turn would reach the parents for the necessary consent. Figure 5-1 shows how access was anticipated and carried out to some extent.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts to reach some groups through this linear model, I realised the need to find/create alternatives and to switch from regular pathways to tortuous shortcuts, as shown in Figure 5-2.
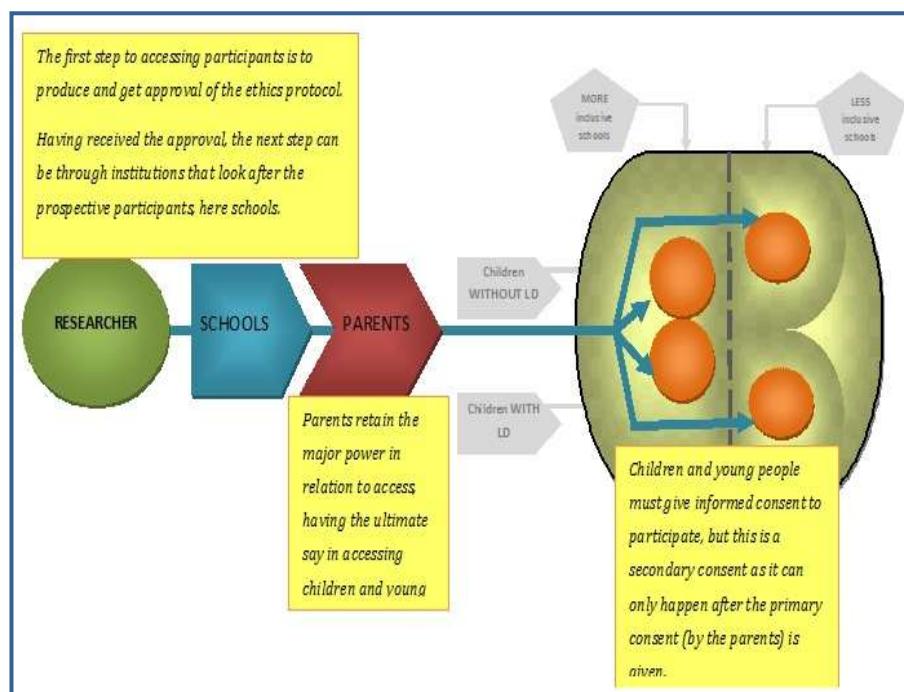
Figure 5-1: Linear route to accessing participants
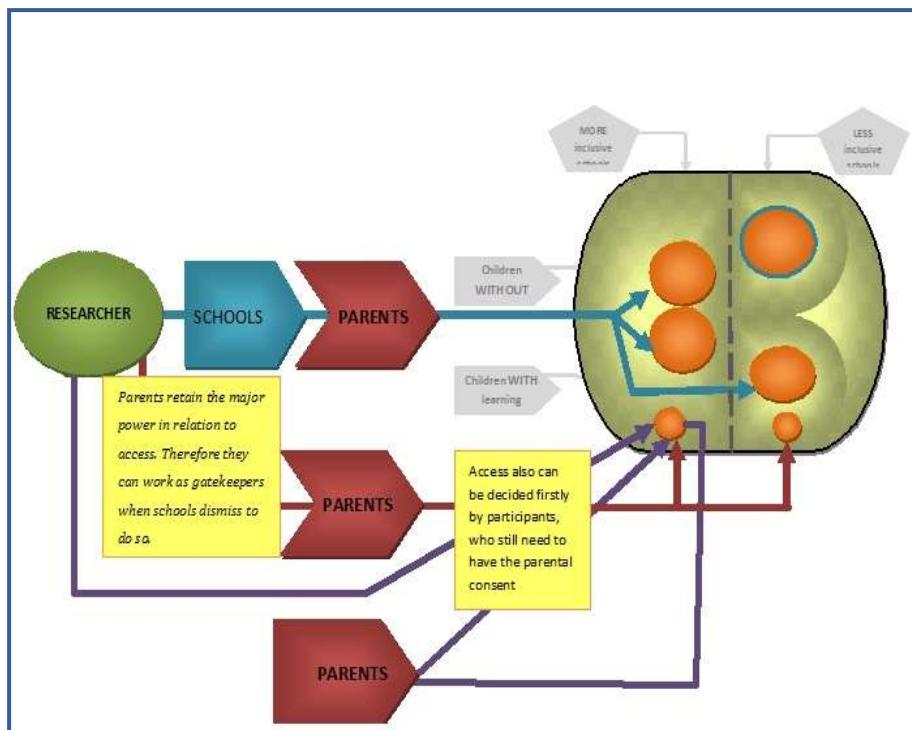
Figure 5-2: Non-linear pathways to accessing participants

The ethics of researching <u>with</u>

Another great challenge is for the research to become a revolutionary agent to social transformation, in the task of not only naming the world through dialogue but recreating it. The revolutionary researcher shares the same attributes of the Freirean 'revolutionary leader', which, Freire argues, must practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement (Freire, 1970b, p.51).

Furthermore, the political challenges put forward ethical challenges, because of the implementation of participation, the issues related to giving voice to the oppressed and the pursuit for social justice all involve difficult solutions, which demand ethical decisions. As Freire (1998) says, "the educational praxis cannot avoid the task of being ethical, that is it must embrace the task of being a permanent critique of easy solutions that tempt us away from the true path that we need to construct and follow. As men and women inserted in and formed by socio-historical context of relations, we become capable of comparing, evaluating, intervening, deciding, taking new directions, and thereby constituting ourselves as ethical beings".

One common task researchers carry out is the development and implementation of an ethics protocol, which embraces a careful analysis of the issues involved in a specific topic and in an specific research. According to Nind (2008, p.6), "a primary feature of ethics protocols in qualitative research is the quality of the relationship between researcher and participants". By predicting possible tensions, constraints and other factors that could compromise that relationship, the ethics protocol presents a series of strategies to address those issues and to assure that the interests of the researcher or the academic community do not go against the participants' best interests. Especially in researching vulnerable groups like children, and people with learning difficulties, the ethics protocol encompasses strategies to guarantee their protection at all stages of the research process. In this sense, "one key issue is the extent to which people with learning difficulties need protecting and who is best placed to do this" (2008, p.5). Although with children with learning difficulties, there is a common sense about the presence of assigned support workers with the children as the more appropriate form of protecting the participants, there is also a need for the research to incorporate this task.

Also "central to any ethics protocol and the start of any project is the need for informed consent" (Nind, 2008, p.6). Several issues emerge from getting informed consent from children with learning difficulties, however "getting informed consent to participate in research has become a legal requirement as well as a moral obligation" (Nind, 2008, p.6). Furthermore, because "the accessibility of information also makes a difference to capacity" (Nind, 2008, p.7), the function of the ethics protocol is to address those issues, planning adequate strategies do communicate the research purposes to the participants, instead of perpetuating the tendency to with regard to competence to give consent, considering people with learning difficulties unable to make decisions for themselves (Nind, 2008, p.6).

An additional important feature of qualitative research is the ethical principle of protecting the anonymity, but managing this principle, according to Nind (2008, p.8), it is not always straightforward. One major issue in researching with children and young people relates to the differential power relationships during the research process. For me, the answer for how to address this issue comes from my previous experience as primary teacher because I consistently worked based on the principles of libertarian education where the learner is an agent, a subject and must be part of their own educational decisions. Having said that, I provide some examples of actions taken to minimise the natural unbalanced power relationship between myself as an adult and the participants as children:

- entering their domain, their familiar environment (giving them the right to chose where to be interviewed), instead of interviewing them in an office, for instance;

- telling them my own story, briefly describing my relationship with school when I was a child; providing them with a "red card" to signalize if/when they want or need to stop;
- allowing them to decide when to stop to tape record the conversation;
- interviewing small groups with similar ages and learning dis/abilities, in order to balance the power relationships among them as well;
- allowing them to ask questions to each other or to me, and providing them with answers that can match the level of engagement and openness they are sharing with me and with the others.

In this research the ethics protocol was submitted to the ethical committee and received their clearance. The whole document id included in Appendix 1 (pp.184-90).

The challenge of marrying the research purposes and the fieldwork response

In this section I discuss challenges that have emerged during the development of the study, which have implied changes and adaptations in the original design of the dialogical inquiry, as conceived prior to the fieldwork. The following is a series of reflexive discussions on the inquiry in action and on how I situated myself and the participants in this dialectic cycle of pursuing the research aims and questions and dealing with the pragmatic barriers to this pursuit.

The power of decision making: the disempowered researcher in contrast to the powerful schools

One major change, which I mentioned earlier in this chapter was the access. Because of the power of decision that schools retain, their preferences and pragmatic choices interfered in the process. Therefore, this dependency on the schools willingness to allow their pupils to take part in the research forced me to accept that my participants would not give consent in first place, to be confirmed by the parents, as I intended. The headteachers wanted to select the parents to invite, and likewise the parents would decide for their children, as they would possess the information about the study that their children had not have access yet.

I am convinced that both the educational research community and the educational system as a whole would benefit enormously if the decision of who can be listen to in situation of academic inquiry was more democratic and less centralised in one individual deciding for the whole community without prior consultation. I suspect that some of my potential participants

and their parents would gladly have taken part in the study and brought an enormous contribution to it, if they were given a choice. Although I accept that schools need to have the power to decide, I maintain that this power should be shared with a parents association or schools council.

My rationale for the above argument is a belief that this selective process led by headteachers and other school authorities can mislead research, and compromise results. In the school where the headteacher sent my invitation letter to two whole classes, I received a very positive feedback, with a group of participants larger than I would expect. In contrast, in the school where the headteacher had chosen three potential participants, only two of those accepted the invitation. However, the bigger compromise I have to accept was the limited diversity of schools, limiting the analysis of more significant differences in relation to degrees and types of inclusive discourses and practices.

The impact of the adults: a necessary reflection

Once again the issue of power became evident in my study. The participants whose contribution was the most empowering to me as researcher were conversely the less empowered ones. I interviewed the special school group first and it was through their contribution that I refined the dialogical inquiry. However, it was in part at their expenses, at their oppressive situation in relation to all adults involved. I think that this questionably the ideal situation.

In addition to the issue of adults (school representatives and parents) not giving these two children the choice to participate or not, the children also had to be accompanied by an adult. This is an ethical situation that I feel strongly that needs re-thinking. On the one hand, it is unquestionable that children must be protected, that the school must guarantee this protection and that research cannot be an excuse to expose children and young people to discomfort or any sort of harm. On the other hand, it is arguable that children and young people are denied the right of privacy and confidentiality. If the researcher as an adult already poses an inevitable imbalanced power relation, let alone having another adult, who is also a school representative. In addition, if the child or young person in question has learning difficulties, it seems to me that this imbalance grows even bigger.

I do not have the answers to my own questions, but this is a problem experienced by other researchers and one that returns to the question of the power of decision that schools hold alone.

The impact of the contingencies in the dialectic cycle: lessons to be learned

As part of the above challenges, consequential issues have become visible, such as the impossibility to put the plan into practice in the time planned. The dialogical cycle requires a great deal of reflection, preparation and revision before taking actions. This praxis becomes unviable if the time when the participants are available for interview does not fit these purposes, which was the case here. However, flexibility and open-endedness is a major feature of the approach I advocate. Therefore, the dialogical cycle is essentially also dialectical as is dialogue itself.

Looking back and forwards: discussing the outcomes through their situational emergence

The creation of the portraits provided a good opportunity to open up a more symbolic conversation, not based exclusively on verbal signs, but also with the richness offered by the visuals themselves. It was also through the visuals that the collaboration in the analysis process was made more meaningful. I found the task of discussing their verbal contributions more challenging and less effective than the discussion about the visuals. The images worked as reminders and tangible marks of what was produced and named by them, which allowed a significant revisit by their authors. The content of the conversations, together with the images, shape the corpus of data, which is the main focus of the next section.

Although power is a commonplace concept in social sciences, its application still entails nuances of context, relationships and so on. In this research there is an inherent unbalanced power dynamic between adults – researcher and co-participants – and children and young people – the participants. The duality adult-child, however, was not the only power relation present during the activities. The groups were heterogeneous to some extent, so their diversity posed some hierarchical interaction between them. As the reasons behind the power some children have over others are not the object of this investigation I do not analyse its dialectic but merely point out where this occurs.

Taking into account the nature of narrative inquiry, where verbal expression commonly plays a predominant role it is clear that the style/level of articulacy of the participants can have an impact, not only on the data as outcomes, but in the process of data generation through interviews and other interactions with the participants and between the participants in group activities. In view of this, articulacy is considered to be a significant factor in analysing the dynamics of each group involved in this study.

A third component that impacted on the interrelation dynamics in each group was the individual disposition or willingness to participate. Although this can be almost intangible, it is also a vivid part of human conversation. While articulacy was a significant factor, in some

cases the participants' willingness to communicate regardless of their difficulties with articulating their speech was more significant. This became evident during the interactions between the two participants in the special school, where the less articulate participant, Lynne, showed some urge to tell her stories while the more articulate Carl showed a willingness to listen to and support her attempts to communicate. In other cases, some participants showed less willingness to talk or a more passive/accommodating attitude towards the peers who were more willing to express themselves. A good example of this was in the family home group, where the more articulate sister, Lidka, would consciously allow Teresa to dominate the conversation.

To provide a detailed description of the dynamics within each of these groups I developed four role matrices. Below I present a set of four matrices I have drawn based on my perception of the power distribution in each group. Each matrix provides a visual representation of the impact of each individual in the group, taking into account aspects such as power, articulacy, and willingness to participate. To illustrate the power dynamics in each group, each matrix shows the prominence of the adults over the participants, stressing the difference between me as a researcher driving the activities and the co-participants – adults involved with the children who also represented an external power (i.e. the school or the parental power).

Role matrix A (Top left in Figure 5.3) represents the dynamics of the group interviewed in the special school. The stronger role was that of the researcher, even if I consciously worked towards balancing the power relations by reducing my talk to the minimum, giving opportunity to participants to make decisions and so on. Considering the three major aspects in analysing the impact of each member to the group dynamics, that is, power, articulacy and expressiveness, the most significant that I could actually minimise in my "performance" (Goffman, 1990) to improve the balance was the expressiveness. The other adult did not possess the power of knowledge about the research and subsequently about the activities, as she was not part of the research team. Therefore, her power consisted primarily of being an adult and secondarily of being an institutional authority as member of the school staff.

The impact of the two participants was very close to even. While Carl was better articulate and aware of all activities developed and Lynne verbally less articulate and less aware of the purposes of the activities, Lynne showed a stronger willingness to communicate. She dominated most of the conversations, even though the support worker interrupted her constantly. In contrast, Carl could have played a slightly stronger role, as he had the knowledge of Lynne's language better than the adults did, and would spontaneously act as translator when needed; he demonstrated an accommodating attitude towards Lynne's urge to tell her stories.

Top-left matrix:
- The researcher
- The dominant [Adam], the talkative [Charmine], and the loudest [Arthur]
- The learning assistant
- The less talkative [Ella & Tom], and the lone in the group [Alice]

- The stronger role was inevitably yet that of the researcher
- Adam had a influence over the and seemed somehow a role model
- The loudest and more talkative tended to get others' attention easily and therefore to dominated the conversation
- The adult-child umbalance was less visible manner in the interventions of the learning support assistant
- Alice belonged to a different' class, which put her in disadvantaged in this group

Top-right matrix:
- The researcher
- The social worker/assistant [Mrs Bell]
- The less autonomous participant [Lynne]
- The more articulate and autonomous participant [Carl]

- The stronger role was inevitably that of the researcher, even if I consciously worked towards balancing the power relations by reducing my talk to the minimum
- The other adult did not have knowledge about the research. Therefore, her power consisted primarily of being an adult and secondarily of being a school representative.
- Lynne dominated most of the conversations, even though she was interrupted constantly by Mrs Bell.
- Carl had the knowledge of Lynne's language, and acted as translator; he was accommodating towards Lynne.

