

# How Students and Tutors Experience the Dyslexia Tutorial Space

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Tutor participant, Ellen:

*Some students say that they see more of me than anyone else in the university, including their personal tutor. I think that coming to the same room, that looks the same, with the same tutor is part of this. It gives consistency in an otherwise chaotic and hectic lifestyle.*

Student participant, Blaine:

*I know more about what I need than anyone else and I get to decide what works for me, not someone else, and I can tell my tutor if something doesn't work for me. I am not having to fit in with what someone else thinks I need and should do.*

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# Abbreviations

ADSHE- Association of Dyslexia Specialists

BDA- British Dyslexia Association

CPD- Continual Professional Development

DS- Disability Studies

CDS- Critical Disability Studies

DSA- Disabled Students Allowance

DSA-QAG- Disabled Students Allowance Quality Assurance Group (now defunct)

SFE- Student Finance England

SpLD- Specific Learning disability/difficulty/difference

SENDA- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act

UDL- Universal Design for Learning

UPIAS- Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation

# Abstract

This research is centred on dyslexia tutorials in higher education; dyslexia tutorials are sessions offered to higher education students who have been assessed as having a specific learning disability. The purpose of this research is to explore how tutors and students experience the dyslexia tutorial in higher education. I take a critical pedagogy of space approach, informed by disability studies to explore the dyslexia tutorial and the structures that influence how the dyslexia tutorial is constructed. Specifically, it seeks to address the following questions **1, How do students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space? 2, How are the tutorials navigated by students and tutors, in terms of power dynamics, negotiation and resistance? 3, What is the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey?**

In my methodology, I utilised a critical realism ontology and a constructivist epistemology. The methods were in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall observations of recorded teaching sessions to allow for an exploration of the students' and tutors' experience of the tutorials. Four tutor participants and four student participants were recruited for the interviews, and two participants were recruited for the interpersonal process recall sessions, one tutor and one student participant. The student participants are students currently on degrees, who identify as being dyslexic and who access dyslexia tutorials. The students self-selected and were recruited via posters advertising the project. The tutors were recruited via an email to the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education, via JiscMail. The criteria were that they were qualified dyslexia tutors, currently working in higher education. Finally, the analysis tool was framework analysis, a form of thematic analysis.

My findings are:

- 1, students and tutors experience the space differently; tutors align the space with their professional identity and relationship with the institution where they worked. Students, in contrast, experienced the space in relation to their department, their lived experience of dyslexia, and their previous educational experience.
- 2, initially, the sessions reproduce traditional tutor-student power dynamics, but these become more equalised as the tutors and students progress through the sessions. The tutorials aim to support students to become acculturated into the academic practices of their department, develop authority over writing, and develop critical thinking skills
- 3, whilst tutors and students view the purpose of the sessions differently, they are in alignment in their view of taking an assignment-based approach and working to develop an academic identity.
- 4, both students and tutors recognise the tension between the dyslexia tutorials being a third space, and the influence of the first space on the dyslexia tutorial.

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# Chapter One, Introduction

## 1.1 Focus of the Research

This research focuses on dyslexia tutorials in higher education institutions. The term SpLD will also be referred to in this research, particularly in the literature review, because much of the literature refers to SpLDs rather than dyslexia. There is a difference, however. SpLD is the term for all specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia; thus, dyslexia is one SpLD amongst many. I will be focusing on students who have been assessed as having dyslexia because students who have different SpLDs will have different learning outcomes and it would be difficult to represent all of the different SpLDs, such as auditory processing disorder and dyscalculia. By focusing on dyslexia, I can draw conclusions about the experiences of dyslexic students; specifically, in terms of outcomes and perceived purpose of the tutorials. When referring to dyslexia and people, I have taken the decision to use the term dyslexic people/students, rather than people/students with dyslexia. This aligns more closely with the disability studies approach, using the terminology disabled people rather than people with disabilities. Further, the term people with dyslexia suggests that dyslexia can be separated from the person and, therefore, does not acknowledge the lived experience (Sinclair, 2013).

The tutorials are taught by dyslexia tutors, who are specialists in teaching students with dyslexia, and are available to students who have been assessed as having dyslexia. The aim of the tutorials is to support students to meet their potential at university, through developing academic skills such as critical thinking and academic writing. Tutors can be employed by the HE institutions, be employed by an agency, or be freelance.

Whilst there has been research into the experience of dyslexic students in higher education, such as work by Alexander-Passe (2015), Blankfield (2001) and Morris and Turnbull (2006), much of this research has not focused on tutorials; equally, the dyslexia tutors' experience has not typically been a focus of research; with O'Dwyer (2022) being one of the few studies to focus on tutors.

