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## Creating a Playful Conversational Learning Space using Surrealism and Podcasting

Andrew J W Middleton and Beatriz Acevedo

*Anglia Ruskin University*

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### ARTICLE INFO

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#### Keywords:

Exquisite Corpse  
playful learning  
conversational learning  
podcasting  
Surrealism

### ABSTRACT

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Innovative spaces for learning in higher education have emerged through consideration of both play and the use of media. This case study reports and reflects on a playful model of media-enhanced learning that brings these interests together. Using the game of Exquisite Corpse as its starting point, the study proposes a playful conversation-based pedagogic model. A serial podcast was designed by the authors as an experimental space. Developed iteratively over 30 episodes, the podcast uses the conceit of constructing a creature, one body part at a time, as the basis for framing constructive learning conversations. The study dissects the methodology underpinning the Exquisite Education podcast and argues for its wider application as a rich, playful pedagogic framework. In the process, an analysis of the attributes that combine to create this playful learning space suggest other games may be adopted as conversational frameworks. Conclusions focus on the value of voice, liberating structures, and play and rapport in building an engaging scaffold for learning conversations.

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### Introduction ('the head')

During the last two decades innovations in higher education focused on creating versatile and rich learning spaces have grown. The *Exquisite Corpse* and the conversational learning framework discussed in this paper contribute to that interest.

Academic innovators have considered how educators can reimagine academic practices by using digital media (Middleton, 2013; 2016; 2018). The study of such media innovations emphasise the value of 'voice' and have demonstrated the versatility of digital audio for creating more personalised learning experiences (Middleton, 2016). Audio, as a digital learning space, accentuates the affective, ambiguous, and exploratory experiences and relationships that can bring learning to life.

Concurrently, approaches to playful learning have developed. Playfulness sits alongside strategic commitments to developing student-centred curricula designed around experiential and authentic learning, especially where experiences attract diverse students and where methods disrupt traditional conceptions of teaching. Playful learning strategies sit within this shift towards versatile and rich learning experiences and involve a readiness to learn through adventure: “a state of mind or an attitude; a willingness to accept and embrace... any activity, to try something new, to attempt something difficult where success is not guaranteed.” (Whitton & Moseley, 2019, p. 4).

Media-enhanced and playful pedagogies project an educational commitment to developing rich learning experiences on a human scale, while valuing both spontaneity and immersion (Getsy, 2011). The *Exquisite Education* podcast discussed in this paper also reflects these ideas by providing a conversational learning framework that establishes a playful ethos while facilitating deep dives into disruptive thinking. It is a space for thinking aloud while ensuring disruptive thinking is allowed.

While media-enhanced learning and playfulness offer new ways to inspire teachers and their students, we reflect, as authors, on our response to a context in which academic innovators continue to be challenged by a crowded curriculum and a lack of wide-spread confidence to play with and explore innovative pedagogies. By considering both ‘podcast’ and ‘conversation’ as playful constructs, we describe an audio-enhanced learning space as a place for co-creative thinking. However, active and innovative pedagogies need to be well-framed if learners are to be given space to interrogate knowledge, practices and ideas. This case study brings those qualities into focus.

### *Defining the Exquisite Corpse*

The study examines the use of a conversational framework based upon the Victorian parlour game *Consequences* and the surrealist construct of the *Exquisite Corpse* (*Cadavre exquis*); a playful approach made popular with the Surrealist movement in Paris during the 1920s by artists including Frida Kahlo, Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. These artists understood how collaborative thinking could be loosely framed to elicit the unconscious in the creative process (Tate, n.d.).

In both *Consequences* and the *Exquisite Corpse*, players take it in turns to add new parts to the creation of a figure or text. Due to the folding of the drawing or writing paper, each player has no sight of what previous players have contributed. In *Consequences* players are given a glimpse of a neck, waist, or ankle as the drawing grows and the folded paper is passed from player to player. Additions to the creation are made by extending the creature through sight of these joints. This turn-taking methodology results in surprising, yet coherent, beasts being given life one body part at a time.