Bottom-left matrix:
- The researcher
- The dominant sister [Teresa]
- The mother
- The submissive sister [Lidka]

- The strongest role was held by the researcher
- Teresa had an evident dominance over her sister
- Similar to Lidka, Sandra constantly avoided contradicting Teresa
- Lidka seemed to make conscious choices favouring Teresa's wishes

Bottom-right matrix:
- The researcher
- The child-"analyst" [Joshua]
- The images themselves
- The absent authors

- The stronger role was that of the researcher
- Basically the contrast was the relation adult-child and the invisible audience
- The self-/portrai also represented th that knowledge th challenged those analysing them
- (absent) authors had the power of knowledge of the meanings of the self-/portraits

Table 5-1: Role matrices

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Role matrix B illustrates a different dynamics, as this was a larger and more diverse group, bringing different abilities into play. The inherent power of the adults over children was still evident, primarily in my role as researcher and in a less visible manner in the interventions of the learning support assistant. Among the participants the most evident power conflict was related to the fact that three of them belonged to one class, three to another class and a single participant who belonged to a third class, which seemed to result in her being disadvantaged in the group. A second unbalanced impact that became evident was the influence of Andrew over the others who would try to replicate his contributions and who apparently considered him somehow a role model of intelligence (See Appendix 3, ii.35, 41). A third influence on the dynamics in this group was the volume of the participants' voices. The louder ones tended to be heard by the others more easily than the quieter one and therefore to dominate the conversation.

In general terms, the group formed a bond with each other, and even though the participant without classmates present was evidently less comfortable in the group, the other six did not show an evident divide between the two sub-groups. The gender divide was more evident (e.g. girls sticking together in a sort of sub-group and boys being around Andrew).

Role matrix C illustrates a straightforward dynamic where the roles played by the adults over the children were present, but subtle. The more manifest asymmetric power relation was evidenced through the interactions between the two sisters. The oldest and formally assessed as having less learning difficulties (Lidka) was also the most passive of the pair. Teresa, three years younger than Lidka, had an evident dominance over her sister. This relationship dialectics was noticeable during all interview activities. Lidka seemed to make a conscious choice in favour of her sister's wishes, which may indicate that she underestimated Teresa's ability to understand or to cope with limits and contradictions to her will. Therefore, Teresa exercised a dominance based on an imminent conflict if she was contradicted. Sandra played a similar role to Lidka, constantly trying to avoid disruption by some possible tantrum.

Matrix D shows a very distinct dynamic in comparison to the three previous matrices because two major differences marked the encounters: the absence of an adult accompanying the child and the absence of other child participants. Another difference in this encounter was that it was a one-off. This encounter consisted uniquely of the participant providing his interpretations of the images created during the study. This participant played a unique role, as his sole task was to analyse the data presented to him. His insights were a significant contribution to the scope of the analysis.

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Enabling findings: has the study succeeded in turning up the volume on participants' voice?

This research has focused on the perspectives of children and young people on their identities, considering the differences between individuals and how they identify themselves and their peers in view of the language they use to name those differences, such as learning difficulties, and how they name each other taking into account those differences. Furthermore, the research was aimed at sharing those perspectives with a wider audience, giving the adequate weight and voicing their views. For this reason, the research encompassed exploring ways to disseminate the findings to the general public as an ultimate goal, and also as a means to make it possible for "those who are researched [to] become aware of relevant findings" (Moffatt et al., 2000, p.1756). The fiction presented in chapter 4 is part of my pursuit to achieve that, even though in small scale. I believe that that fictionalized story could be informative for members of the general public if published.

The method of analysis:

Prior to the fieldwork, I assumed that grounded theory was the obvious approach to the type of research I was starting to carry out. However, my interactions with the participants gradually proved otherwise. It was evident to me that my participants' voice would be better heard if retained entirety as opposed to being broken down into small pieces separated by categories, themes, patterns and so forth. Their narratives were so peculiar and individual, that drawing comparisons seemed unreasonable to say the least. In addition, I wanted to preserve and share the impact that their contribution had on me, which was empowering and liberating as a whole. It was for this reason that I sought a method of analysis that would safeguard the unit of individual voices considering thematic analysis , structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis , content analysis, and even psychoanalytic analysis. Each contributed to what became my approach, but none of them served my purposes entirely. It was because I was convinced that my participants' contribution would be better represented and re-presented through a type of analysis which would keep their identity "unbroken", and that would listen to each voice as a whole, whether a visual or verbal form of expression that I developed a combination of several aspects of the considered approaches to draw my method

Voices and silences though the factual/literal analysis

Although the terms factual and literal may relate to notions of truth and objectivity; I have used them to clarify the distinction between (1) the portion of the analysis that portrayed the data without the intention to add elements that are not evident by reading the transcripts or by observing the visuals, and (2) the portion, in which symbolisms were introduced in the form of metaphor and fiction. Those symbolisms emerged from my perception about interruptions, denials and absences that impacted the data.

The visual and verbal voices: is there a consistent syntax?

In hindsight the influences on my approach led to my own specific approach. Riessman (1993, p.141) argues that "narrative research has relied on spoken and written discourse" but that words are not the only form of communication and research must consider other forms. She then raises the question of how social scientists have been incorporating images into their narrative research and how the new technologies with their rapid developments have been shaping narrative inquiry. Riessman offers five examples of contemporary studies to address these questions, in which different genres of visual communication have been incorporated together with the spoken and written word. The examples range from the use of images offered to the participants, to images made by the participants. These were influential in my decisions and practice.

Prior to my decision about what type of method I would apply to enable participants' visual voice, I came across the work of Lewis et al. (2008) on the use of visual prompts to realise child voice, namely cue cards . I found the cue card approach very insightful and enlightening for developing my own approach. However, I sought an alternative that would enable the children to provide their inputs using the prompts provided in a more open-ended way than with the cue cards. I was also aware from Lewis et al. that the use of cue card required some time for teaching the children how to use them and for practicing. In my circumstances, where access to the children was a challenge in itself, I right that adding extra time in my already ambitious timetable of meetings with the participants would not be feasible. I was also concerned with the issue of identification and self-identification and was convinced that the use of visuals could be key to achieving that.

I first found inspiration for my approach in the widespread use of avatar creation on the wide world web, which provides users with a large range of resources to create their identities. I decided to experiment with some of those resources to understand their functionality and features and I was immediately struck by the absence of diversity. In the options that avatars offer to the user there is a general standard that would make most of the avatars very homogeneous – no disabled-bodies, not many skin colour varieties, and so on. That reality inspired me to think of how children would represent themselves if the options were open-ended and the children could form the "avatar" from non-standard proportions for instance. That was the beginning of the design of my visual approach.

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Concluding remarks

Implications of the dialogical inquiry

The outcomes of the dialogical inquiry might not have a direct impact on practice, however, I strongly recommend further investigation of the effect of the intervention of special needs professionals in the outcomes of educational research in general, taking into account the ethical issues I have touched upon here (access, power, etc.) and the need to engage children and young people in studies that concern them, especially those whose voices have been historically ignored. If we are to develop inclusive research, we must learn the art of listening to the voices of all, not only of privileged groups, who are under the regulation of individuals with a critical mind and open heart in relation to the current state of affairs. If we are to produce research that brings all the voices, we need to make sure that we can access all. Ideologically, I would hope that my research would add another voice to the collective effort to researching children and young people with/without learning difficulties, and call attention to the status quo of access and its relation to legitimate research outcomes.

In terms of the dialogical inquiry as an alternative approach to research, I am convinced that it has far more to contribute and to be developed. It is a flexible method, which can accommodate several types of contingencies common in research. However, my experience provided me with the notion that the best conditions to employ a dialogical cycle include:

- a significant amount of time in-between encounters, to allow self-reflection, listening to the audio records and if possible to start transcribing;
- a distinction of the length of time dedicated to the interview activities and the consultations activities. The latter demands far more time and it is of crucial importance if a reasonable degree of dialogue is wanted;
- the consultations activities should not last less than one hour;
- to enable all participants to have their voices heard and their styles taken into account, the groups should not exceed three participants at a time;
- the set of body parts should be expanded, including a larger variety of shapes and forms.

Limitations of the study

According to Cleary et al. (2007, p.224):

dissemination beyond academic or professional journals and other academic report has traditionally been a low priority among researchers and authors. By and large, researchers are trained in research methods and well schooled in reporting their findings in the scientific literature but not in the wider dissemination of results.

As a research student, new in my career as a researcher, I am amongst those who lack this wider knowledge. I am yet to develop strategies to distribute the new knowledge that the research findings revealed to a wider audience in order to engage in further dialogical activities, to encourage others to re-think their position in regard to diversity and inclusion, and hopefully to raise new questioning which may generate further investigation on this field. Consequently, that is a considerable limitation of this study: the incongruence between one of its purposes and the reality so far.

One major purpose of this study prior to the fieldwork was to make the participants' voice reverberate within a wider audience, which may find their assumptions challenged and hopefully changed for the good. The ultimate idea was to shift the debate from the academia and educational circles to the wider society - the general public. The vision was to translate the research into a literary piece, which would likely have the potential to reach a wider audience and to help this audience to envisage different perspectives and to have their paradigms challenged by what the fictionalised stories might reveal.

Implications for further research

The dialogical inquiry has proven that the principles of dialogue are related to the principles of participatory research, as well as the foundations of the libertarian educational philosophy of Freire relates directly with the principles of emancipatory research. Therefore, I claim that Freirean education is a positive model to be incorporated in educational research, in view of engaging participants, promoting social justice and addressing issues of voice/silence.

Another contribution this study made was a demonstration of the power of visual research with children and young people and of its applicability equally valuable for those with and those without learning difficulties. Visual methods can be employed with the clear intention to make inclusive research and to incorporate not only the verbal, but also the visual voices so deeply pervasive in ordinary language and communication.

Finally, one crucial aspect of qualitative research is that it is time-consuming. Time is a critical aspect in any research that is intended to lay a qualitative look at subjectivities, and the dialogical inquiry confirmed this.

At the end of this journey I believe that it was worth keeping on moving. I am convinced that the dialogical inquiry is a replicable and expandable approach. My choice of type of visuals can make a significant contribution in the hands of an enthusiastic visual researcher apt to go beyond the given and to dig further. In hindsight, it is always easy to regret and to consider that things could had been different. However, in retrospect, now knowing what I did not know before, only gives me a source of hope in educational research, in a more inclusive and just society, and ultimately in the power of lived lives.

Postscript

It had been a long time since I last saw Belise. The prospect of seeing her on that day was extremely exciting. I had looked everywhere for my flowery hat that she liked so much, but could not find it. As I did not want to be late, I gave it up and left in the direction of our meeting place. I arrived first, so I had time to recover my normal breath and to have a good look around. That was a familiar scenario but I had not been there for quite a while. Fortunately, Belise arrived before I had time to immerse myself in melancholic thoughts. She had grown into a mature woman and only by then I remembered that she had turned into an adult during our last time together. Strange enough for a moment I was unconsciously waiting for my lively talkative child. However, I knew she was in fact there, in front of me, as old as me and still as fresh as ever.

At this time we did not talk much as we used to do. We sat side by side in silence for a while until she apologized for the hat. Indeed, she was wearing my flowery hat, how could I miss that? She told me all about the day she found it by chance and how many times she planned to send it back to me and that she never did. She could keep it as it looked just perfect on her, I told.

A long and less comfortable silence followed the conversation about the hat. However, it was Belise again who broke the ice, saying how happy she was to see me and that I looked slightly different from the last time four years ago. I told her about my long journey. I told everything I could recollect from it, from the smallest things I saw along the way to the greatest challenges I faced. I told about the people I met, the things I learned, and the ever so enormous transformations I went through. I told Belise about Maria's eventual appearances and how I dealt with her needs. Belise knew that Maria had come and gone a long time ago, but was surprised to learn that she kept coming back. We both agreed that Maria had not ever vanished after all, that she had just found a discrete place to live. She was probably secretly living behind thick curtains, seeing the world through windows.

We both respect Maria profoundly. We respect her tears, her pain, her solitude, and above all we respect her as a survivor. That is why when I showed Belise my travel journal, where my journey is recorded in every single detail; she was not even slightly surprised to read the dedication:

"To my Maria and all Marias out there".

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Appendix 1: Ethics protocol documentation

Ethics protocol document 1: EP
Name of Principal Investigator: Maria Hilra Vinha

The research aims are the following:

1. To examine learners' perceptions of their peers with different learning labels (with/without Disability) in different settings (inclusive/non-inclusive) through the language in use

2. To analyse the language in use – including verbal and non-verbal, visual, graphical and so on – amongst learners experiencing exclusive/inclusive practices in relation to the imagery of ability and disability

3. To investigate whether all pupils in inclusive settings express a sense of belonging to the school community and how this is expressed

4. To analyse how "others" are constructed, identified and labelled taking into account different educational settings in terms of the stage of their journey toward inclusive education.

The first aim raises two main questions. One relates to what life stories could reveal about learners' notions of ability and disability, taking into account the kind of educational experience they have to date had. The other concerns whether the language used to refer to differences (especially in terms of dis/ability) has some connection with the kind of educational experience they have, in terms of inclusiveness. These lead to questions about the language in use in the learners' storytelling and in particular whether this language might inform us about which sort of imagery of dis/ability the learners are building/developing and if those images differ from learners in different kinds or levels of experience with inclusiveness. This query leads to another concerned with the specific differences and/or similarities different groups may express in their discourse. Having said that, it is important to highlight the fact that the language used by the participants can vary – from almost no articulation to more articulated speech. The data analysis will seek to uncover dissimilarities and the specificities of the kind/level of communication used by each participant. The framework for developed analysis will be open-ended and flexible to accommodate all abilities and forms of expression. The third research aim embraces another aspect concerning inclusive education, which is to understand the process of building a sense of belonging to a group or community. To accomplish this aim it is crucial to understand how learners articulate this sense of belonging in their stories, firstly related to themselves and secondly how they perceive their peers. The main question here is whether the inclusive education experienced by the participants can be inferred as a factor that contributes to the sense that everyone

belongs, or if still some belong and some are outsiders with special visa a kind of 'stay with *us'* or even a 'stay with *them*' permit. The four research aim and their respective emerging questions are summarised in Table 1 below as follows:

Table 1: Summary of Research Aims and Questions

Aim	Emerging questions
To examine learners' perceptions of their peers	• What can life stories tell us about learners' perceptions about Dis/ability relating to the type of educational experience they have? • Are there any connection between inclusive/exclusive experiences and the language used to refer to "differences" – representations, stereotypes, metaphors, imagery of Dis/ability? What can pupils' accounts reveal about this possible connection?
To analyse the language in use in relation to the imagery of Dis/ability	• What can language in use through life accounts tell us about the imagery about Dis/ability built by learners from different educational experiences? • Which differences and similarities can be found in pupils' discourse about notions of Dis/ability taking into account their experience with inclusive/non-inclusive education?
To investigate the sense of belonging	• What can life stories tell us about the sense of belonging among learners experiencing inclusive education? • What can pupils' discourse reveal about their understandings about the "others" as insiders/outsiders?
To analyse how others are constructed, identified and labelled	• What can experience accounts tell us about learners' perceptions of the (different) "other"? • What can the use of metaphor tell about identification and labelling "others" in relation to ability/Dis/ability?