Where the dyslexia tutorial has been referenced, it has often not been the main focus of the paper, for example Jacobs *et al's* (2020) study about the experience of dyslexic students in higher education, only made brief reference to the tutorials, and Robson's (2014) paper primarily considers time management issues around accessing tutorials, as opposed to the tutorials themselves. One study by Kirwan and Leather (2011) considers students' experiences of SpLD tuition, focusing on outcomes of the sessions. It provides a number of findings, namely, developing an understanding of dyslexia and specific learning disabilities as part of the process of self-development, normalising their experiences, and developing their critical analysis and problem-solving techniques to support the skills needed for studying. The paper does not consider other elements of the experience such as accessing the space and does not include the experience of tutors; furthermore, the research was conducted in a dyslexia consultancy, and, thus, does not include students' experiences of in-house dyslexia tutorials. Equally, Graham's (2020) research focuses on attainment data of students with SpLDs who had accessed one-to-one support and compared this to SpLD students who had not accessed tutorials. Graham found that 10% of the students who had not accessed support had withdrawn from their studies; whereas none of the students who had accessed support withdrew. A positive correlation between the number of support sessions attended and attainment was also found. Graham's research, therefore, focused on retention and achievement, as opposed to the experience of the tutorial. In contrast, my research will explore how both dyslexic students and

dyslexia tutors experience the dyslexia tutorial, considering the spatiality of the tutorials, and includes both in-house and out-sourced tutorials. The research questions are:

- 1. How do students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space?**
- 2. How are the tutorials navigated by students and tutors, in terms of power dynamics, negotiation and resistance?**
- 3. What is the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey?**

This chapter will provide a brief introduction to the research. It will begin with a discussion of the background and context, followed by the research problem, the research aims, objectives and questions, the significance, and limitations, and, finally, it will provide an outline of the chapters.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

This section will begin by briefly considering how higher education has changed post-war and the impact this has had on numbers of dyslexic students attending university. This will provide an insight into the increasing accessibility of higher education beyond its traditional parameters, for example, being more accessible to people from diverse economic backgrounds, and how this has impacted disability provision.

It will then provide a brief explanation about dyslexia. Dyslexia is a contested area and, therefore, conceptualisations of dyslexia will be considered in depth in the literature review in section 2.8. This section (1.2) will confine itself to identifying the key concepts of dyslexia; it will then outline the areas believed to be affected by dyslexia in a higher education, for example academic writing, and reading. As these are also contested, I will briefly outline the literature considering evidence for the different areas. Again, debates around dyslexia will be considered more fully in the literature review, section 2.8.

Once dyslexia and its impact on education have been discussed, I will move on to providing an overview of dyslexia tutorials. This will comprise the setting of the tutorials, the tutor-student dynamic, and intended outcomes of the sessions. This will help to provide the context within which the students and tutors are experiencing the dyslexia tutorial space, and, thus, provides an insight into the structures impacting the sessions. This will help to address how students and tutors experience the space, how the space is navigated and the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey.

### 1.2.1 Increasing Participation in Higher Education

Higher education has traditionally been seen as the preserve of the elite. The role of the university has been changing, however, with the move to a broader system of tertiary education. This can be traced to a post second world war demand to broaden access to higher education (Guri-Rosenblit *et al*, 2007). The last thirty years has seen particular change, beginning with the forming of many new polytechnics in the 1960s, following the government's 1966 white paper establishing its intent to set up thirty new institutions (Pratt, 1997). The new polytechnics provided both academic and vocational courses at a tertiary level and were designed to create a binary system that would ensure that all of society's educational needs were met, namely,

- the increasing need for vocational, professional, and industrial based courses could not be met by the universities
- a system based on a 'ladder' concept would lead to demoralisation in the public sector
- it was desirable that part of higher education remained under 'social control' and responsive to society's needs
- Britain could not stand up to foreign competition by downgrading the non-university professional and technical sector. (Crosland, 1965, cited in Pratt 1997:17)

