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Creative writing

Reading between the lines

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Abstract

The non-normative structural possibilities of poetry, with its focus on emotion, imagery and sound, makes it a useful way to portray inner experiences that are difficult to express through traditionally descriptive, more prosaic language. As a lecturer, artistic designer and researcher with dyslexia I have often had to use alternative paths to succeed professionally. Both professionally and privately I share arising complexities of my inner intellectual and felt life through poetry. This is a flow of consciousness about my dyslexia.

Keywords: Poetry, learning, disability, dyslexia, education, personal experience

Introduction

At a time when teaching methods and learning support have come a long way in understanding and embracing differences, it has become easier for people with particular needs to engage in and successfully complete higher education studies. Educators and students alike now have the means to adapt and find methods and strategies allowing both a class to progress while individuals can still be supported. However, this often means meeting half way for all parties involved in the learning process. As a lecturer, artistic designer and researcher with dyslexia I have often used alternative paths to succeed professionally. As part of my own dyslexia, I have 'slow processing' and short-term memory issues. In particular, making sense of or expressing information in the 'expected' constructed prosaic form (traditional texts or essays), has always been a challenge for me. Writing in a segmented, yet often flowing, form is a useful strategy that, as I discovered, allows me to express and process concepts that I would have more trouble rendering in full sentences. The non-normative structural possibilities of poetry, with their focus on emotion, imagery and sound, make it a useful way to portray inner experiences that are difficult to express through traditionally constructed and structured language. It helps me formulate my thoughts and feelings without having to hold as much information in my head at once. It also creates a much clearer visual structure that is easier for my dyslexic self to follow. Both professionally and privately I share the arising complexities of my scholarly, inner intellectual and felt life through poetry. For instance, I have recorded research sessions with a person with dementia in poetic form, which allowed me to write quickly and immediately after contact. I would have otherwise got stifled trying to make traditional notes and, in the process of trying to write conventionally, I would have forgotten more or would have had to make sound recordings (this being a hindrance in this particular interaction). Poetic forms simply take the pressure off as they allow me to let the information flow and the experience come out rather than trying to push it out through a more conventionally shaped hole.

Though there are many variants and depths of dyslexia, from a teaching point of view, this example shows how finding alternative ways can support an individual with dyslexia and help them process and express in a way that feels more natural and is less confusing. External normative constraints are indeed often draining and create a stressful learning environment where one can easily feel inadequate.

This piece is a flow of consciousness about my own dyslexia.

Reading between the lines

Reading between the lines

The white abyss

The maze of foam

Distracting from the shore

Is it the negative

Or the positive

That sees me through

This draining

Exercise

Beyond you

There's a gap

Perception

Of sounded opinion

Or fact

Of others

Just a flaw

In personality

A character

Traited

To be misplaced

With the others

In the hour glass

In the hands

Of passing time

Away from me

This clouded hue

Is light for me

Dark for you

A status quo

Just hanging on

Or new shield

For us and them

To find a coast

Of plasticity

Of thought

Measured in value

A measured taught

It is seen

As a wide paint brush

But secrets lie

Within the state

Of the affected building

In front of you

Grasping

To be Norman

All the while

In your world

And our own

Multitude

In us

Of you

In you

Of us