Participants:

The study seeks to examine:

a) Socially different perspectives, that is learners within diverse educational context (inclusive/non-inclusive), environments and backgrounds;

b) Individually different perspectives that is learners with different personal identifications regarding their dis/abilities (pupils with and without SEN statements).

The age range includes learners from 6 to 16 years old, with the possibility of including over 16s as well. The participants will be volunteers who attended a presentation informal meeting to be held in inclusive and non-inclusive (special schools, for instance) educational settings, which previously gave permission through gatekeepers for the research to take place there. In this meeting the research will be explained and discussed. This presentation will be tailored in accordance to each group/setting. From these presentations those who express an interest in taking part will have the opportunity to read the information sheet and

consent form. They will also be informed that all those under 16 will need parental permission.

How the stories are to be captured

The methodology to be applied embraces life story; narrative analysis with emphasis on the use of metaphor and is to be inclusive and participatory. Data collection will consist of a series of interviews with each participant (3 at minimum), including semi-structured and open-ended interviews, individual and in small groups (focus groups). The interviews are intended to gather life stories about participants' schooling experiences. The semi-structured interviews will also encompass a computer-aided creation of a visual character to be included as part of the stories collected and later used as part of the derivative material. Bearing in mind the diversity of the abilities the study is intended to convey, the "stories" here might mean a less linear idea of storytelling, embracing a wider perception of the means that will support the participants storytelling (pictures, personal objects, mediators, drawings and so on). The stories may come in fragments, lose words, or structured narratives. Whatever the form, the inquiry is focused on the ways learners represent themselves, others, their dis/abilities and sense of belonging.

Data analysis

The data analysis will be carried out based on the principles of Grounded Theory, with adaptations to the particular research aims. The analysis will focus on issues related to identification, how learners describe themselves and others, also to the sense of belonging, looking for issues such as 'who is insider/outsider'. It is anticipated that issues related to stereotypes, and bullying may emerge. However, the study will look for the emergent issues rather than prompting them. Taking into account the outcomes of the data analysis process, the stories collected will be fictionalised in order to present the issues in the most covert format as possible, ensuring complete confidentiality about the whole scope of information gathered and the anonymity of the participants. The participants will be informed about the fictionalisation beforehand and will be consulted regarding their approval of the stories derived from theirs.

Detailing the checklist

My responsibilities to the **participants:**
  a) **Respect**
    - Respect them.
    - Respect their feelings and sensitiveness above the research purposes and deadlines
    - Consider each of them as a person, not a simple "informant"

- Consider their ideas, abilities, feelings, fears, opinions and will
- Do not deceive, mislead or take advantage of them

b) **Inform**
- Fully inform the participants about the research, my intentions and my responsibilities
- Ensure that information given take into account all types of abilities, in a variety of means and formats, to ensure every participant has access to it.
- Inform them and have their consent for any participation or the information they gave

c) **Act individually/personally**
- Treat them as individuals – even when in small groups – with specific characteristics and needs and not only based on general prescriptions that would work as 'one fits all'.

d) **Act ethically**
- Guarantee that the ethical protocol is totally observed at all times

My responsibilities to the **sponsors** of the research
- Follow all guidelines of the SoE
- Act based on ethical principles
- Complete this study to the highest possible standards
- Keep the SoE informed about any aspect of the research or any decisions I may take that can affect the investigation
- Fully communicate the research findings in the most excellent possible quality
- It does not degrade, disempower or violate their experiences

My responsibilities to the community of **educational researchers**
- Contribute to the construction of new knowledge with original work
- Through working based on ethical guidelines, without any sort of misconduct
- Acknowledging everyone who contributed to the work
- Respecting and acknowledging the authorship of others

Fully inform participants about the nature of the research:
Addressed through Informal meeting to talk about the project, providing opportunity for them to ask questions, use of additional material to support information and a Three-version Information Sheet – two aimed at participants and one aimed at parents/guardians (see appendixes 1-4).

Ensure participants agree to take part freely and voluntarily

Addressed through a storytelling activity, in which the research will be presented and that will give the opportunity to potential participants to express their interest in taking part (see ID card attached). Afterwards those who expressed interest will be given the Information Sheet – A or B and the associated Informed Consent Form (see appendix 1,2).

Inform participants that they can withdraw freely at any time

Addressed firstly through the activity, when they will be informed that they can withdraw their ID cards at anytime and secondly in the three-version Informed Consent Form – two aimed at participants and one aimed at parents/guardians (see appendix 1-2).

Offer protection for any vulnerable participants or groups in your study

I am CRB checked and my previous experience as primary teacher and also as educational supervisor/coordinator demonstrate that my behaviour toward children is appropriate, as proven through. In addition, the issue will be also addressed through the provision of a safe and appropriate place for meetings where the participants feel familiar and comfortable to talk. To enhance this familiarity, adults and other children known by the participants are to be around, either in the same room or nearby.

Manage the differential 'power relationships' in the setting

My previous experience as primary teacher is again a source of knowledge in respect of this issue, as I consistently worked based in a libertarian view of education where the learner is an agent, a subject and must be part of their own educational decisions. Having said that, I provide some examples of actions to be taken to minimize the natural unbalanced power relationship between myself as an adult and the participants as children:

- entering their domain, their familiar environment (giving them the right to chose where to be interviewed), instead of interviewing them in an office, for instance;
- telling them my own story, briefly describing my relationship with school when I was a child;
- providing them with a "red card" to signalize if/when they want or need to stop;
- allowing them to decide when to stop to tape record the conversation;
- interviewing small groups with similar ages and learning dis/abilities, in order to balance the power relationships among them as well;
- allowing them to ask questions to each other or to me, and providing them with answers that can match the level of engagement and openness they are sharing with me and with the others.

Avoid any pressure on participants to contribute under duress or against their free will

In the informal presentation meeting potential participants will be identified by their choice to take part or not. Those who indicate an interest in taking part will be invited to complete the consent form; a consent form aimed at parents is also to be sent. Those who consent will be contacted for the interviews, but no pressure will be put on them if they decide not to attend and will be deemed to have withdrawn and no further contact to be made, unless they return voluntarily. Additionally to this information, parents will also receive an **additional letter** and **advice form**, where they can provide additional information to support the interviewing process, such as personal likes and dislikes, and suggestions to the researcher to enable a better communication with their child.

Another precaution will be the support of an advocate, which will be present at the moment of the child to give their consent to take part. The advocate will act both to make the process clearer to the child and also to ensure their will is fully respected.

Guarantee that any research assistants or support staff involved in the project understand and adhere to the ethical guidelines for the project

Addressed through the Ethical Protocol and acceptance form (see attached)

What procedures to set in place to ensure a balance between a participant's right to privacy and access to public knowledge

All information given in the interviews will be translated into fictionalised accounts, with the main purpose to guarantee anonymity and privacy, but also to provide full access to the relevant information.

How best to provide anonymity and confidentiality and ensure participants are aware of these procedures?

The fictionalisation of the real life stories will actively involve the participants. They will drive the process of fictional character creation, to represent themselves and others. From the very beginning the final product will be explained in detail, in order to guarantee participants fully understand and agree with the procedures.

The implications of the Data Protection Act (1998) particularly in respect to the storage and availability of the data

Although personal identification will not be collected (address, date of birth, 'filiations' etc.), only names and ages, the implications of the Data Protection Act will be addressed by the secure storage of all data on the university server according to university guidelines. Administrative data such as names and ages will be kept separately from the research data and password protected – accessible only to the researcher/supervisor.

Disclosure of information to third parties and getting permission from the participants to use data in any reports/books/articles

No disclosure of identifiable information such as personal details will be made to third parties, and any use of anonymised data to be made only with permission from participants and their parent/guardian. However, the derivative data (fictionalised accounts and fictional names/characters) will be shared with Supervisor, examiners and available to the academic community through a variety of means, including the publication of articles and conference papers.

How you are going to inform the participants of the outcomes of the research
The final report will comprise a chapter called "The Novel", in which the language used is aimed also to the general public, not only to scholars. The parents/guardians can have access to the novel. In addition, a simplified version will be prepared to provide access to the participants, together with a website (likely a blog) aimed at them.

How you will protect the integrity and reputation of educational research
- Through working based on ethical guidelines
- Acknowledging everyone who contributed to the work
- Respecting and acknowledging the authorship of others

Ethics protocol document 2: Consent forms and information sheets

Parent/Guardian Consent Form[17]

Please put your initial in the appropriate box to state your consent in each question:

	YES	NO
I understand that my child has taken part in the "storytelling meeting" and had expressed interest in taking part in the project		
I have read the Information Sheet and had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my child participation		
I understand that my child's contribution to the project will consist of interviews with the researcher and that all information given will be anonymised.		
I consent my child's story/stories to be used in the research with the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality		
I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed		
I understand that the interviews will consist of conversations about stories of daily life at school and will be transformed into a fictionalised narrative for public information		
I understand that my child will help to create a character (or characters) to represent them and that they need to agree if the character/s is to be used in the final story		
I understand that I have the right to veto my child's character to be used or any part of the interviews in the final texts		
I consent to my child to take part in the project		
I consent to have my child's contribution to the project to be used in events where the project maybe presented		

Signed: _____

Date: ___/___/_____

Parent/guardian Name in block letters: _____

Child name in block letters: _____

Signed (Student researcher): _____

Date: ___/___/_____

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[17]Consent form **– C (aimed at parents/guardians)**

Information sheet – A [18]

Format: A short story, told with the use of graphics/images

Script: The story consists of a lady who looks at children playing together in a playground. She wonders what they think about playing in the same playground. She starts talking to them. She then writes a story to help other adults to better understand how children feel and what they think about themselves and those who also play in that playground.

About the script: This is to be the summary of the story to be told in the first meeting, as a means to help participants to recollect what was told.

There was a lady who wanted to help schools to be a happy place to everyone.

This lady realised that if she wanted to know how students could be happy at school, she should ask them what they thought about it.

She then decided to go to schools and have conversations with students. She asks them about good times and bad times at school.

After talking with lots of boys and girls, children and teenagers, she wrote a tale about school life. She now knew what students like and dislike in their school.

Her story was very helpful to other people who also wanted to make schools a happy place to be.

The story also helped parents and teachers to find other people to come along to make students even happier at school.

---

[18] Aimed at younger children and children with statements

Widgit

Information sheet – B (Aimed at older children/young people)[19]

- This is a study intended to help people to understand students' opinions about their daily life in school.

- Anyone aged between 6 and 16 years old can take part, as long as they have permission from their parents or guardians.
-
-
- Students interested in taking part can help coming to conversations with the researcher, to talk about moments at school that they consider important for themselves or for their friends.

- Students can help this study in a variety of ways, such as:

- Telling stories (oral or written)
-
-
- Making drawings or other form of visual expression (collages, paintings, pictures and so on)
-
- Other forms that they may prefer but it's not listed above

- All students' real names will be kept confidential (they will be given different names, like nick names) so only the researcher team will know whose stories were told.

- Students can give up taking part of this study at any time. They don't need to provide a reason to do so.

- The researcher will collect all stories, pictures, drawings and other forms of contribution and transform everything into a new story that will look like a fairy tale.

- The new story will be firstly presented to the students involved in the study before anyone else can read it.

- The students can stop their part of the contribution to be used in the new story before it is published.

- During the study the researcher will ask the students permission to any activity involving themselves or their stories, drawings and so on.

- Students can also contribute with suggestions for changes in the activities they are taking part and with new ideas for the study.

---

[19][19] The objective of this sheet is to summarise the research in short sentences in simplified/accessible language, with the support of bullet points or tables/graphs where appropriate.

Information sheet – C[20]

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am a PhD student in the School of Education in University of Southampton. I am writing to you because your child has attended an introductory meeting about a research project that I am conducting and expressed interest in taking part. In this letter I provide some information about myself and about the research itself. Please, do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Who I am

I am in the third year of my studies at the University of Southampton. I am a mother of two young children and a sibling of a brother who has learning disabilities with severe communication limitations, which provided me with personal experience with different learning styles and abilities. I am also experienced as primary teacher and as educational supervisor, working with teacher's education in mainstream schools. I am strongly interested in understanding some of the effects of inclusion in schools, and this affect student's behaviour and opinions.

The study

The study is about how children and young people perceive their experience in school especially related to their peers and their individual differences. The study is about the language children use to mention those differences among peers, especially related to learning disabilities. The study will be based on interviews with the children who volunteered to take part.

The main objective of this research is to understand some of the effects of inclusive education in the ways children view themselves and the others. Additionally I expect to contribute with what I may learn from this study to the current studies on education and also to share it with the general public as a means to catch people's attention to the issues that might emerge and hopefully to improve further developments in the area.

The interviews: conversations to tell stories

---

[20] Aimed at parents/guardians

The interviews will be both on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. In the interviews they will be asked to tell stories they experienced at school. Their names will be changed to pseudonymous to protect their identities. My Supervisor and I will be the only people to have access to their real names. In addition to this, the stories will not be used exactly as they are told, but they will be adapted into fictional accounts, in order to preserve the confidentiality and the identity of those who told the stories and those who are mentioned by them.

Your child's participation will consist of a series of interviews as follows:

- First interview – **memories of school moments**: in this interview your child will be invited to tell stories that happened to them or to someone they know at school. They will be allowed to tell the story freely without any sort of pressure or anything that may cause discomfort or unease;
- Second interview – **developing a character**: this second meeting is aimed to create a fictional character to be used in the final story that will derivate from the stories children had told. The character will consist of a textual description and the selection of physical features with the support of a software developed specifically for this study;
- Final interview – **what we've done**: in this stage children will be invited to learn about which stories and characters that are to be used in the final story, and they will have the opportunity to veto any data to be used, if they feel that data is not correct/accurate or simply because they changed their mind and don't want their contribution to be used anymore. In any case their withdrawal will be accept without questions. Otherwise, they will be invited to sign the publication consent form, where they explicit that they are aware of how their contribution is to be used and that they agree with it.

Transcriptions and confidentiality

Each interview/conversation will last one hour or so and may take place at your child's school. The interviews may be tape recorded and transcribed in order to guarantee the accuracy of the collection and subsequent analysis of the contribution given. The research is committed to and will comply with the terms of the Data Protection Act. All the transcriptions and potentially identifiable materials will be stored on a password protected computer for the period of 12 months after the research completion and then permanently deleted. No third party will be given access to these identifiable contributions. You will be informed in advance the dates and times of your child's interviews.

Consent

Any child interested in taking part of the study can only be allowed to do so if they have their parent/guardian written permission. If you agree with your child taking part in the study, please complete the **consent form** attached, sign it and return it to me in the envelope

provided. I will sign it and send you a copy for your records. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Kind regards,

Hilra Vinha
PhD Student
School of Education
University of Southampton

Ethics protocol document 3: Additional letter and information form

Additional letter

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____

Thank you for your consenting for your child to take part in our study. In order to develop the most appropriate approach for each child I am consulting parents/guardians to provide me with any information they can about their child's communication. I would welcome any suggestions that can help me to interact with **_[name of the child]_** taking into account his/her individual characteristics and preferences. Any information provided in this form will be kept strictly confidential and used solely to enable me to approach **_[name of the child]_** appropriately. Please find enclosed a brief questionnaire which is for guidance only. You may provide information in a different format, in a separate sheet for instance, if it is more convenient for you.