The polytechnic system, which was abolished in 1992 (1992 Further and Higher Education Act) when polytechnics were granted university status, had the impact of widening participation in higher education. An example of this is Manchester Polytechnic, which had 25,000 students in 1992, 50% more than Manchester University (Pratt, 1997). Traditional universities also experienced growth. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were approximately 500,000 students in higher education, whereas in 2000 there were 100 million students worldwide, which is a cohort of approximately 20% of people of student age (Guri-Rosenblit *et al*, 2007). A great deal of this expansion has occurred in the last forty years, for example, in the 1980s approximately 12% of young people aged 18-30 were in higher education (Shelley, 2005), compared to around 40% by 2013 (Younger *et al*, 2019). This change could be argued to have impacted on the role of the university within society. Whilst Castells (2001) states that universities have four main functions: ideological apparatuses, mechanisms of selection and socialisation of dominant elites, functions of scientific research, and the training of a skilled labour force, it is the latter that is most emphasised, with employability being a key element of many degree programmes. Indeed, in the early 80s, a government minister stated that the role of education was to ensure that, “*government, industry and higher education work together to match the output of qualified personnel with industry's needs*” (Waldegrave, 1982, cited in Pratt, 1997:30), thus demonstrating how higher education is increasingly linked to creation of a trained workforce. Universities UK (2012) argues that this is being driven by a number of factors: political, economic, technological, and cultural. Further, it states that these trends are global and will impact every area of higher education, including the structure of higher education and how it will be funded. The link between education and becoming economically productive, and how this influences the dyslexic students’ experience of higher education will be discussed in the literature review, section 2.8.

There is also evidence of widening participation of dyslexic students in higher education, with a measurable increase in the number of dyslexic students entering higher education. In 1994-1995, the number of dyslexic students entering higher education was 0.48%, by 2004/2005 it had risen to 2.47%, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (cited in Mann *et al*, 2012) and by 2020 it was 4.5% (HESA, 2022). Despite this apparently positive picture, Richardson and Wydell (2003) point out that the numbers of students with dyslexia participating in UK higher education is disproportionately low in comparison to the number of people with dyslexia in the general population (around 10-15%). There were 135,990 students with a specific learning disability in 2020/21, which is 4% of the student population (HESA, 2022). In comparison, 14.4% of secondary school children are assessed as having an SpLD in 2022 (Department for Education, 2022). Further, Richardson and Wydell (2003) argue that there is an uneven representation across academic disciplines. This is supported by Longobardi *et al* (2019) who found that the departments with the highest representation are Statistics, Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Education, and Architecture. Thus, overall, dyslexic students continue to be underrepresented in higher education.

Legislation has played a part in supporting diversity in higher education. The Equality Act (2010), for example, provided that institutions must not treat disabled students less favourably, and that they must make reasonable adjustments to ensure a student is not placed at a disadvantage because of their

disability. A reasonable adjustment can be defined as an accommodation or alteration to academic programmes, if necessary, to ensure students have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities (Equality Act, 2010). The aim of the application of adjustments, therefore, is to support the students to reach their potential, whilst meeting academic requirements.

In summary, there is, therefore, evidence that the nature of higher education is changing; in 1960 there were 400,000 people in higher education, by the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this had risen to 2,000,000, with approximately one in three young people participating in higher education (Blanden and Machin (2004). One argument is that universities have been subject to massification (Guri-Rosenblit *et al*, 2007), which is the view that universities are no longer the preserve of the privileged elite, but rather are open to a more diverse population of potential students. As such, the number of students with an assessment of dyslexia has increased, and laws such as the Equality Act (2010) have required institutions to develop reasonable adjustments, such as dyslexia tutorials and alternative assessments. The dyslexia tutorials will be discussed in more detail in section 1.4. The next section will move on to a discussion about characteristics of dyslexia and how it impacts on higher education.

### 1.3 Characteristics of Dyslexia and how Dyslexia Impacts Learning in Higher Education

Definitions of dyslexia are contested and will be discussed in more depth in the literature review, section 2.8. Having said that, there is some agreement on the main characteristics of dyslexia. A brief explanation of these characteristics in this section will enable a discussion about the impact of dyslexia on learning. Dyslexia is considered to be a specific learning disability, which is neurologically based, and is believed to have a prevalence of 10 to 15 percent among the population, although this is contested (Wagner *et al*, 2020). A prevailing theory is that it originates from a phonological processing difficulty, characterised by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition, spelling difficulties and difficulties decoding text (Snowling, 2000). The definition primarily used in the field of dyslexia, for example the BDA (British Dyslexia Association), is from the Rose Report (Rose, 2009),

*a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.*

The Rose Report also provided recommendations for teaching practices (Macdonald, 2019) including synthetic phonics and an explanation of how dyslexia impacts learning, both of which are aimed primarily at primary education.