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The first person creates a head but conceals this from the next person who receives a folded paper showing only the neck joint. The second person adds the mid-section of the creature and conceals this before passing it back with only joining marks visible as a starting point for the next addition. The turn-taking continues until the feet have been added at which point the drawing is unfolded to reveal the whole, usually grotesque, creature. The same approach of create, conceal, and connect can be used to create poetry and stories too.

Adamowicz (1998) discusses the use of the *Exquisite Corpse* as a Surrealist approach to creating collages that involve both the cutting and pasting of ready-made material as a subversive act and creative strategy, resonating with ideas of wilful acts of play (Getsy, 2011). Adamowicz considers collage as being non-specific to particular media and capable of accommodating verbal and pictorial approaches, and the hybrids they generate.

The *Exquisite Corpse* continues to be used as a game and a creative framework for writing poetry and drawing collaboratively. Their familiarity, ease of use, and the amusing and surprising ‘consequences’ they generate indicate its versatility as a creative framework. The *Exquisite Corpse* has the potential of becoming "a site where complexity meets empathy, a locus where we learn that giving information and receiving it is just part of what it means to live on this or probably any planet in the universe." (Miller, 2009, p. x).

#### *Adopting the Exquisite Corpse*

This paper describes how the authors built upon this creative and fun game to develop a rich audio-enhanced learning design. Our aim was to develop a structure for exploratory thinking which can be used pedagogically for framing learning conversations: a nonserious, playful, and exploratory space (Getsy, 2011) for serious thinking. In this model, conversational learning is situated within an inherent playfulness that toys with a person’s awareness of being in a game: a framing supporting the intention of reducing anxieties and breaking down formalities and other engagement barriers by fostering a sense of trustful fun amongst participants in an immersive conversation.

We have used the *Exquisite Education* podcast to explore and test ideas about education and conversation-based learning. Over three years, we have adapted the *Exquisite Corpse* game to frame purposeful thinking through conversations involving ourselves and guests.

To consider the *Exquisite Education* podcast and the game of *Exquisite Corpse* upon which it is based, this paper first sets out and discusses the attributes and affordances of the podcast format and then considers the value of learning conversations pedagogically.

We have used the corpse to help us structure this conversation too.

## **Background ('the body') – the *Exquisite Corpse* model**

The motivation for using the *Exquisite Corpse* in our own work stems from a familiar academic need for making time and space for dialogue. Academic working life in practice is filled with meetings and processes, with little time for scholarship or meaningful conversations with colleagues. We aimed to create a space for talking about things that mattered as professional educators and scholars – not only the more mundane day-to-day needs, deadlines and plans that preoccupy us. We had connected around our common backgrounds in art and creativity, but we were aware that we lacked a suitable creative thinking space in our work. Through our interests in the *avant-garde* and podcasting, the *Exquisite Corpse* emerged as a suitable audio play space for us.

Together we created a conversational model by adapting the *Exquisite Corpse*. It offered a liberating structure (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013), in the sense of creating a reusable and flexible framework for holding conversations.

The power of the *Exquisite Corpse* lies in its destabilization of the traditional subject in its social context, and its potential to challenge traditional power structures, like those in education (Kochhar-Lindgren et al., 2009: xxi).

This simple methodology works well when the players approach their turn with a wry attitude and sense of fun. In this way, when revealed, the complete body inevitably displays some surprising and often amusing qualities. The rules are few, the structure is light and liberating, but the outcome is nevertheless coherent.

It was this simple approach that inspired us. Connecting our interest in podcasting to the game format, we asked, is it possible to construct a coherent body using audio alone? We were amused and decided to find out.

### ***False start***

In our initial attempts we experimented by audio recording each body part separately, in turn and asynchronously: one of us started by creating the 'head' (an articulation of the main idea or stimulus), and we then took it in turns to record short pieces that represented the body of the idea and extensions to it. We would store the audio components and only shared the 'joints' in the form of email texts containing just the last few words said by the previous contributor. This would be the prompt for the next person to add the next piece of the body.