If you have any queries regarding this letter and form or any other issue related to your child's participation in the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Hilra Vinha
PhD Student
School of Education
University of Southampton

Additional information for interview sessions

Child's name: _____ age: _____
The name s/he prefers to be called by: _____

1. Is there any particular approach that upsets your child and therefore you advise to be avoided?

NO/YES

If **yes**, please describe it as much detailed as possible (use separate sheet if needed):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Is there any particular approach that encourages your child to engage in interaction with someone who is not known to them?

NO/YES

If **yes**, please describe it as much detailed as possible (use separate sheet if needed):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Is there any activity that your child enjoys that I might use in making him/her feel comfortable?

NO/YES

If **yes**, please list as many as you can remember:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. How does your child communicate? Please tell me something about whether this is verbally, through sign or symbol or a mixture of these. Do you recommend someone in particular to attend/support your child's interview sessions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Is there anything that could cause unease for your child?

NO/YES

If **yes**, please describe it as much detail as possible (use separate sheet if needed):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What is the best way to reassure and comfort to encourage your child to keep him/her engaged in communication?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Please give any other information you believe to be relevant to help your child to have take the most of the time of his/her interview sessions:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 2: Accessing schools

Access document : Letter to headmasters and response form [model]

Dear [**Recipient Name**]:

The purpose of this letter is to formally invite [**name of the school**] to give the opportunity to some of its students to take part in my research project which is focused on children's perspectives of themselves and their peers. I am in the final year of my doctorate study and my research method involves narrative/storytelling and visual methods. I have chosen your school based on your ofsted report because of [**reason**]. The ultimate goal of my research is to identify how children express their views about ability and disability, in regard mainly to learning difficulties. I would like to interview children from 6/7 to 16 years of age, with/without statements of SEN.

I hope you feel compelled to contribute to this study by providing me access to some children in your school. I intend to visit the school for a period of two weeks comprising 6 meetings with each child/group. If you are interested in learning more about the research before making a decision, I would be very happy to pay you a visit at the time of your convenience. Please find a return form attached to this letter and a stamped envelope. It would be of great help if you could provide me a response, but if this is not convenient for you, I am going to call you in a couple of weeks following up this letter.

I recently completed my pilot study and the results have proven my study to be relevant for the knowledge about children's views of themselves and others in relation to the context they are immersed in, even though the school settings are not scrutinised or assessed by this study. Because [**name of the school**] is/has [**add a specific characteristic of the school**] I believe that it provides a context that can add value to this study and to the final outcomes of it as a whole.

I am convinced that you will find this study appealing if we have a chance to discuss it in person and would like to ask you to carefully consider this invitation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need more information.

Yours sincerely,

Hilra Vinha
Hilra.vinha@soton.ac.uk

[name of the school] - Return form21 - version 1

Headteacher: [name of the headteacher]

Please indicate your response to this invitation by ticking the appropriate box.

A ☐ **YES**, I am considering allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study and would welcome a visit of the research to discuss it in detail (*I understand that the researcher will contact the school for an appointment if this box is ticked*)

B ☐ **YES**, I am interested in allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study but would prefer to discuss this over the phone (*I understand that the researcher will contact the school for an appointment if this box is ticked*)

C ☐ **YES**, I am considering allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study but would like to receive some more written information before I can decide about meeting the researcher (*I understand that the researcher will post me more information about the study this box is ticked*)

D ☐ **NO**, I am not considering taking part at the moment, but may consider this in future and would welcome receiving more detailed written information about the study (*I understand that the researcher will may contact me again in future about the study if this box is ticked*).

E ☐ **NO**, I am not interested and do not want to be contacted again in regard to this matter (*I understand that the researcher will NOT contact me again about this study if this box is ticked*).

If you have ticked box D or E, could you please indicate any factor in regard to your decision and if there is anything that could make your decision to be different? [optional]

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Signature:_____ Date: _____

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[21] Please use the envelope provided to return this form.

Return form – version 2

King Arthur XII School

RESPONSE FORM*

Headteacher: Mr Callum Todd

✍ *Please tick the box that best represents your response to this invitation.*

A	**YES**, I am considering allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study and would welcome a visit of the research to discuss it in detail (*I understand that the researcher will contact the school for an appointment if this box is ticked*)
B	**YES**, I am interested in allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study but would prefer to discuss this over the phone (*I understand that the researcher will contact the school for an appointment if this box is ticked*)
C	**YES**, I am considering allowing some of my pupils to take part in the study but would like to receive some more written information before I can decide about meeting the researcher (*I understand that the researcher will post me more information about the study this box is ticked*)
D	**NO**, I am not considering taking part at the moment, but may consider this in future and would welcome receiving more detailed written information about the study (*I understand that the researcher will may contact me again in future about the study if this box is ticked*).
E	**NO**, I am not interested and do not want to be contacted again in regard to this matter (*I understand that the researcher will NOT contact me again about this study if this box is ticked*).

If you have ticked box D or E, could you please indicate any factor regarding to your decision and if there is anything that could make it to be different? [optional]

---

* Please use the envelope provided to return this form

Signature:_____   Date: _____

Appendix 3: The self-/portraits
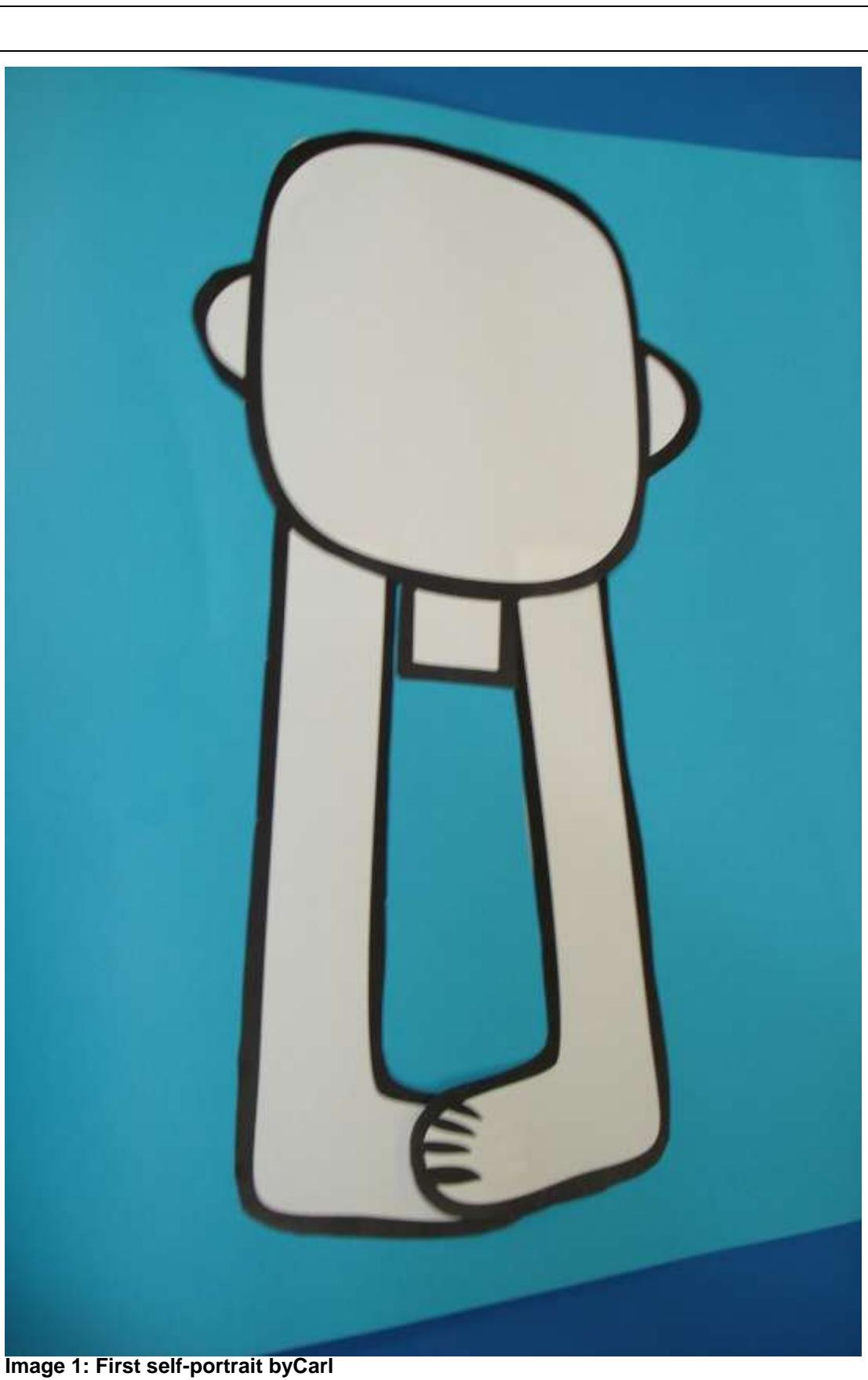
Image 1: First self-portrait byCarl

Image 2: Second self-portrait by Carl
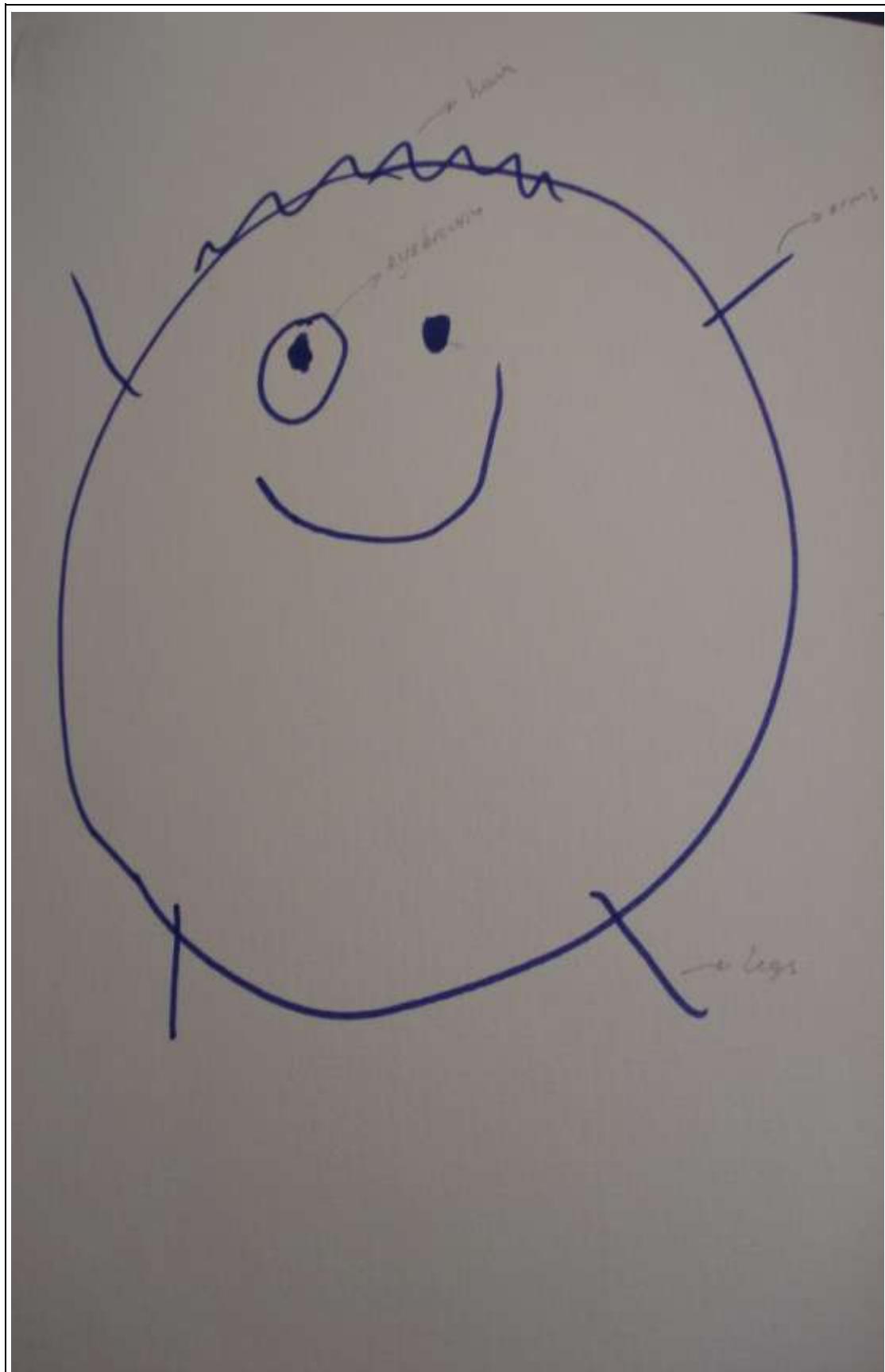
Image 3: Third self-portrait by Carl

Image 4: Portrait of a peer from the special school by Carl

Image 5: Portrait of a peer from the special school by Carl

Image 6: Portrait of a peer from the special school by Carl

Image 7: Portrait of a peer from the special school by Carl

Image 8: Portrait of able-bodied brother by Carl

Image 9: Portrait of able-bodied brother by Carl
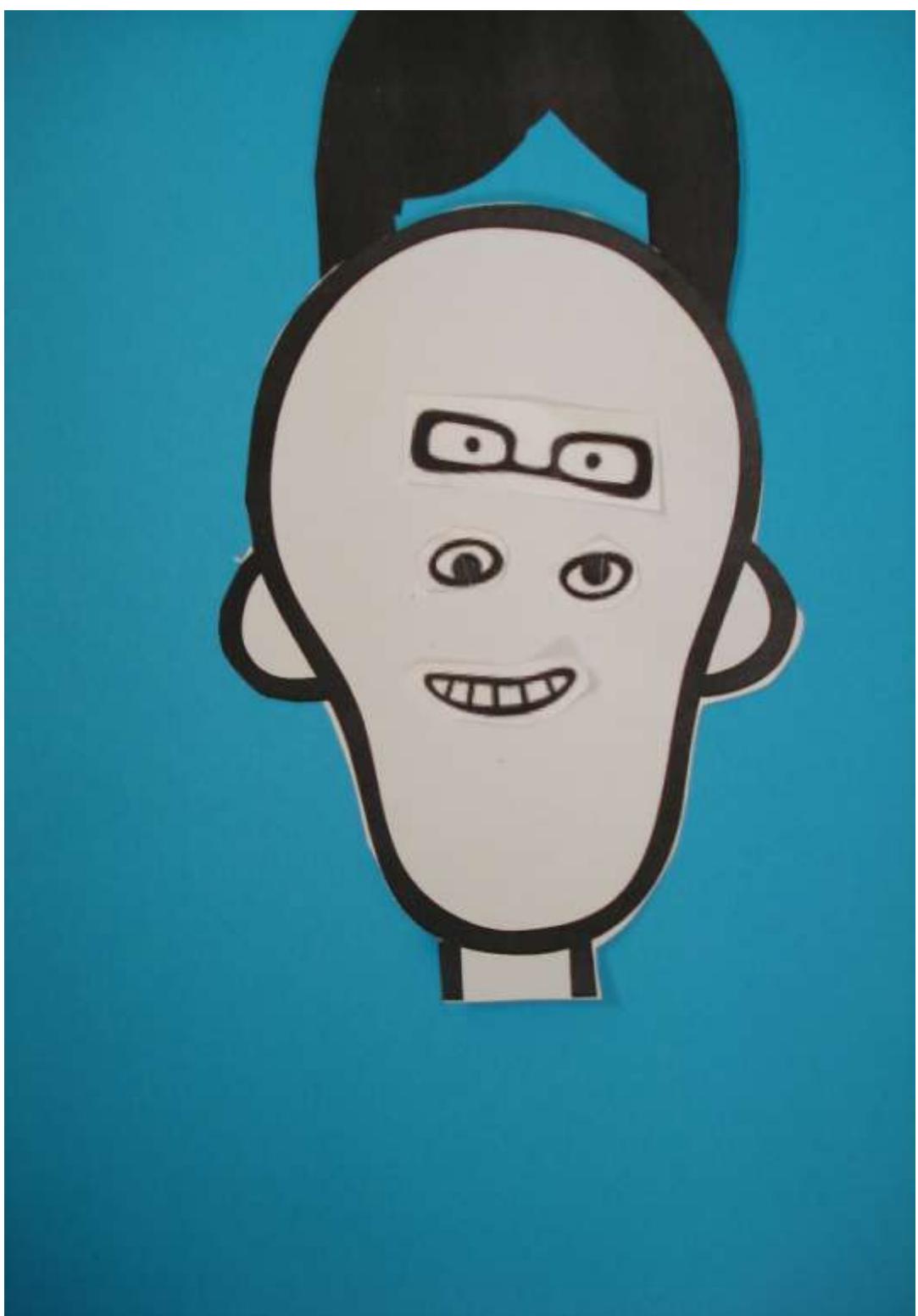
Image 10: Portrait of researcher by Carl [22]

---

[22] Carl tried to put the glasses on the right place, yt they were not cut out (transparent) so he opted to leave the eyes visible. He didn't take the small dots on the glasses as eyes.