There are a number of areas that may be impacted by dyslexia in a higher education setting; however, these areas are contested. Where there is most agreement in terms of dyslexia and impact on learning is in writing and reading. Abbott and Berninger (1993) identified three interlinked elements, writing, handwriting, spelling and composition. Berninger (2006) found that dyslexic students often have significant difficulties in improving both spelling and written composition. Equally, Connelly *et al* (2006) found that whilst skills such as spelling and handwriting skills were lower in dyslexic students than non-dyslexic students, the higher order skills such as ideas were of a comparable standard. This can be seen to demonstrate the difference between the dyslexic student performance in written assignments and their performance in seminars and other forms of assessment. Hatcher, Snowling, and Griffiths (2002) assessed dyslexic students, comparing them with a control group. They asked students to summarise a

text and found that they performed more poorly in terms of the structure of the summary. This was echoed by Berninger *et al* (2008), who found that dyslexic children had difficulties with composition, although adults with dyslexia were found to have fewer difficulties. Specific difficulties with composition include lack of clarity; repetition of ideas through the assignments; lack of topic sentence to clarify the purpose of a paragraph; difficulties expressing ideas; and use of colloquialisms. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that dyslexia impacts on writing.

The link between dyslexia and reading also appears to be well established. Reading comprises two primary processes: decoding and comprehension. Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2003) determined a phonological basis for the link between dyslexia and reading, arguing that there is a deficit in segmenting words into their individual phonemes. Consequently, the reader has difficulties in decoding and thus identifying words. They argue that in dyslexia the phonological deficit is domain-specific; that is, it is independent of other, non-phonologic, linguistic abilities. In terms of impact of instruction on reading, Nation, Snowling and Clarke (2007) found that dyslexic children use context to compensate for poor decoding skills, whereas children with poor reading comprehension skills fail to benefit from context as much as normal readers. This supports the definition of dyslexia as not responding to instruction. According to Snowling *et al* (2020), these findings further demonstrate that children are at-risk for reading difficulties for different reasons than other poor reading. They attribute this issue to weak decoding. In terms of reading difficulties and dyslexia in university students, Pedersen *et al* (2016) found that whilst, as a group, the dyslexic students performed poorer on most measures, there were, however, a number of differences within the dyslexic group in reading behaviours and there was little association between how well dyslexic university students read aloud and comprehended the text. They argue that findings suggest that many dyslexic students in higher education will focus their attention on one subcomponent of the reading process such as decoding or comprehension. This is possibly due to engaging in both simultaneously being too cognitively demanding. In further research on university students, Simmons and Singleton (2000) investigated the reading comprehension abilities of a group of dyslexic university students, compared to a group of non-dyslexic university students. The students were given a 655-word passage and asked literal and inferential questions about it to measure comprehension. The design of the text was syntactically complex, whilst placing lower demands on decoding skills. They found that dyslexic students performed at a similar level to the non-dyslexic students on the literal questions, but they performed less well on the inferential questions. Their conclusion was that dyslexic students in higher education have reading comprehension difficulties that cannot be accounted for by an inability to decode individual words in the text; thus, arguing that decoding is not the only reading deficit experienced by students.

Linked to reading is processing speed; Farmer and Klein (1995) found a potential causal link between temporal processing deficits and some reading disabilities. They concluded that a temporal processing deficit was present in many dyslexic people; equally, Slaghuis, Twell, and Kingston (1996) found that visual and language processing differences are concurrent in dyslexia and that these difficulties continue into adulthood. Hari and Renvall (2001) partly attribute difficulties in impaired processing of rapid stimulus sequences to, what they describe as, sluggish attentional shifting (SAS). Finally, Lassus-Sangosse *et al* (2008) argue that whilst both sequential and simultaneous processing skills relate to reading, it is simultaneous processing that contributes to reading speed and accuracy; thus, a simultaneous processing disorder might contribute to developmental dyslexia.

There is also some evidence to suggest a correlation between dyslexia and working memory; there is a lot of debate as to the nature of this correlation. Alsulami (2019) identified a link between a deficit in short-term and working memory with the phonological difficulties often experienced by dyslexic people (Alsulami, 2019). Equally, Abd Ghani and Gathercole (2013) determined that dyslexic students performed significantly more poorly on measures of working memory; whereas the control

group obtained significantly higher scores, and Nergård-Nilssen and Hulme (2014) identified a link between working memory and phoneme awareness. This correlates positively with a verbal working memory deficit in working memory. Supporting this, Jeffries and Everatts' study (2004) determined a link between working memory in terms of phonological awareness, with dyslexic people performing equally well on visual-spatial working memory measures. In contrast, general learning-disabled people performed less well than the control group on both of these measures. This evidence suggests a link between phonological working memory and dyslexia, but not in spatial working memory. However, Menghini *et al's* (2011) results contradict this; their findings were that there were deficits on span tasks tapping verbal, visual-spatial, and visual-object working memory in dyslexic children. This indicates that the working memory deficit in dyslexia is not limited to phonological components, but also includes visual-object and visual-spatial information.