Our rule at this stage of our approach was, don't listen to any of the audio until all the audio body parts have been recorded. Over a few days we would record a new part and add the 'audio body part' to our audio collection with a text annotation to represent the fold in the paper from the original game. This would be the only clue the next speaker would receive and the next contributor would start their contribution by reiterating

those words. The approach worked as a Surrealist act and was amusing and occasionally insightful, but it didn't work as a deep learning conversation or one that would be suited to engaging a general educational audience. It was also time-consuming, and we realised that we wanted a lively structured conversation. While the surprising creative associations that come from the original game intrigued us, we realised, as our experience grew, that the essential structure was more useful to our interest in conversational learning rather than the concealment aspect of the game.

A revised conversational model became clear.

### *A workable model*

We retained the metaphorical idea of building a whole exquisite corpse. We could see that the body and its parts worked as a playful structure for a conversation and that it could help us to frame our thinking as we addressed a topic. We also realised that this structure would work to frame a good, lively conversation in real time. Not only could we envisage a podcast format, but we also began to see the wider benefit of structuring learning conversations: conversation as a framed pedagogic act.

### *Body building*

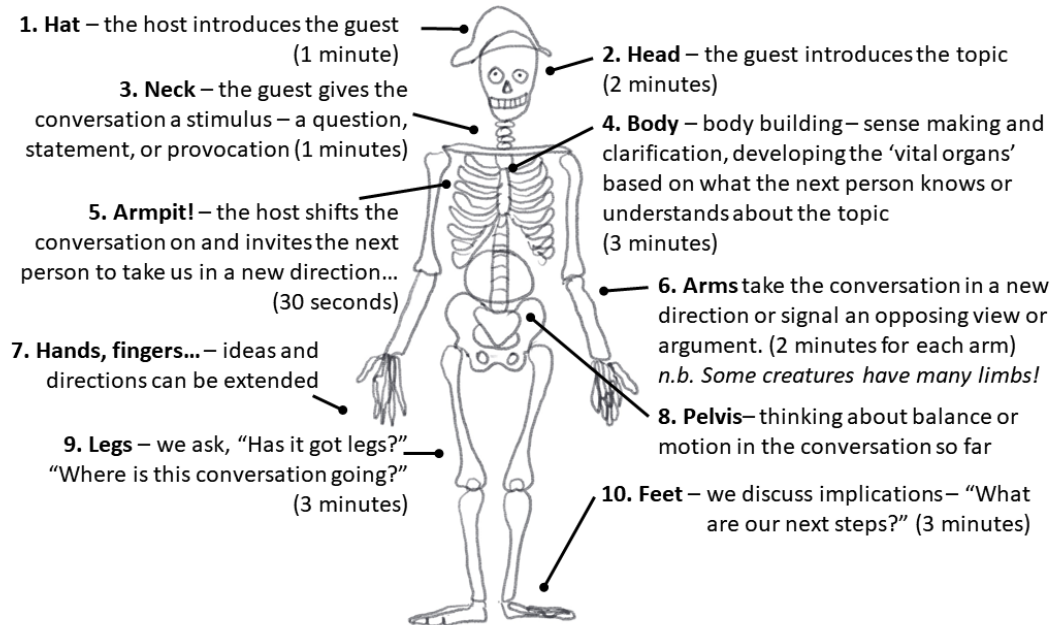


Figure 1 – The Exquisite Corpse as a conversational model

The 'audio corpse' conversational model works as follows:

- The head – a stimulus or provocation, an idea, a question, or proposition.
- The body – the initial establishing response to the head to clarify, build and give strength to the initial stimulus, or to challenge it.
- First arm – an extension to thinking so far, introducing new perspectives and angles (elbows!), sometimes our verbal responses would build waving or flapping arms indicating ideas attempting to take off or ideas for another day! Spontaneously, hands could be added to consider practicalities, and fingers to indicate directions or dimensions. To our amusement, other body parts, corporeal turns of phrase, metaphors, and slips have occurred frequently in the conversations. Interjections occur in good humour, like, "Can I just add a fingernail to your finger?" or "I'm feeling a little uncomfortable with that", or "I need to scratch that itch..."
- Second arm – an opportunity to pursue a different direction, challenge ideas already shared, or develop a persuasive argument ('twisting the arm'). Usually, the second arm brings in other perspectives or further 'muscle' to support the thinking so far or to do a bit of heavy lifting of an idea.
- More arms or no arms – the best creatures often develop further arms (ideas that have 'a life of their own'), and we have also created limbless creatures when our focus has been on establishing a substantial body.
- Legs – we ask, 'Has it got legs?' 'Is there something novel, significant and substantial in what we are discussing?', 'Is there balance, grounding, or movement in our thinking so far?', 'Do we see a progression or a transition in our thinking?'
- Feet – we ask, 'What are our next steps?', 'How are we going to progress this thinking?' and we then think about how many steps might be involved in taking an idea forward – 'What would progress look like?' We might ask, 'What might trip us up?', or 'What footwear do we need?'