Image 11: First self-portrait by Lynne

Image 12: Second self-portrait by Lynne - slightly "corrected" by Mrs Bell
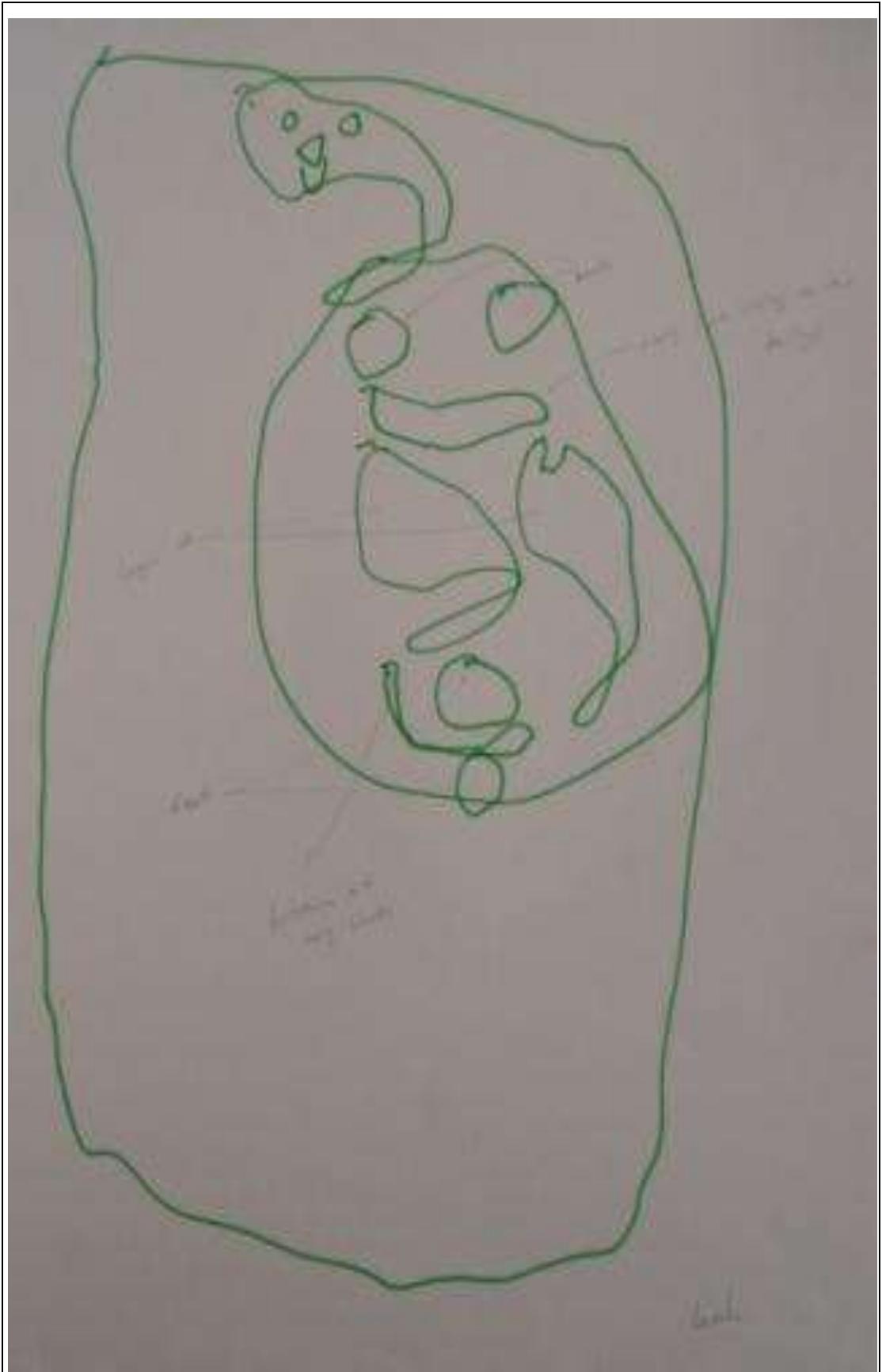
Image 13: Third self-portrait by Lynne
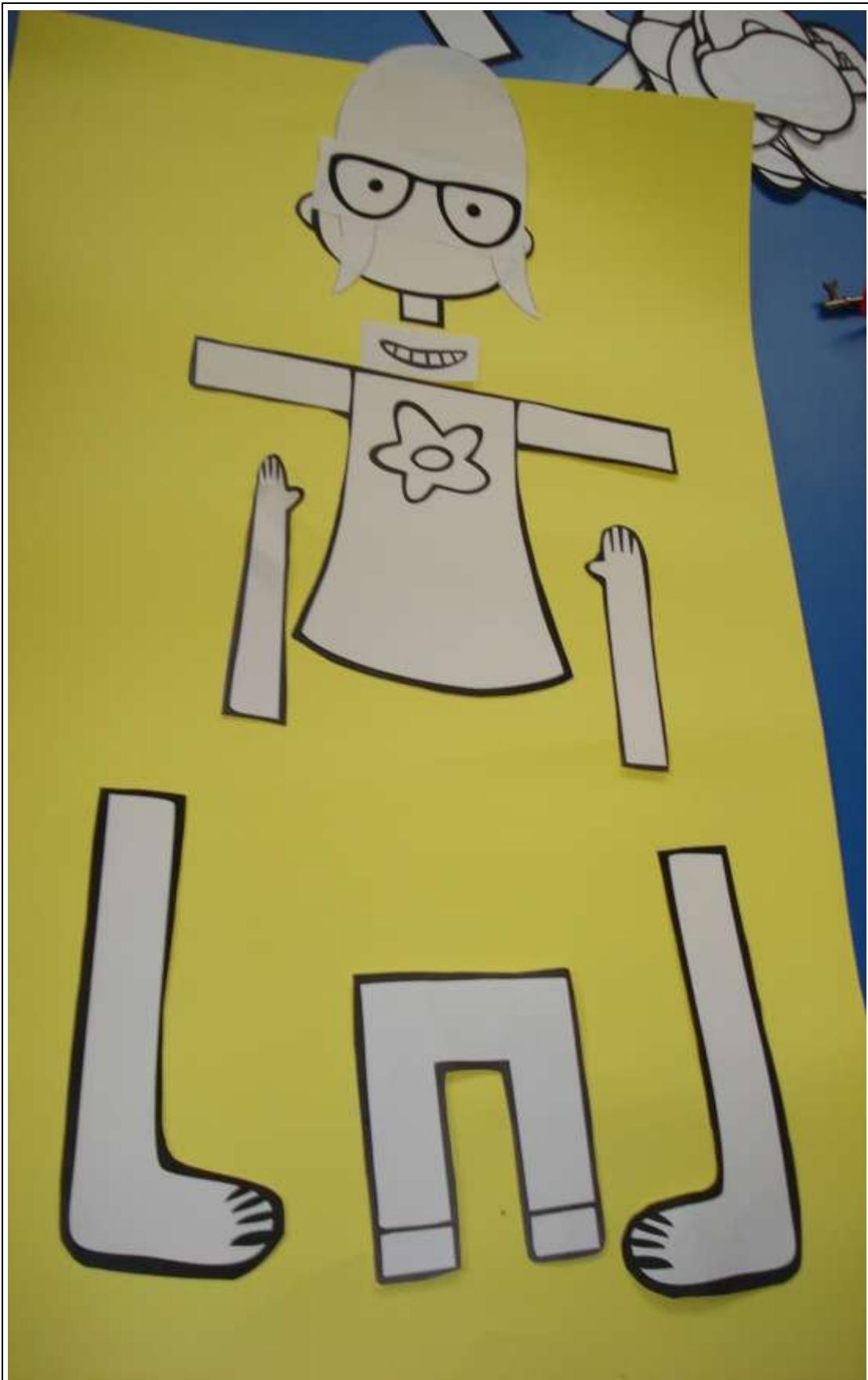
**Image 14: Fourth self-portrait by Lynne - with some interference of Mrs Bell**
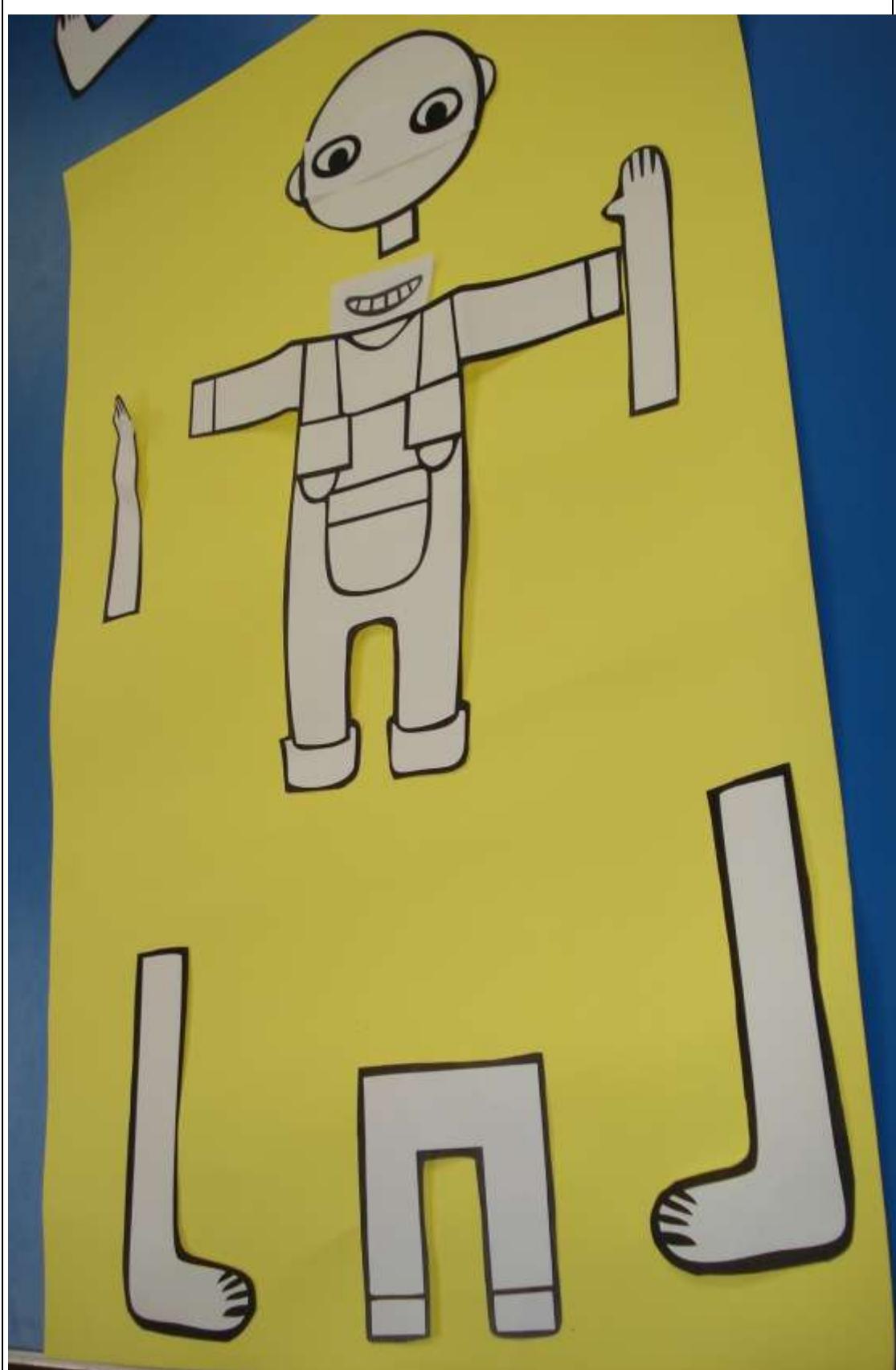
Image 15: Portrait of peer from special school by Lynne

Image 16: Portrait of a peer from special school by Lynne - with interference

Image 17: Portrait of a peer from special school by Lynne with interference of Mrs Bell