Finally, there is conflicting evidence about the impact of the central executive functioning on memory in dyslexic people. Pickering (2012) found that there appears to be a deficit in the central executive functioning of the memory system of dyslexic people; this was found in other poor readers, not just dyslexic people. In contrast, Cohen-Mimran *et al* (2007) found a deficit in memory tasks that tax the central executive functioning in dyslexic people.

Therefore, the impact of dyslexia on different aspects of learning are disputed. This can contribute to a lack of consensus about what dyslexia is and to what extent it impacts learning. Elliott and Grigorenko (2014), for example, argue that the label of dyslexia is too general and has become an umbrella term for a collection of perceived deficits. Further, they see the label of dyslexia as appropriated by the middle classes in order to differentiate themselves from other reading difficulties and to gain access to resources. They argue that the term dyslexia should be replaced with the term reading difficulties. This could potentially impact on students' experience of the dyslexia tutorial. Alexander-Passe (2015), for example, found that dyslexic people perceived that they experienced discrimination due to their dyslexia and that a lack of understanding about dyslexia and its effect was a contributing factor in this discrimination. In a higher education context, Mortimore (2013), found that many SpLD students did not make use of additional SpLD support services such as tutorials for fear of being perceived as getting an unfair advantage over other students.

Despite the characteristics of dyslexia being contested, there is evidence that dyslexia can have a significant impact on learning in higher education. Mortimore and Crozier's (2006) research found that SpLD students reported that they experienced difficulties with a wide range of skills and academic tasks; in particular, note taking, organising, and structuring essays and expressing their ideas in writing. Further, Stoeber and Rountree (2021) found that, in comparison to secondary school, the overall workload at university is often significantly higher. Equally, there is an expectation that students will manage their own time in order to complete essays, coursework, and projects before the submission deadlines. They argue that this can have a significant impact on dyslexic students. This is because dyslexic students often report problems with time and organisational management.

The lived experience of dyslexic students in higher education is a good starting point when considering the impact of dyslexia on higher education. For example, Sumner *et al* (2021) found that students with dyslexia reported that they had lower confidence in their grades than students who did not report dyslexia. Further, Cameron (2016) identified four elements of lived experience of dyslexia in higher education: getting things out of my head; performance as risk; effort of constant self-monitoring; and not belonging in academic spaces. This research will consider how the lived experience of dyslexia impacts on how the students experience the dyslexia tutorials, and whether this lived experience changes as a result of interaction with the dyslexia tutorials. The next section will outline the support that is available to students with dyslexia, with a focus on the dyslexia tutorial.

## 1.4 Support Available to the Dyslexic Student

Dyslexia tutorials are provided for students in higher education who have a recognised dyslexia assessment. This can be from an educational psychologist or a dyslexia assessor. Whilst a number of students entering higher education have a dyslexia diagnosis, many students have not been assessed for dyslexia prior to coming to university and, consequently, have an assessment whilst at university. This usually consists of completing a screener (Dobson, 2019) before undertaking a diagnostic assessment, which determines if a student is deemed to have dyslexia, followed by an assessment of need (Price and Hargreaves, 2008), which determines what adjustments the student will require. The adjustments include: 25% extra time during examinations, access to coloured paper and assistive technology, and access to dyslexia tutorials with a specialist dyslexia tutor (Cameron, 2021). Students can access the tutorials at any point in their university career, from the foundation year, through to PhD studies.

The students are allocated a number of sessions, usually 30 a year (Dobson, Waters and Torgerson, 2021), and these sessions are usually externally funded by bodies such as Student Finance England (SFE). The funding is attached to the individual student, rather than funding being provided directly to the universities. Additionally, in some circumstances, sessions can be funded by the university; this is usually dependent on the university having an in-house dyslexia service. Students are not obliged to access the tutorials and there is no expectation that the students attend on a weekly basis. Instead, the responsibility for arranging tutorials lies with the students. The sessions are on a one-to-one basis, usually for an hour, although this can be negotiated between the tutor and the student (Kirwan and Leather, 2011). The dyslexia tutor is required to have a degree, a teaching qualification, and a dyslexia teaching qualification in order to enter the profession (Beck, 2021). They are then required to be registered with a professional body, complete ten hours of continual professional development (CPD) and submit a portfolio to their professional body, in order to maintain their registration to teach dyslexia students who are externally funded.