The body is constructed by taking turns over half an hour. For the podcast, we set aside a half hour meeting before the working day begins, so the conversation is delineated. Having the conversation in non-work time has been important to us as innovators. We felt we needed room to experiment, fail, and have as much fun as we could muster.

One person presents 'the head', the next builds the body, and then each takes one of the arms. With about five minutes to go, both address the question "Has it got legs?" and both of us and our guests conclude by committing to our respective next steps.

### **Methodology and analysis ('the arms')**

We now develop two 'arms' for analysis. The paper explores the concepts of educational podcasting and conversation using the context of the Exquisite Education podcast to situate our thinking.

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### *The concept of podcast and its affordances*

Educational podcasting deserves more attention as a creative space for the academic facilitator and provocateur or for the creative learner (Middleton, 2016; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). Carrigan (2022) observes that accessibility to podcast production has increased in recent years due to the high-quality audio which can be captured due to the ubiquity of smart phones and the ease with which audio can be edited, uploaded and made public. Strickland et al. (2021) discuss the proliferation of podcasts in their discipline and how this creates a remarkable network of scholarly conversations; as with academic courses, podcast audiences are niche but together can create a rich and busy assemblage (Delanda, 2016). The pandemic has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people listening to podcasts (Fisher, 2021). It has also made digital media and communication technologies like Zoom and MS Teams ubiquitous. Having conversations and recording them has moved from being strange to normal for academics and their students (Torres, 2021).

Within this literature there is often a presumption that the podcast can be an alternative, a replacement or equivalent to traditional ways of delivering content (Bell et al., 2007; Copley 2007; Lonn & Teasley, 2009). Equally, many studies consider its value as a supplemental form of content (Hill & Nelson, 2011; McLean & White, 2009). While many researchers continue to report on their ‘coursecasting’ of recorded lectures and other teacher- and content-centred strategies (Forbes, 2011), there is a growth in progressive research that discusses the versatility of audio-enhanced learning (Lazzari et al., 2009; Middleton, 2016; Nie et al., 2016). Fernandez et al. (2009) note how some progressive studies have established audio as a space with its own properties and affordances, and as an accessible learning media for student producers. Hitchcock et al. (2021), for example, discuss podcast assignments in which their students produce podcasts for non-academic audiences. This has engaged their Social Work students and benefitted them by developing their self-awareness, communication skills, and skills with using technology. Ferrer et al. (2020) also report how their student podcasters used their knowledge by applying it in a professional context, supporting the development of their critical and reflective practice skills, their professional identity, and the formation of connections between theory and professional practice. O’Bannon et al. (2011) are amongst many who observe that podcasting helps to personalise learning engagement.

Sutton-Brady et al. (2009) set out some of the many approaches available to academics and the value of using short-format podcasts to enhance learning and teaching. This paper considers a playful ‘short-form’ conversational learning model, its pedagogic implications, and the value of structuring learning conversations. Such an ontological positioning puts technical matters to one side and encourages a focus on how we teach and learn in a space where voice and linguistic conventions have the room they need.

In our *Exquisite Education* podcast model, the following design attributes and affordances are deemed significant:

- A focus on voice.
- Audio enhanced learning as a matter of learner agency.
- Play and rapport.
- Liberating structure.
- Reducing interference.
- The dynamics of conversation - provocation and reaction.
- Spatial ownership.
- Schedule, serialisation, and connectivity.