**Image 18: Portrait of able-bodied father by Lynne**
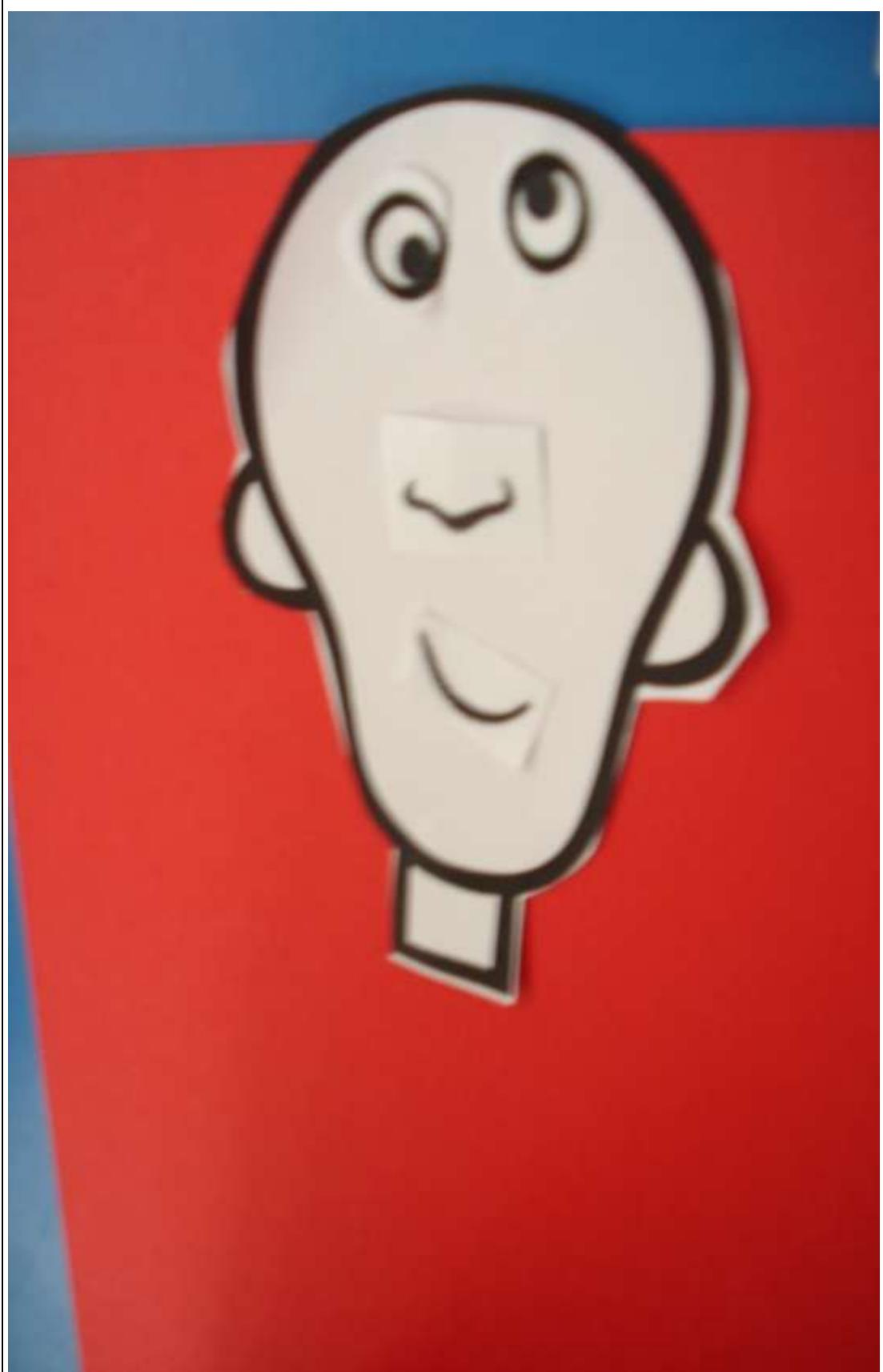
Image 19: Portrait of researcher by Lynne

Image 20: Self-portrait byTeresa

Image 21: Self-portrait by Teresa

Image 22: Portrait of someone with learning difficulties by Teresa
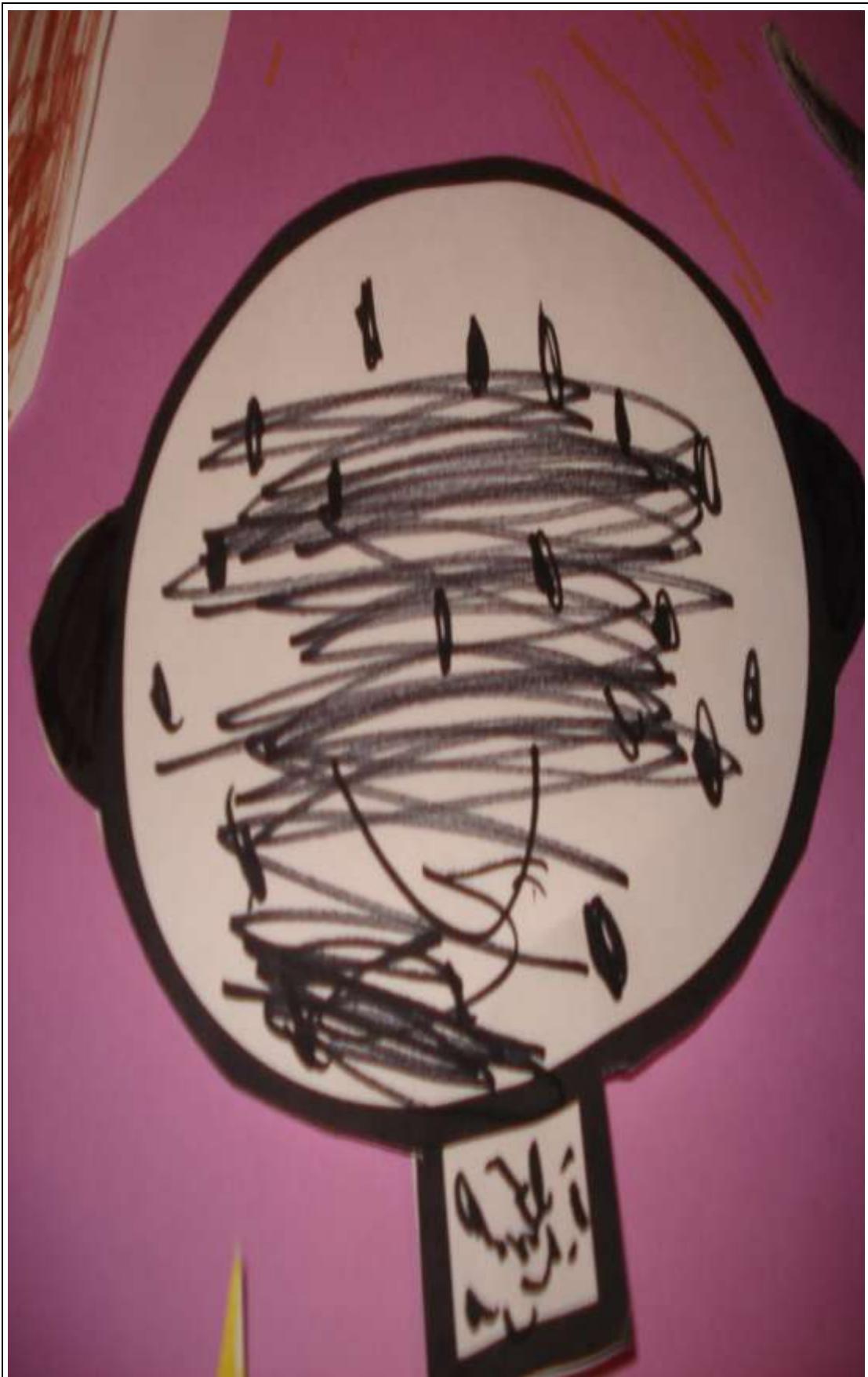
Image 23: Portrait of peer from special school by Teresa

Image 24: Portrait of peer from special school by Teresa

Image 25: Portrait of peer from special school by Teresa (progression into more 'disabled')

Image 26: Portrait of 'smart' person by Teresa

Image 27: Portrait of smart person by Teresa (progression of portrait in the next encounter as she said the person is "really smart")

Image 28: Portrait of very clever person by Teresa
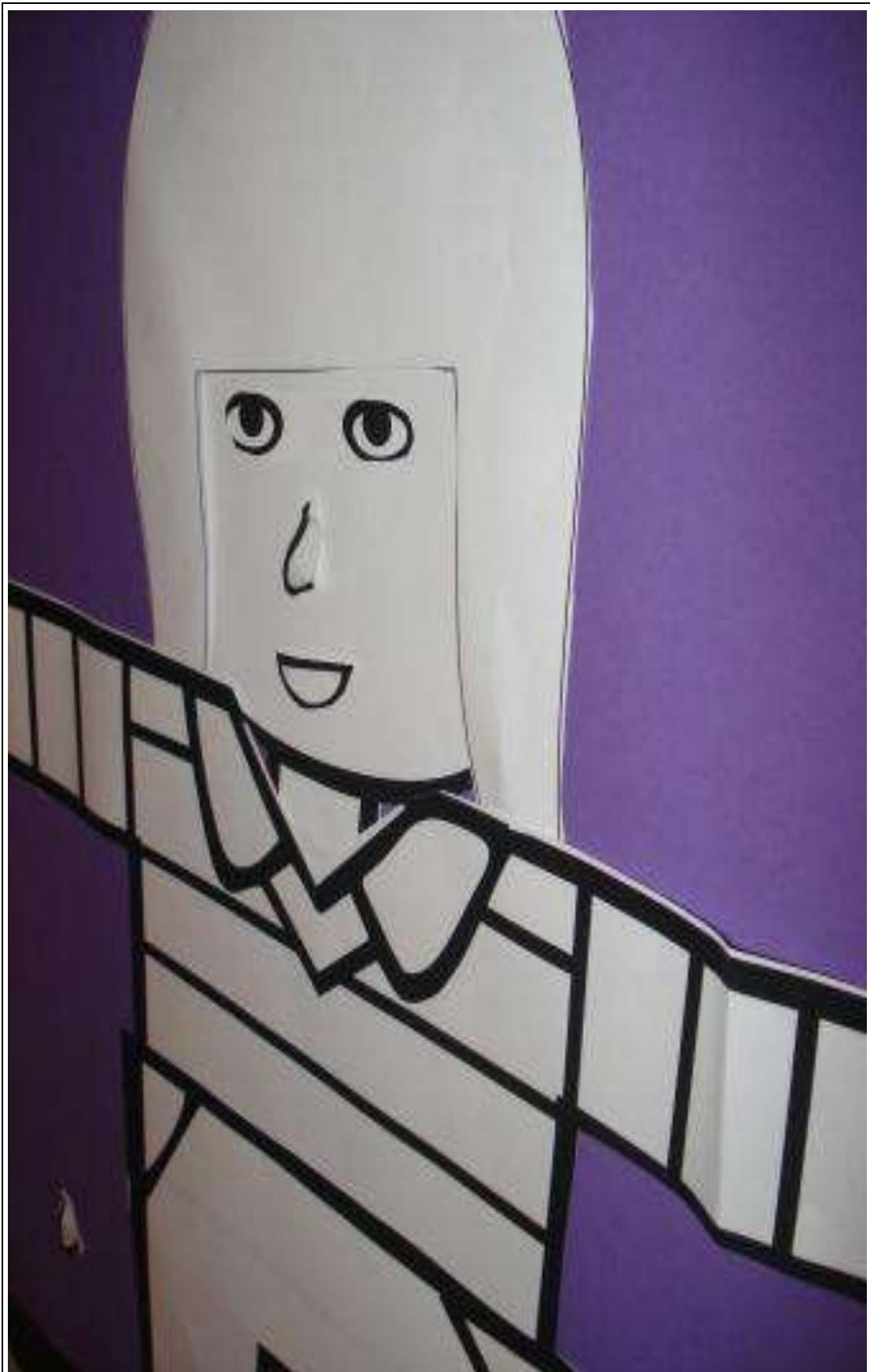
Image 29: Self-portrait by Lidka

Image 30: Self-portrait by Lidka

Image 31: Self-portrait by Lidka – improved to look a bit smarter

Image 32: Portrait of a clever person by Lidka
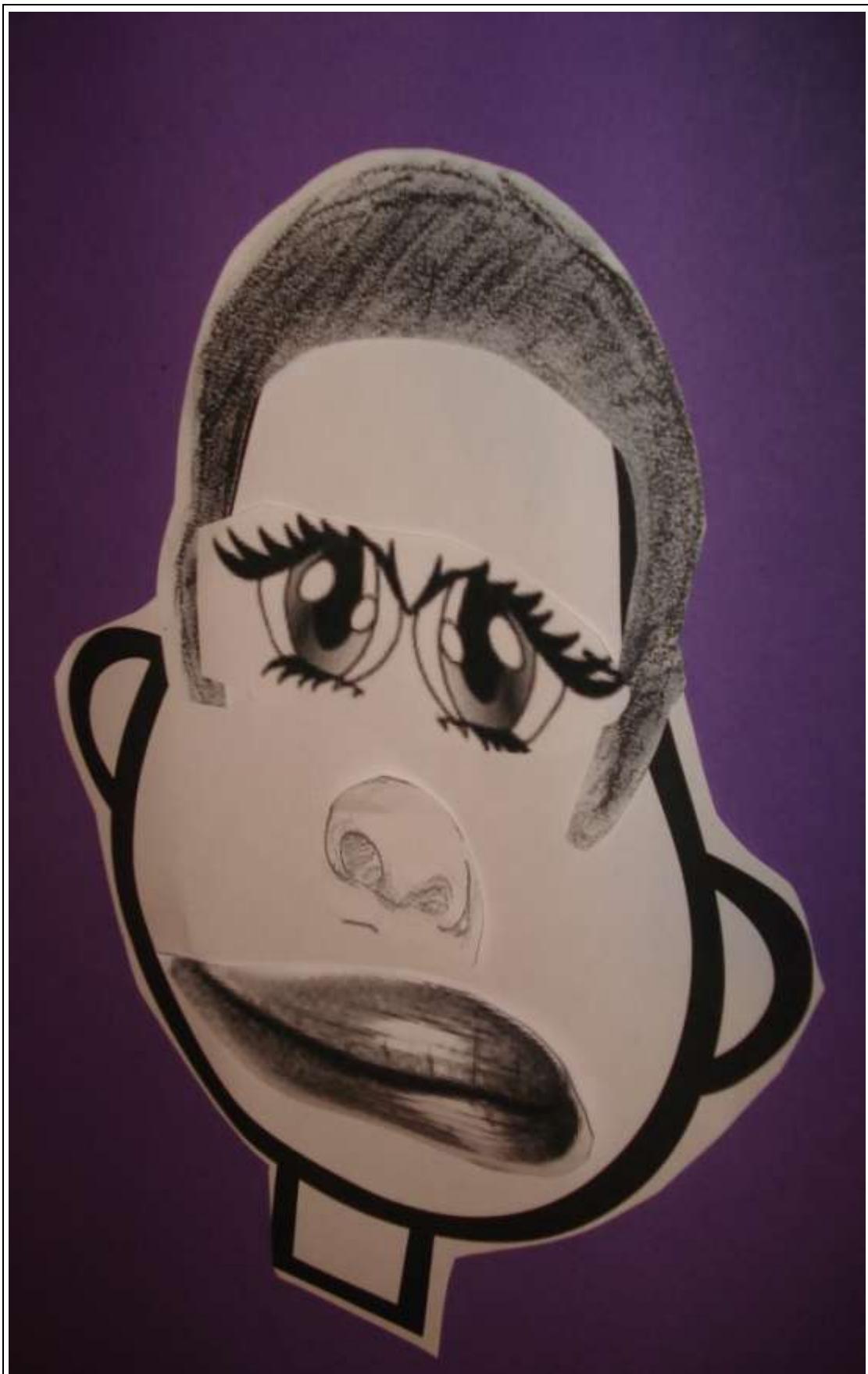
Image 33: Portrait of person with learning disabilities by Lidka

Image 34: Self-portrait by Catherine who is identified as having learning difficulties

Image 35: Portrait of peer identified as very clever by Catherine

Image 36: Self-portrait of Arthur who is identified as having learning difficulties, and experienced exclusion

Image 37: Portrait of peer who Arthur identified as being very clever, and in a second encounter he said it was himself in a cold day (referring to the small hat)