The sessions can take place in a number of different venues both in the higher education institution and outside the institution, although within the university is more usual. Some tutors have permanent offices to host the sessions, some tutors are required to book a room, and some tutors, usually freelance and agency teachers, are not provided with a room by the higher education institute and so may conduct tutorials in a public place such as a library, or a cafe. Mortimore (2013) found inconsistent levels of dyslexia support in universities, citing physical accessibility of tutorials as a key factor. The provision of rooms and how this impacts the student and tutor experience will be discussed further in the thesis.

There is no curriculum or scheme of work that the tutor and students follow, instead, in the first session, the tutor and student will devise an individual learning plan. The aim of the individual learning plan is to identify key areas that the student wants to work on, these can include, academic writing, decoding questions, academic reading, revision strategies and exams strategies (Brunswick, 2012). Students can work on these areas until they feel comfortable and can revisit areas. Thus, there is less of a sense of an area being completed. It is often more of a spiral, with students returning to areas as the course progresses. The thesis will explore how students and tutors view the purpose of the tutorials, develop a relationship, and negotiate learning outcomes. The PhD will, therefore, centre the research on the dyslexia tutorial space and how tutors and students interact with and within the space.



## 1.5 The Research Problem

Whilst there is a body of research on writing advice centres, primarily focusing on academic writing and one to one tutorials, there is less research on dyslexia tutorials in higher education in terms of how students and tutors experience the dyslexia tutorial. There is some research on dyslexic students in higher education, but this mainly focuses on areas such as their experience in higher education, or studies focusing on the impact of tutorials rather than on the dyslexia tutorial experience. For example, Graham (2020) compared attainment data of SpLD students who had accessed one-to-one support with SpLD students who had not. The study found that 10% of the students who had not utilised tutorials had withdrawn from their studies, whereas none of the students who had utilised support had withdrawn. Further, the study found a positive correlation between the number of support sessions attended and attainment. Thus, the study is focusing on outcomes of the tutorials, as opposed to the experience of the tutorials. Equally, a qualitative study by Newman and Conway (2016) focused on students' evaluation of the effectiveness of the tutorials in terms of areas such as self-esteem, academic work and development of study skills. My study, therefore, aims to focus on the tutorials themselves to explore how the tutors and students experience the tutorials. This will give a voice to dyslexic students and tutors and provide an insight into the dyslexia tutorial. The research questions are:

- 1. How do students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space?**
- 2. How are the tutorials navigated by students and tutors, in terms of power dynamics, negotiation and resistance?**
- 3. What is the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey?**

## 1.6 Potential Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on the experience of dyslexic students in higher education, specifically focusing on the dyslexia tutorial. Further, it considers the experience of the dyslexia tutor and gives a voice to dyslexia tutors, who often see themselves at the periphery of university institutions (O'Dwyer, 2022). The research, therefore, provides an insight into the dyslexia tutorial, in terms of the spatiality of the tutorials and how the tutorials are experienced by the students and tutors. This will add to the research in this area, proving a focus on the tutors and students' experience. As such, it will be of benefit to dyslexia tutors and professional service practitioners, who want to develop greater understanding of the experience of dyslexic students and tutors who access dyslexia tutorials. It may also be of interest to institutions who seek to review their current dyslexia provision

## 1.7 Indicative Content

The thesis will be structured into six chapters.

### **Chapter 1, Introduction Chapter**

This has provided an overview of the research and the indicative content.

## **Chapter 2, Literature Review**

The literature review will comprise two sections. The first section will outline the theoretical framework of the thesis, critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies through a critical realism ontology, framing the context of the thesis. I will begin by briefly discussing how disability has been constructed through history. I will then move on to how the medical model was challenged in the 1970s, leading to the development of other models of disability. I will then discuss the conceptualisation of dyslexia, including the history of dyslexia, diagnosis and assessment tools, legislation, and embodiment of dyslexia. Finally, I will discuss dyslexia tutorials in terms of literacy models, how the tutorials are situated in the university, and negotiated outcomes in the dyslexia tutorials.

## **Chapter 3, Methodology**

The methodology will provide an explanation and critique of the methodology used. Participants, sampling and ethics will be included in this chapter. I will begin with my positionality, before moving on to my ontological and epistemological position. I will then discuss my methodological approach of naturalistic inquiry and provide an explanation of my methods (in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall). This will be followed by an explanation of my analysis, framework analysis, before concluding with a discussion of ethics.