Each attribute is now described and analysed. From this, the paper will draw conclusions on the *Exquisite Corpse* as a conversational model, on conversation-based pedagogy, and on the spatial affordances required by a conversation-based pedagogy.

#### *A focus on voice*

Audio creates a sonic space that excludes, as far as is possible, other distractions. It creates an immersive experience for both the producers and the listeners. It heightens presence, meaning and trust, and can clarify nuanced thinking (Bull & Back, 2020).

However, the affordances of polycontextuality (Elstad, 2016) need to be considered: podcast listeners are physically situated and typically occupied in other acts or amongst other people at the same time. These factors potentially create a dissonance which may affect the quality of their engagement and their ability to learn factual or procedural knowledge. For example, podcast listeners typically multitask while doing mundane tasks, being engaged in activities such as driving vehicles, walking, travelling on public transport, relaxing, and cooking (Berry, 2016; Perks & Turner, 2019). Therefore, the nature of the listener's focus and attention and their capability to make notes or take immediate action is unknown. Further, the listener is usually engaged through their aural modality while other senses and modalities may be focused on other more immediate matters including operating machinery. It is hard to predict, therefore, how much attention a listener will be able to give to listening or learning any detailed information delivered through a podcast recording.

The implication of this is that podcast content should be focused, structured and navigable. It should be less concerned with explaining factual knowledge and more interested in stimulating thinking. In conversation, the aim of participants is to stimulate each other's interest by asking questions, telling stories, presenting formative ideas, challenging thinking, taking risks, and building trust, belonging and intrinsic motivation.

An educational podcast is an affective space that creates emotional resonance and counters potential feelings of anomie (Garrison et al., 2003) while creating a heightened reality (Gunawardena, 1995; Short et al., 1976). These can be achieved through building social presence and belonging. For example, Sung and Mayer (2012)



note the following five facets of social presence: social respect (being noticed); social sharing (information and beliefs); social interaction; social identity; and social intimacy. A podcast is a place of voices in which the value of social presence and co-operation through collaborative thinking can have real value educationally.

#### *Audio enhanced learning as a matter of learner agency*

The concept of an audio-enhanced learning environment is a commitment made to the centrality of voice in learning (Middleton, 2013; 2016). Voice has two meanings in this context: it refers to the agency of participants and to the value of the spoken word in teaching and learning. Both are connected by ideas of presence and ontological perspectives which position the learner and the teacher as participant contributors to the co-creation of knowledge. Acts of speaking can be seen as acts of knowing and being, and important to the learner's self-efficacy.

Conversation epitomises learner co-operation. More than collaboration, co-operative pedagogies value learning as association and emphasise the fostering of a human, emotional, and social context.

#### *Play and rapport*

Given the playful premise of the *Exquisite Corpse*, the tone is one of serious play, co-conspiracy and, potentially, subversion. Using Sutton-Smith's (1997) 'seven rhetorics of play', a conversational podcast model can embody a sense of frivolity, while being an example of play as a signifier of the imaginary. The *Exquisite Education* podcast model is intentionally a playful conceit that serves the purpose of considering serious ideas. It reflects Whitton and Moseley's (2019, p. 20) thoughts about frivolity:

This focus on the frivolous potential of play for disruption and reimagining, rather than for silliness or purposelessness, is ... in keeping with the notion of playful learning.

In fact, the *Exquisite Corpse* offers the possibility of a dialogue, mediated by the external artefact (drawing, poem, recording) and includes the element of performance, by bringing life into a message or an idea. It 'acts as a method of research and collaboration that accounts for the folding of multiple realities and bodies.' (Kochhar-Lindgren et al., 2009: xxi). The elements of humour and disruption act as conversational lubricants that help contributors to construct a body in each episode. The playful elements contribute to building rapport and trust through the learning experience while opening routes to unexpected and spontaneous ideas. More generally, in considering conversation-based pedagogies, a conversation must be founded on a common sense of trust and respect. Being frivolous is an invitation to take risks together and to test boundaries without venturing into danger. Establishing a fit-enough relationship for a trustful learning conversation can come out of the experience of playing around with ideas. The *Exquisite Corpse* is one such playful scaffold, but there are many other familiar parlour games, sports, and common frivolities (e.g. TV show formats) that can be

powerful framings for setting the necessary conditions of a rich learning conversation.