Image 38: Self-portrait by Edwina who is identified as having learning difficulties
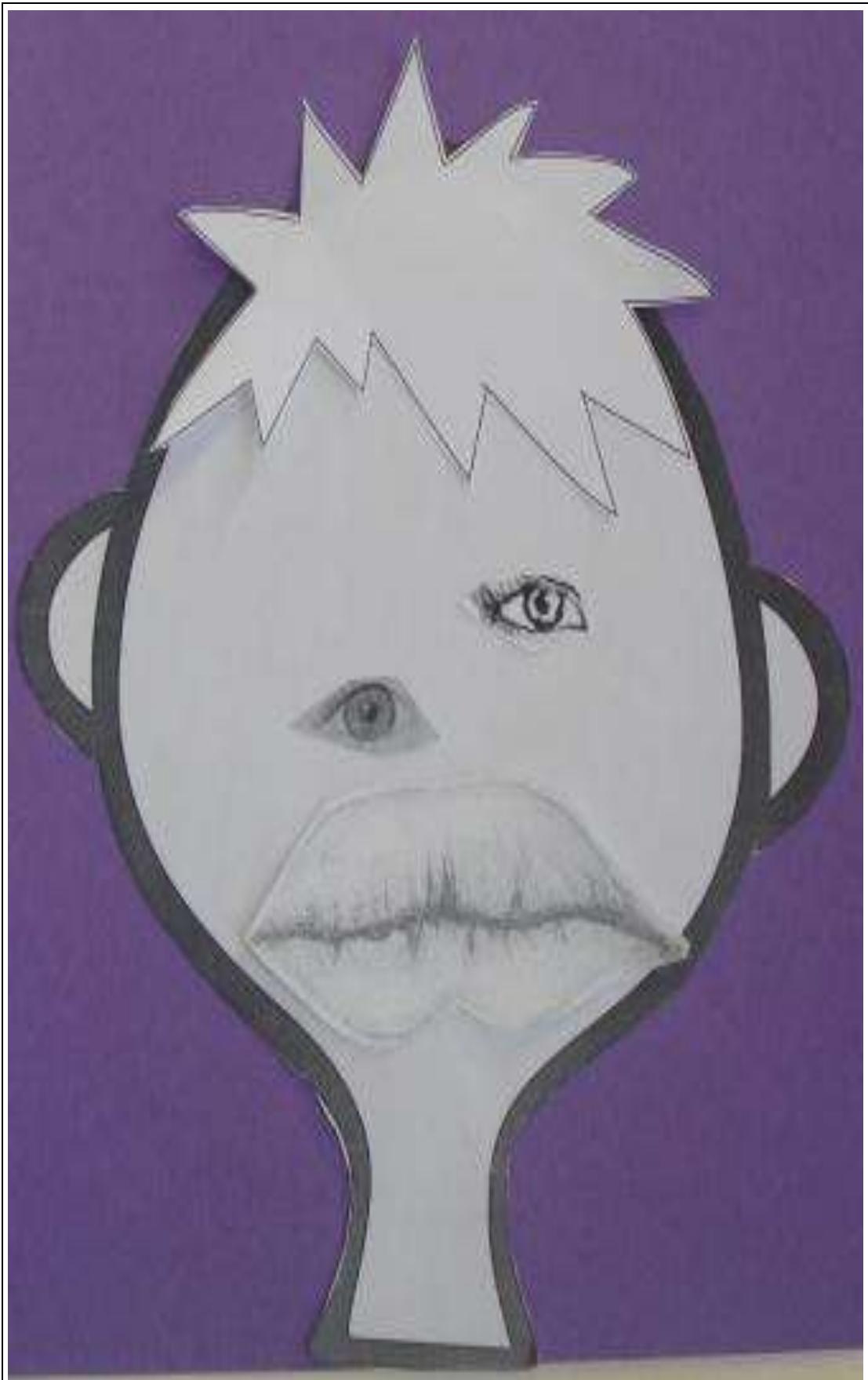
Image 39: Portrait of a naughty boy [instead of the clever person requested]

Image 40: Second attempt to portrait someone clever. Edwina ended up saying this was a 'nice girl'.

Image 41: Self-portrait by Andrew, the dominant participant

Image 42: Portrait of a not-so-clever person by Andrew

Image 43: Self-portrait of Adeline

Image 44: Portrait of 'unclever' person by Adeline

Image 45: Self-portrait of Chloe

Image 46: Portrait of 'unclever' peer by Chloe

1   Appendix 4: Sample of transcripts

2   **Transcript A: Special school**

3

4

5   **CARL: She got [bandages today] [00:00:17] cause she had an operation.**

6   **LYNNE: Look I can't bend it.**

7   Researcher: You can't bend it. Where is the operation?

8   **CARL: Where's your operation. Show her there. Lift your arm up.**

9   **LYNNE: I can't bend it.**

10   Researcher: [You need an injection] [00:00:40] for it?

11   **LYNNE: No. Look I can't bend it.**

12   Researcher: so it's still hurting. It was yesterday? And you can come to school straight

13   away? Yea?

14   **CARL: I didn't want to come to school yesterday**

15   Researcher: Why?

16   **CARL: Because I wanted to be lazy.**

17   Researcher: I'm going to show you some pictures here.

18   **CARL: This one is so sad.**

19   Researcher: Yes, and this one what do you think?

20   **CARL: Crying.**

21   Researcher: They're different as well.

22   **CARL: This one laughing that one's sad.**

23   Researcher: You think she's sad do you? And these ones, is anyone sad?

24   **CARL: [no] [00:02:16]**

25   Researcher: They're all happy? What makes you sad do you think?

26   **CARL: She's got an operation like LYNNE**

27   Researcher: Do you think so, LYNNE? She had an operation like you?

28   **CARL: That one's scared.**

29   Researcher: And this one what do you think?

30   **CARL: Cross.**

31   Researcher: Cross, yea? And these two?

32   **CARL: Happy.**

33   **LYNNE: Happy and sad.**

34   **CARL: sad.**

35   Researcher: You think it's sad? Look at her face.

36   **CARL; she's a bit worried.**

37   Researcher: What is this, what's she doing?

38   **LYNNE: Smiling.**

39   Researcher: smiling yes but maybe doing something else as well?

40   **CARL: Sad.**

41   Researcher: And these are the things you're going to see in a minute.

42   **CARL: Were going to draw them?**

43   Researcher: Yes we're going to make the pictures with these but I'm going to show you

44   these first. What is she doing?

45   **CARL: Drinking.**

46   Researcher: Do you think she's happy or sad?

47   **CARL: Happy.**

48   **LYNNE: Happy.**

49   Researcher: And what about this one? What do you think?

50   **LYNNE: Sad.**

51   Researcher: And these ones?

52   **LYNNE: Happy.**

53   **CARL: Angry.**

54   Researcher; You think angry?

55   **CARL: a bit scared.**

56   Researcher: And this? Happy or not?

57   **LYNNE: Happy.**

58   Researcher: Okay she's happy. I think he's deciding yet. We're going to do, later, this as well

59   but we're going to start with making some pictures. If we need more I can cut some more but

60   we have some that I already cut. So we have got some legs.

61   **CARL: We've got legs.**

62   Researcher: We've got some legs here and some hands and arms, yes?

63   **LYNNE: I don't know where that goes.**

64   **CARL: Heads.**

65   Researcher: These are heads yea but there's something missing yea? What's missing?

66   Where's the mouth? Do they have mouths?

67   **CARL: Yea.**

68   Researcher: So we have different heads, different shapes and sizes. Going to put some

69   here. We have some- but if we don't like the heads, these ones, we can make other ones.

70   Some hair there. Then we have some face bits. We have different types. What's that?

71   **LYNNE: Mouth.**

72   Researcher: And they have your size.

73   **LYNNE: This one's sad and this one's happy.**

74   Researcher: Is this one sad? If we turn this it can be happy. And these are nose they're a bit

75   strange.

76   **CARL: Yea.**

77 Researcher: But I have different nose. Look another nose. They are a bit strange. So we

78 have face bits here that you can use however you want

79 **LYNNE: Shoes.**

80 Researcher: Shoes, different. Here they are and some clothes. That's good.

81 **CARL: Teacher.**

82 Researcher: [*** drawings are not ***] [00:08:18] another one, that's good so we have some

83 clothes in different sizes as well so you can choose if you're going to do small or big. If you

84 need more or different ones we can have a look here and then you can choose and then I'll

85 cut it for you. If you decided you want something bigger or different. You can have it if you

86 want and then we're going to do something else.

87 **LYNNE: Like that?**

88 Researcher: You said something about LYNNE's annual review, what time will it be?

89 **SW: Her father is here now, they'll just come get her any time from now**

90 **LYNNE: I don't want him up here picking me up.**

91 **SW: He's not picking you up he's just coming for your review and then he's going**

92 **home.**

93 Researcher: Let's choose a color for today.

94 **LYNNE: Yellow.**

95 Researcher: Which yellow this yellow or this one?

96 Researcher: CARL?

97 **CARL: Blue.**

98 Researcher: you prefer blue? Alright.

99 **LYNNE: My dad will pick me up**

100 Researcher: When he comes you go and then you come back here and you finish that.

101 Okay?

102 **LYNNE: No.**

103 Researcher: No? you're not coming back?

104 **SW: She is. Your dad's going home afterwards, don't worry about it.**

105 Researcher: You're going to use these ones to make the picture okay?

106 We're not going to use glue so you can change the position of them so you can choose from

107 each of these places to make a person, okay?

108 If you want you can start making someone like yourself (Carl), or maybe a friend of yours.

109 You have to tell me who it is okay?

110 **CARL: I'd do me**

111 **SW: come over this side okay?**

112 **SW: You can have one of those chairs if you're really good.**

113 **SW: I'll give you that merit because you had to have that injection**

114 **SW: right come on then.**

115 **SW: That way or that way?**

116 **SW: Right.**

117 SW: Find a face.

118 SW: Where does that go then.

119 SW: Maybe that way because that's his neck,

120 SW: what comes next?

121 LYNNE: I don't know.

122 SW: You got a head now you need something else.

123 LYNNE: Leg.

124 SW: A leg then.

125 Researcher: Okay just a second because what I'm going to do

126 SW: What else you need there?

127 LYNNE: I don't know.

128 SW: Yes you do.

129 Researcher: We're going to take pictures of the pictures.

130 Because we're not going to glue them okay?

131 Then you have a look.

132 SW: Why don't you go round?

133 Which ones you want?

134 You put those there.

135 Now what else do you want then?

136 Researcher: Who is this?

137 [SW talks simultaneously, Carl's voice inaudible]

138 Researcher: So that's your friend?

139 SW: You need something in the middle

140 what do you need there?

141 LYNNE: Trousers

142 SW: Over there.

143 Researcher: What do you need, trousers?

144 We have different things, look. We have a few shirts here look this one this one. We have a

145 skirt.

146 SW: put these in place first

147 and then you can decide if you want something else in a minute.

148 Perfect.

149 Where's that going then?

150 And where are those going.

151 Right.

152 Okay.

153 And what else?

154 Anything else you'd like to do?

155 LYNNE: Knickers.

156 SW: Well they're underneath the trousers so we don't see them.

4

157 Researcher: who is this person?

158 **LYNNE: That's LYNNE.**

159 Researcher: Okay this is LYNNE and is LYNNE happy or sad?

160 **LYNNE: Happy.**

161 Researcher: I can't see, can you make LYNNE happy?

162 **SW: What's that?**

163 **LYNNE: Hair.**

164 Researcher: Good you've got some hair here and some face bits here.

165 **LYNNE: Eye.**

166 Researcher: Which one you think is good for LYNNE?

167 **LYNNE: Beard.**

168 **SW: No, that's not a beard.**

169 Researcher: Okay

170 **SW: good**

171 what else do you need?

172 **LYNNE: Eye.**

173 Researcher: Which one?

174 **LYNNE: *** [00:15:38]**

175 Researcher: Oh you've done it, well this is quite good.

176 **CARL: My friend.**

177 Researcher: Your friend and what's the name of your friend?

178 Researcher: Is it a boy or a girl?

179 **CARL: It's a girl yea.**

180 Researcher: There she is then. You can't remember her name?

181 **CARL: She's going to have lunch**

182 Researcher: Can we change her to make it look like one of your sisters?

183 **LYNNE: Yea.**

184 Researcher: What do you need?

185 **LYNNE: Hair.**

186 Researcher: Find what you need, what do you need? Eyes? You tell me what

187 **LYNNE: Lucie.**

188 **SW: Don't keep talking about Lucie were doing this job.**

189 Researcher: who's Lucie?

190 **SW: Lucie's in our class.**

191 Researcher: Okay she's not your sister. So you prefer to do Lucie instead?

192 **LYNNE: No.**

193 **SW: Lucie's not in a very good mood today we won't talk about it now we'll talk about**

194 **it later. What's your sister's name?**

195 **LYNNE: Hannah**

196 Researcher: Anna?

5

197 LYNNE: Hannah.

198 Researcher: So you're doing Hannah?

199 **LYNNE: Eyes.**

200 Researcher: You've got the eyes what else do you need?

201 And she is wearing the same dress.

202 Does she have the same dress as you?

203 It's okay.

204 What else?

205 **LYNNE: I don't know.**

206 **SW: You don't know?**

207 **SW: Look around to see what bits you can use.**

208 Researcher: You decide if you want to use some of these.

209 Some of that?

210 **SW: LYNNE, come on!**

211 Researcher: So you're going to change her dress.

212 So Hannah's having this one?

213 Is Hannah ready for a picture or do you want to put something else on her?

214 Does she need something for her

215 **LYNNE: ***[00:18:33]**

216 Researcher: Who's this one.

217 **CARL: Another friend of mine.**

218 Researcher: Oh it's a secret.

219 Is that someone from this school?

220 **CARL: Yeah.**

221 Researcher: Would you mind drawing one of your brothers for me?

222 **LYNNE: I don't want my dad to get me I don't want my dad up here.**

223 **SW: He's going to come.**

224 **LYNNE: Later.**

225 **SW: Yes later.**

226 Researcher: LYNNE? LYNNE? Do you want to make Lucie now?

227 **LYNNE: No.**

228 **SW: How about making daddy?**

229 **Right**

230 **Take all this off, and choose someone else.**

231 **Start again maybe you could make daddy.**

232 **What does daddy need?**

233 **LYNNE: Big head.**

234 **SW: Give him a head then, we have lots of heads here.**

235 **Which one is better for your dad?**

236 **LYNNE: This one.**

237	SW: Right
238	what does he need next?
239	LYNNE: Trousers.
240	Researcher: Trousers, let's find the trousers then.
241	LYNNE: Big trousers.
242	Researcher: You need big trousers? Then we have to cut them because we only have small
243	ones.
244	SW: While we're waiting for some trousers, find what else we need.
245	Researcher: What's his name?
246	SW: How about something like this?
247	LYNNE: Nose.
248	SW: Find a nose then.
249	Researcher: You forgot the name of your brother? Oh dear me.
250	SW: The noses are here, there's another one there, you choose which one you want.
251	Researcher: Choose here and then I cut out which one you want.
252	SW: See if you can find some trousers. Or maybe we can just use the small ones for
253	now. Researcher: Could we use these trousers LYNNE? What else do you need.
254	Lynne: A shirt.
255	SW: Find one then.
256	LYNNE: Can we color them?
257	Researcher: Yes you can.
258	SW: You need to find it, LYNNE,
259	it can be your choice whatever you want.
260	Come on you are snails this morning,
261	you got the trousers what else do you need?
262	LYNNE: Eyes.
263	SW: Find some eyes.
264	Put the eyes on.
265	Researcher: Is he happy or sad?
266	CARL: Happy.
267	SW: Find a happy face.
268	These are mouths,
269	this one
270	this one
271	and this one.
272	SW: No don't touch.
273	Researcher: This is you brother, right?
274	Researcher: CARL you're doing really well, aren't you?
275	Researcher: You want to change something on him?
276	SW: Is there something else you might need, LYNNE?