## **Chapter 4, Analysis**

I will be taking a framework analysis approach to my data. In terms of process, framework analysis will be used to analyse the data. This is a seven-step process that allows me to move backward and forwards through the data. I have identified four themes in my analysis: The first theme considers the impact the tutorial space has in terms of both the participants and the university, purely by its existence. The second theme focuses on how students and tutors gain access to the dyslexia tutorial space. The third theme considers how the tutorial aims and outcomes are negotiated between the tutor and the student. Finally, the fourth theme explores how the tutors and students perceive the purpose of the tutorials.

## **Chapter 5, Discussion**

This discussion will bring together the analysis, theoretical framework and conceptualisations of Dyslexia to consider the findings. I will discuss the themes identified in the analysis through my theoretical lens (critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies) in the light of the literature in these areas and consider the implications of my findings.

## **Chapter 6, Conclusion**

In this chapter, I will bring together the findings and consider how the research questions have been addressed. Finally, I will make recommendations, discuss limitations of the study and consider potential future research.

## **7, References**

A reference list will be provided.

## **8, Appendices**

A number of appendices will be provided, including transcripts, an information sheet, and a consent form.

# Chapter Two, Literature Review

## Part One: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

Part one of the literature review will outline the theoretical framework that will be applied to the Dyslexia tutorial. I will be utilising critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies, for example ableism, within a critical realism ontological framework. This is appropriate for this study because it encompasses the educational, spatial and disability dimensions of the research. Critical pedagogy of space informed by disability studies aligns with my ontological framework of critical realism in a number of ways. In terms of critical pedagogy, both critical realism and critical pedagogy situate data generated from the research project in the context of its specific socio-economic context (Harvey, 1990). Further “*critical realists argue for an understanding of the relationship between structures and human agency that is based on a transformational conception of social activity*” (Bhaskar, 1989:2-3), which aligns with critical pedagogy which, “*seeks to transform oppressive structures in society using democratic and activist approaches to teaching and learning*” (Braa and Callero, 2006:357). In terms of disability studies, Frauenberger (2015:91) argues that a critical realist approach, “*allows a non-reductionist perspective [to disability studies], taking into account multiple layers that make up the disabled experience (a concept that is known as stratification in critical realism.*” Further, a number of disability scholars make the case for a critical realist perspective in disability research. For example, Shakespeare adopts a critical realist approach to disability, conceptualizing disability as, “*an interaction between individual and structural factors*” (Shakespeare, 2013:74). He makes the case for a critical realist approach to disability, arguing that,

*critical realism means acceptance of an external reality: rather than resorting to relativism or extreme constructionism, critical realism attends to the independent existence of bodies which sometimes hurt, regardless of what we may think or say about those bodies.*  
(Shakespeare, 2013:)

Bhaskar and Danermark (2006:280), also make a case for a critical realism in disability research.

*Critical realism is able to move beyond both reductionism and simple non- or anti-reductionism through ontological pluralism to a positive concept of the object of disability research as (what we will call) a necessarily laminated system, that is, a system that refers essentially to several different levels of reality*

Finally, Thomas (1999), whilst not explicitly referring to critical realism, takes a similar approach in her research.

A critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies approach, will therefore help me to consider the experience of the tutor and student through a lens of space and, through utilising critical realism will enable me to consider structural influences on this experience.

Part one of this chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section will provide an explanation of the development of critical pedagogy, including a definition, which encompasses work from scholars such as Freire (1970) and Giroux (2020). The second section will then move on to critical pedagogy of space, as proposed by Peter McLaren (1999) and developed by Morgan (2000). Critical pedagogy of space builds on critical pedagogy, adding a spatial dimension. This section will utilise the work of Lefebvre (1991) and will consider both public and private spaces to consider the impact of space on higher education and will consider the third space and its impact of both function of space and how the third space can resist existing power dynamics. This is relevant to my research, as I will be considering how the dyslexia tutorial environment, such as a private room or a table in a library, impacts the experience of the inhabitants of the space. The third section will then consider how elements of disability studies can be used to inform critical pedagogy of space. Concepts such as ableism and the impact of ableism on dyslexic students will be introduced here to provide a framework through which to analyse the students' experience, for example how they experience meeting the requirements to access the space. I will consider how concepts such as the medical model and the social model impact the perspective of tutorials, before moving on to a discussion about the use of a modified social model, proposed by Hosking (2008).