### *Liberating structure*

Lipmanowicz and McCandless (2013) set out a useful framework of specific liberating structures; micro pedagogies that present an alternative to traditional teacher-centred forms of education. However, the term itself has been useful in the development of the *Exquisite Education* podcast. We have used the term when talking about how to frame or scaffold learning, knowing that conversation could be seen at its simplest and most reductive as filling a void. Entering into that space with just enough structure, however, is liberating and constructive. Conversation necessitates addressing a challenge; a topic that needs to be 'coloured in' or a case that needs to be made or connections that need to be found, for example.

Conversation may be enacted as a performance; for example, a group presentation in which students relate their individual contributions to co-create a coherent report on an inquiry. In such cases, a framing of the conversation emphasises the coherence and connection in the students' work while providing the audience with enough structure too. Structuring allows for milestone objectives to be met, pauses for thought, exchange of leadership, and moments to recover and reset. Structuring or framing student-centred learning activities provides them with the clarity they need to do well.

In conversations, both contributor and listener immersion can be heightened therefore by a loose structuring and signposting, giving them the confidence to engage in the experience together. For the listener, the playful structure is intended to engage them vicariously: they can anticipate and follow the creative act because each part of the structure is familiar and provocative and, by structuring a conversation, the listener can become a co-creator too as they build their own thoughts and responses.

### *Reducing interference*

The act of recording raises the pulse and focuses the mind. We tend to count '3, 2, 1' as we begin the recording. Beyond that, the space we create needs to be unadulterated by the necessities of technical production. If, as happens occasionally, our MS Teams connection is broken, there is a great danger that the 'moment' will also be lost. The conversation is a form of performance first and foremost: we step up to the mark and assume responsibility for our audience. The simplicity of the act of recording helps to establish a creative commitment from which there is no turning back. The pressing of the record button is a call to action. (Middleton, 2013).

In our case, this is heightened by a commitment to allow only minimal edits: the topping and tailing of the recording and the addition of intro and outro music to signal a familiar listening space: metaphorical curtains to open and close the performance.

Both authors are practised creatives and approached the development with a determined philosophy to keep

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technology in its place whilst recognising and making good use of its affordances as a creative space. The simplicity of the audio medium is particularly important: the act must be feasible technically. The process of making the material must be autonomous and must not present obstacles that deflect or deflate the producer from the essential desire to create a space for conversation-based thinking.

### *The dynamics of conversation - provocation and reaction*

As is noted in the description of the model, each limb of the body is constructed in response to an unseen provocation. This keeps the participants focused and, given the responsibility that a podcast producer has to their audience, it demands a considered response. Although there may be frivolity, this is not an idle conversation; it is artful.

The principle of ‘what you *say* is what you get’ is helpful: ‘There may be other points to be made, but today you said this’. Good ideas will have their day, not necessarily today. There is an authenticity and therefore credibility in this. This attitudinal ground rule keeps us moving on, contributing to the dynamic of the conversation in hand.

This commitment to immediacy aids production but more significantly, it is a quality of trustful conversation. In the case of the *Exquisite Corpse* game and our podcast model, reacting to surprise (whether that is a reaction to ‘the head’ or ‘the arms’, or the use of metaphor itself) is a defining attribute that sets the tone of the conversation. Without this agreement on tone, what would the conversation be?

Similarly, we don’t prepare. Questions and topics (the ‘head’) are intentionally ill-formed and ambiguous, and the respondent must use their wits or risk failing. Often, it is the respondent who creates the direction in the conversation as they build the ‘body’. While a topic may be clear in the proposer’s mind, it is the respondent who gives permission to proceed and who establishes the ground to be travelled.

This creates a useful live tension to drive the conversation.