277	**SW: I guess this is a good color then.**
278	**<u>You can choose.</u>**
279	**You can have these and these, let's just put them here.**
280	**CARL: What are they?**
281	Researcher: It's just to put the pencils in, to make it easier.
282	Here we have some crayons.
283	You can use crayons or pencils.
284	Researcher: Who are you doing now? Who's this one?
285	Or is this another secret?
286	it's a secret?
287	Oh okay you are full of secrets.
288	**LYNNE: Science.**
289	**SW: No we're not going to do science today.**
290	**LYNNE: Where's mine?**
291	**SW: Where's your what?**
292	**LYNNE: my picture**
293	**SW: we'll look in a minute.**
294	Researcher: [showing the pictures ini the digital camera] this is our table, the other side of
295	the table, this is your dad, remember?
296	**LYNNE: no.**
297	Researcher: You're coloring it no? This one is CARL's brother. This is your dad again. This is
298	a secret, he told me
299	this is a friend of his
300	and this one you told me is Hannah.
301	**LYNNE: Yeah.**
302	Researcher: And who's this one?
303	**LYNNE: Daddy.**
304	Researcher: No you told me someone else, your daddy was not wearing this dress, was he?
305	Who was wearing this dress?
306	I think it was LYNNE
307	Did you change your mind?
308	**LYNNE: Allison.**
309	Researcher: This is another one
310	Can you tell me or this is a secret?
311	**CARL: Secret.**
312	Researcher: This is a friend of yours?
313	Is he in this school?
314	**CARL: yep**
315	In this school?
316	In your class?

317 **CARL: He's my friend.**

318 **LYNNE: This one is my friend.**

319 Researcher: You can choose maybe you have more things here. Yes we have this one and

320 you have-

321 **LYNNE: I got her hair and legs.**

322 Researcher: You like painting too? And then I have some right here. Okay then you clean

323 your hands?

324 **SW: LYNNE what are you going to do next?**

325 **LYNNE: I don't know.**

326 **SW: You're going to do some more colouring?**

327 **LYNNE: Yeah.**

328 Researcher: Want to do something with it? When you finished you're going to glue it

329 [00:31:05] okay?

330 **CARL: ***[00:31:25] can I take it home?**

331 **SW: He wants to take it home.**

332 Researcher: What the drawing?

333 Researcher: Yes you can.

334 **LYNNE: Can I take it home?**

335 Researcher: Yes later, I'm going to take a picture of your hand. There you are. The other

336 ones didn't work, this is good, this is not good and this is no good.

337 **SW: Just your hands.**

338 **LYNNE: I don't want my dad up there.**

339 **CARL: maybe I'll make LYNNE's dad.**

340 **LYNNE: look I made my dad. ***[00:34:10]**

341 Researcher: I don't have a beard. No more than that. You can choose whatever color you

342 want.

343 **SW: Play nicely LYNNE.**

344 **LYNNE: What?**

345 **SW: Okay very good.**

346 Researcher: Oh this is really good. Don't you want to stick it on the other side instead?

347 **CARL: No.**

348 Researcher: Let this dry. This way. That's okay.

349 **CARL: Where are you going after here? [00:35:36]**

350 Researcher: Me?

351 **CARL: Yes**

352 Researcher: I go to my school.

353 **CARL: Here?**

354 Researcher: I'm a student as well just like you.

355 **CARL: Are you?**

356 Researcher: Yes, you know it's just a different school.

9

357 **CARL: ***[00:35:49]**

358 Researcher: No, not today, just my children. I told you I have children. Two small ones.

359 **LYNNE: ***[00:36:00]**

360 Researcher: Are you doing something special with this one, who's this girl? What do you

361 need?

362 **LYNNE: Trousers.**

363 Researcher: You don't like the dress? Here are trousers.

364 **LYNNE: What day have we got?**

365 **SW: What time? You don't have to go.**

366 Researcher: Are you going to use the trousers or not?

367 Have you changed your mind?

368 **CARL: I don't want to anymore.**

369 Researcher: Can you just tell me who is this first before we finish?

370 **CARL: Samantha. It's for her.**

371 **LYNNE: Have I got ***[00:37:57]**

372 Researcher: You're not putting ***[00:38:00] for Samantha?

373 **LYNNE: When are we going to leave?**

374 Researcher: I think we are going to assembly today.

375 **SW: We're going, we're going home.**

376 **CARL: Are you going to your school when we finish?**

377 Researcher: Yes.

378 **CARL: Can I come?**

379 Researcher: Can we meet again next week? And I'll bring the pictures.

380 **CARL: Yes.**

381 Researcher: Do you want to keep some of these to play later?

382 **CARL: I'll keep that one.**

383 Researcher: LYNNE ***[00:38:59] I think we're going to go to assembly now. LYNNE do you

384 want to tell me something about Lucie? You were talking about Lucie before.

385 **CARL: She was being naughty today**

386 Researcher: Today? What'd she do?

387 **CARL: She hit LYNNE.**

388 **LYNNE: yeah. I'm not her friend anymore**

389 Researcher: you're not her friend anymore?

390 **LYNNE: Lucie hit me in the head.**

391 ***[00:40:03]

392 Researcher: LYNNE, oh that's quite good.

393 **SW: I'm going to give you a merit anyway because you had an injection in your arm.**

394 Researcher: I just have a paper to do with the two of you if we can.

395 **SW: Just sit down.**

396 Researcher: We're going to do this.

397 **SW: Don't worry about assembly we don't have to go.**

398 Researcher: You need to clean up your hands a bit more

399 **CARL: There's still paint. I'll wash them here.**

400 **LYNNE: I want to go wash my hands.**

401 Researcher: I need you to just do the initials.

402 **SW: can you write your name?**

403 **LYNNE: Yeah.**

404 **SW: LYNNE can write her first name. CARL just put it down on the table and listen,**

405 **please.**

406 Researcher: Put your name down. We're going to do it, I'm going to explain you and then

407 you put ***[00:42:15] yes. Okay so *** [00:42:23] so I'm going to cut this out and do you

408 remember that I told you that I am here with you and LYNNE because I want to help schools

409 be better for everyone. Remember that? And do you understand that? And do you think I can

410 do that?

411 **LYNNE: The lion.**

412 **SW: In a minute.**

413 Researcher: This one. One the first day you and LYNNE came here to help. Do you think

414 you were helping?

415 **CARL: Yeah.**

416 Researcher: You tell me, okay? Do you know this thing here it's recording our conversations.

417 Just say I understand that what you talk, is being recorded. Okay so yes? I'm going to do the

418 same with you.

419 **LYNNE: In the end?**

420 Researcher: Yes. But different because you may say no to some of the things that CARL

421 said yes. And later I'm going to listen to these and then I'm going to write in a paper what we

422 talked to here. Next week I'm going to bring, to discuss with you, if it's right or not that I

423 understood what you said. So LYNNE, if I write something that is not what you said you can

424 change you can tell me no I didn't say that. Do you understand?

425 **LYNNE: Yeah.**

426 Researcher: Okay so put your name here. Do you remember what we've done today with the

427 pictures?

428 **LYNNE: Yeah**

429 Researcher: Do you remember that we've done today some people?

430 **CARL: Yeah.**

431 Researcher: So I'm going to use that to talk with those pictures so I am going to ***[00:45:23}

432 even with your secret friend. I'm going to say this person because we do not have a name.

433 So you put your name here. When I finish with you, the other week, I'm going to write a story

434 about this. Do you think it's a good idea if I write this story? Do you mind if I write about our

435 meetings? Is It okay for you? Is it okay, LYNNE, for you as well if I write a story about our

436   meetings? And also if next week I'm going to bring the things if you change your mind 'oh I

437   don't want to help anymore' you just tell me you don't want to help anymore. Is that okay?

438   **CARL: Yes.**

439   Researcher: Okay LYNNE?

440   **LYNNE: Yep.**

441   Researcher: Just put your name. This is about ***[00:46:45] okay?

442   **SW: And this one we're not doing?**

443   Researcher: Right. You're going to be asked questions.

444   Researcher: Thank you. Today? Only if you want. Do you want to write something? You can

445   if you want.

446   Researcher: You don't mind taking ***[00:47:20] and keeping secrets.

447   Researcher: Do you want my pen? You want to keep it? It's okay. LYNNE. CARL have

448   chosen a pen and paper to keep, do you want to keep something from here? Whatever you

449   want. Do you want to keep anything that you've done today? The play-doh? You want to

450   choose some colors? Which one?

451   **LYNNE: Red.**

452   Researcher: This one or this one?

453   This one?

454   Yes you can.

455   **LYNNE: Thank you ma'am.**

456   Researcher: You're welcome.

457   Researcher: Thank you very much for helping me today. Next week were going to, like last

458   week and today, see the pictures we've done and were going to try to remember who they

459   were, which one was LYNNE which one was Hannah which one was daddy and your secret

460   ones. If you change your mind you tell me next week. And also I'm going to bring some of

461   the bits of our conversation that is recorded, that I may not understand well and I need to ask

462   you what you said. Is that alright?

463   **CARL: Yes.**

464   Researcher: maybe CARL is going to tell me what LYNNE says because sometimes I don't

465   understand. Do you understand your other friends that's in your class as well? Do you help

466   them?

467   **CARL: Yeah.**

468   Researcher: And you LYNNE?

469   **LYNNE: Yeah.**

470   Researcher: You help someone in your class as well? Do you like helping?

471   **LYNNE: Yes,**

472   Researcher: Ah, you like helping. Okay so we're going to meet again next week, thank you

473   very much, have a nice week. And you're feeling okay with your operation, is it still hurting?

474   Thank you very much.

475   **SW: Go around the outside that way.**

476   Researcher: CARL you said you want to keep this one? Just make sure-

477   [End of audio]

Appendix 5: Paper for conference [23]

The exceptional experience
of difference:
a learning journey
through difficulties and insights

First years

The day he was born, he cried more than a new born usually does. My mum knew from then that something was not quite right

He was nearly two when learned to sit without help

He was already three and could not walk at all yet

---

[23] Paper presented in the conference 'Families, History and Learning Difficulties' organised by The Open University in 9th and 10th July 2009, when I presented the paper: 'The exceptional experience of difference'. These two illustrations were part of the visual narrative I have used, and was produced by Weaver Lima especially for the conference

The fourth year

There was a folk culture-based belief that he could not walk because he had a curse and needed a sort of spiritual 'doctor'

The last attempt was an alleged miraculous medicine, also with superstitious elements

One day, a ball game woke up his desire to walk, and he did a big effort and that was just the beginning.

The special school years
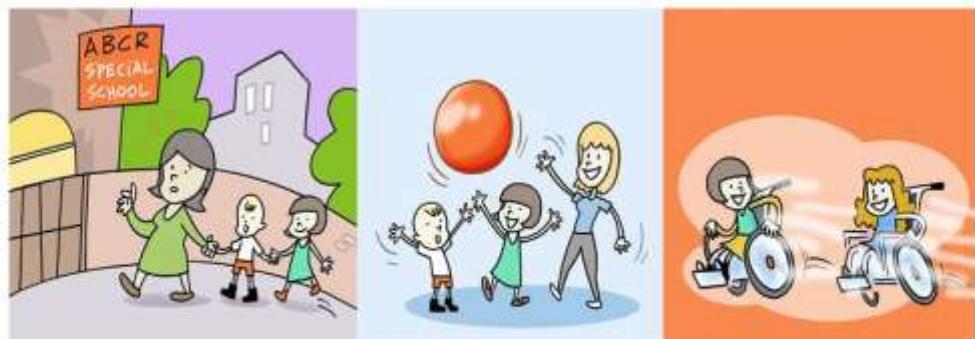
After five years of exploratory homemade experiences, we finally got a place for him in a special school

I was always welcome to join in the activities in the special school

I even enjoyed "illegal" wheeled racing games with other "special" children

The 'carrying' thing

All my friends knew how to play *with* him, and they loved it as much as h e did.

But...sometimes he loved it too much and did not want to go back home

He probably thought that a carry was much more fun...for him at least.

The new 'carrying' thing

We were growing up fast and the difference between us became more evident, as he could not join in our conversations. But he enjoyed being there and always found something to laugh about.

Sometimes the old "problem" would happen...

And a new "solution" became necessary.

New but still a good reason to laugh....for him of course.

The 'carrying' thing for ever
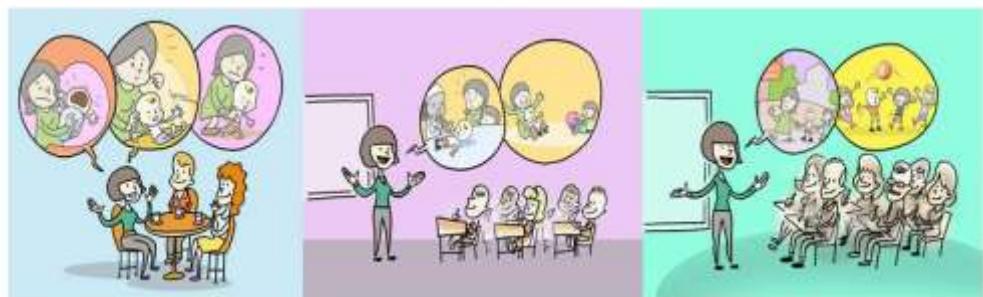
This is part of the story of how I became the person I am and how I kept carrying my brother everywhere *with* me...even here today.

Appendix 6: Table: International definitions of disability in discrimination laws

European Union		USA	Australia
An EU Directive in 2000 prohibited discrimination 'on the grounds' of disability. The Directive did not define disability. **Whilst most EU countries have now introduced disability discrimination laws, generally these are very recent, and are untested by case law or in practice. A wide range of approaches to definition has been adopted.**		The **Americans with Disabilities Act 1990** contains a definition which has proved in practice to be narrower than that in the DDA: a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such an individual b) a record of such an impairment (this means 'has a history of, or been misclassified as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities'); or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment.	**The definition of disability in the Australian** Disability Discrimination Act 1992 **is the model for the Irish legislation and is identical with it. The Productivity Commission (established by the Australian Government to improve laws) produced a Review of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 in 2004.**
Belgium	**Netherlands**		
The Belgian Act to Combat Discrimination **does not define disability, on the basis that any definition would result in an exclusion of that which was not mentioned**	The Dutch **Act on the Equal Treatment on grounds of Disability or Chronic Illness** (2003) also does not provide a definition of disability. The legislation covers discrimination on the grounds of 'a real or supposed disability or chronic illness'.		
Spain	**Ireland**		
In contrast the Spanish 'law for equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility for disabled persons', **excellent in many other ways, states that 'disabled persons shall include all those who have a grade of handicap of 33 per cent or above', linking the definition to welfare benefits law (this definition is being challenged as overly restrictive before the European Court of Justice).**	**The** Employment Equality Act 1998 **and** Equal Status Act 2000 **both define disability as: 'the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body, or the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, or the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, or a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.'**		

1   Could you tell me why you don't like him to go to your school?

2   Craig: He's a different one.

3   Researcher: Different? Why he is different?

4   Craig: He doesn't go to school with us.

5   Researcher: Which school he goes?

6   Craig: ***[00:31:02] a little thing.

7   Researcher: He doesn't come

8

9