### *Spatial ownership*

An educational podcast creates an ambiguous homely sense of third place (Oldenburg, 1989): being a neutral ground, a levelling space, conversation-focused, involving regulars, being accessible and accommodating, and being a ‘home from home’ that creates a sense of ease. In the case of the *Exquisite Education* podcast, we intentionally produce it on the cusp of the working day between 8.30 and 9.00 each week, thereby establishing a liminal space owned by the participant producers, not their employer.

### *Schedule, serialisation and connectivity*

Podcasts are serial and episodic (Edirisingha et al. 2008). Each episode sits within the context of others. Not

everything needs explanation because referring to previous conversations is possible. As a learning environment, a body of knowledge can be created through the connections made between one idea and another. Discussions can refer backwards to previous conversations and forwards to conversations that are needed. Inviting guests to the conversation injects new knowledge, perspectives and ideas, and connections can be made that reach out to other conversations that happen in other media and situations. We have, for example, pursued our thinking (our next steps) in our work, through blogging, through other podcasts with other people, and through conference workshops.

The podcast does not have an official institutional affiliation or corporate goal, but it follows the need for having meaningful conversations without a specific 'purpose' but with the intention of making space to talk and listen to each other as colleagues and scholars.

To date we have published more than 30 podcasts using the platform Podbean: including a first phase of podcasts between the authors, and a second phase where we have invited guests to join us in this audio game. Our guests are mostly colleagues at our own university, but we have also welcomed students, practitioners, learning technologists, and special guests from other universities. As a podcast framework, the *Exquisite Education* podcast is a lively platform for disseminating ideas and knowledge to a specific audience that accommodates diverse contributions and generative thinking to co-create knowledge. It allows thinking to be captured, and this becomes a resource to stimulate further thinking and learning.

### ***Conversation as a pedagogy***

Here we consider conversation as specific pedagogic acts rather than as strategic teaching frameworks designed to present interactivity within a curriculum, as in Laurillard's conversational framework (2002).

#### *Debates, dialogues and conversational formalities*

In considering the usefulness of conversation to learning, and therefore the efficacy of a conversational framework based upon the *Exquisite Corpse*, it is useful to begin by describing what is meant by conversation in this context.

For this paper, conversation describes a mutually acceptable pattern of spoken exchange between two or more people in which ideas, opinions, knowledge, and questions are shared with the aim of exploring a matter of common interest, albeit possibly incorporating differing perspectives and points of view. It is characterised by turn-taking and a process of co-construction in which thinking is developed incrementally with the aim of finding resolution.

Yankelovich's *The Magic of Dialogue* (1999) compares ideas about debate and dialogue. The comparison highlights how different the two are and how, in some situations, the terms may be used unwittingly as synonyms. A debate assumes there is a right answer while a dialogue assumes that many people have pieces

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of the answer and that they can craft into a solution. A debate is essentially combative while dialogue is essentially collaborative. A debate entails listening to find flaws and make counter arguments, while dialogue entails listening to understand and find meaning and agreement. Yankelovich highlights other differences. His comparison highlights how important it is in education to use spoken pedagogies deliberately and with clarity. This applies to conversation too and so a scaffolded approach becomes a useful pedagogic tool.

Pask (1975) in his conversation theory argues that learning occurs through conversation about a subject; an emergent constructive process that makes knowledge explicit. Conversation can happen on several levels. In this study our interest is mostly in using natural language, although the use of subject specific 'object language' and meta-languages, in which the nature of the conversation itself is analysed, may also have a role. Pask argued that individuals use conversational engagement strategies which follow either a serial route or a holistic model. While this binary presentation is helpful in differentiating types of engagement with conversation, the reality is that people, their motivations and preferences cannot be defined so simply. Individual preferences undoubtedly come as responses to the situation and, as Pask himself explains, the emergent status and compatibility of participants (Boyd, 2001). Further, contextual factors such as spatial affordances and cultural beliefs will affect participants. Designing a conversational learning framework may introduce structure but there is a danger of mismatching the participant's preferences and compatibilities, adversely affecting their learning. While the binary serial/holistic theory has limitations, it nevertheless reminds us that being part of a conversation involves personal challenges and attributes which require careful mediation and support from the teacher. In Pask's serial approach, knowledge is built sequentially, incrementally, and logistically. The conversation focuses on the particular, and deviation from this flow is likely to lead to frustration for those who prefer serial engagement. For the holistic strategist, ideas ebb and flow as a topic is explored causing leaps to be made, which can surprise and confuse serialists. Gaps and repetition characterise holistic contributions. A desire to make connections will be evident, and generalisations are made to hold ideas together as they are formed.

The *Exquisite Education* model provides more of a 'bare bones' liberating structure; one with enough framing to accommodate those with holistic preferences without unnecessarily constraining them, while signposting a path for the serialist.

### *Divergence and convergence*

Divergence and convergence are important to creative thinking: patterns of ideation and selection are evident in approaches like design thinking, for example (Brown, 2019; Morris & Warman, 2015; Rowe, 1987; Sharples, 2019). Conversation, as a learning activity, can draw upon design-based learning in which practitioners engage in dialectical and interactional sets of exchanges which lead to formulation, evaluation and 'moving' actions (Haigh, 2005). The conversation is dialectic and flowing, not prescriptive, and is a matter of productive negotiation.

Patterns of 'opening up' and 'focusing in' are found in conversation too (Hudson, 1967). Divergence involves generative thinking and elaboration in response to a stimulus. When followed by convergent thinking, a sifting and sorting draws together key ideas from the generative activity to create a synthesis. Typically, this drawing together is an act of negotiation involving participants intent on finding and making meaning from their conversation. Questions such as, 'What is important?' or, 'What have we found?' or, 'What's the meaning of this?' characterise this synthesis. The *Exquisite Corpse* model incorporates both divergent and convergent thinking: our 'legs' ask us to synthesise and conclude, while our 'feet' ask us about how we will act upon the discussion.

Kochhar-Lindgren et al. (2009) describe the *Exquisite Corpse* model in terms of rules of engagement giving specific reference to the ritual use of the *Exquisite Corpse* historically and contemporaneously as an artistic device. Conversation benefits from an etiquette; an agreed tacit or explicit framing that enables conversation to be a productive act.

### **Conclusions (the 'legs' and 'feet')**

In this paper we set out to construct an exquisite corpse. In conclusion we ask: has the proposition, as we understand it now, got legs? And if so, how should we respond? What steps should we take?

The proposition is that semi-structured conversation has a valuable pedagogic purpose which requires a scaffolded approach to become useful and usable. A scaffold exists in the form of the familiar games of *Consequences* and the *Exquisite Corpse*. This has been adapted and evaluated by producing the *Exquisite Education* podcast and by reflecting on the affordances and attributes of podcasting in general.

The framing is intrinsically playful: co-constructing a body in the act of conversation is clear, bizarre, potentially subversive, empowering, and educationally sound. We argue that the scaffolding can help the educator to focus their pedagogy on voice, and thereby involve and empower their students, and develop their agency in confidently navigating constructive learning conversations. The scaffolding accentuates the fun to be

found in forming knowledge through conversation by offering a liberating structure that provides enough direction to guide any learner through the process while at the same time accommodating their creative deviations. The scaffold is technically straightforward and reduces interference in the immersive act of thinking through ideas. It frames conversations that allow for spontaneous contributions and reactions while guiding participants to commit to acting on their knowledge. It creates a convivial and intimate space; a homely third place (Oldenburg, 1989). By framing conversational acts, students use conversation to interrogate specific ideas and arrive at actionable conclusions. Used over time, conversations create a body of co-constructed outcomes.

In developing our model, we came to value the skeletal framing. The element of surprise in the original *Exquisite Corpse* game was intriguing at first, but we moved away from it. While our audio game may be perceived more as dressing a favourite and familiar doll rather than allowing ourselves to be surprised and shocked through uncanny revelations, it is interesting to wonder whether an alternative learning game can be derived based on the create, conceal, and connect approach of engaging participants. Indeed, the potential application of parlour games and art movements suggests there may scope for others to explore new academic innovations.

The *Exquisite Corpse*, when used as a podcasting scaffold, has provided us with the spatial affordances required by a conversation-based pedagogy; one that can be adopted by other educators in class or through audio.

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