Finally, in the fourth section, I will consider space from a disability studies perspective, whereby Kitchin's (1998) and Campbell's (2017) work on separation and segregation in higher education spaces will be discussed. This will help me to consider issues around where dyslexia tutorials are located in higher education institutions. The tutorials are typically provided by a specialist service, separate from the students' departments. The chapter, therefore, will provide the reader with my theoretical framework, which aims to consider the tutor and students through the lens of critical theory. It will also provide the reader with the historical context of dyslexia, in order for the reader to understand the context in which the dyslexia tutorial sits in terms of both disability models and how dyslexia is conceptualised.

Critical pedagogy of space originates from critical theory, which was developed from scholars who formed the Frankfurt School (How, 2017). This term refers to Marxist researchers, who originally worked in Frankfurt. The researchers built on,

*both Marx's critique of the political economy of liberal capitalism and Freud's exposition of the role of the unconscious in the formation of the human psyche to explain the persistent domination of late capitalism and to propose a means to achieve human emancipation"* (Hosking, 2008:2).

One tenet of critical theory is that empirical study and philosophical analysis should be brought together to form a detailed understanding of the research subject and that the normative basis for the critical research and critique should be founded on the needs of the people living within the system that is being researched (Moisio, 2013). Critical theory, therefore, includes a wide range of descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry that aim to maximise freedom and end the domination of some groups by others (by class, power, race or other social construct, for example) (Thompson, 2017). Critical theory does not claim to be normatively objective, rather, the aim of critical theory is to explain oppression and through this to challenge and change society (Best, Bonefeld and O'Kane, 2018). According to Bohman (1991), critical theory must consider the issues with current social reality, must identify the actors to change current social reality, and finally, provide clear norms for criticism and achievable goals to progress social transformation. Social reality has been described by McLeod and Chaffee, (2017) as emerging from habituation and becoming institutionalised into the social structure. This theoretical standpoint will support me in considering the tutors and students' experience of

disability and disability support and how this influences their experience of the dyslexia tutorial. Critical theory allows me to explore the structural influences on the experiences of the tutorial and to consider the power dynamics between the student and tutor, and whether these power dynamics are challenged or even acknowledged by the student and tutor. As such, critical theory allows me to uncover and bring to the surface these hidden elements and consider how they may contribute to an oppressive or emancipatory teaching environment. This will help to address how the tutorials are experienced by tutors and students, particularly in terms of the student-tutor relationship, power dynamics within the tutorial, and how aims and outcomes are negotiated in the tutorials.

## 2.2 Section 1: Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is critical theory applied in the field of education. It sees education as a way to culturally shape and control society through school because, both implicitly and explicitly, schools adopt a worldview that perpetuates and legitimates certain ways of perceiving and acting in the world (Kanpol, 1999). Beck (2005) describes critical pedagogy as applying critical social theory to education and examining how schools reproduce inequality and injustice. As Freire (1970) puts it, education is not neutral, it is either employed as a tool of liberation or of domestication. This is described by Derounian, (2018:5) as the “*process of education either creat [ing] critical, autonomous thinkers or [...] render[ing] people passive and unquestioning.*” School structures reproduce and maintain power relationships and privilege certain types of knowledge; as such, structural inequalities are normalised and maintained. This is achieved through both explicit methods, such as the curricula, and in less visible ways, such as how space is controlled (Giroux, 2020). Kessing-Styles (2003) views critical pedagogy as an educational response to structural inequality and oppression, and McLaren (1999:35) describes critical pedagogy as,

*a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state.*

Critical pedagogy, therefore, seeks to make normalised structures visible in order to effectively challenge them. Porfilio and Ford (2015:20) identify the key aims of critical pedagogy as to,

*alleviate or combat [...] oppression and human suffering through pedagogy. Thus, its attention is focused on both power relations in the classroom, school, and university, and how these power relations connect with broader social structures, including the mode of production.*

The key tool identified by Freire (1970) for achieving this is to problematize the accepted oppressive structures of education. By this, Freire is referring to the way power is woven through society and how this power creates institutions and social structures that benefit those in power at the expense of those who do not hold power (Giroux, 2010). Freire saw education as a political act where educational services meet the needs of some and not others and thus is never neutral (Freire, 1976). As such, education can be an oppressive tool, but equally it could be a tool for liberation. According to Duarte (2018), Freirean liberation pedagogy is best described as the practice of politics within the classroom that aims to create a setting for radically democratic education. Thus, Freire argues that it is important for teachers to recognise the political nature of their work and as such, “*must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working*” (Freire, 1985:80). This is discussed by Sachs (2005), Jordell (1987), and Fullan (2000), who consider the structural influences on teacher identity and the outside forces that influence teaching and education.

According to Freire (1985), one of the tools of oppression in education is the use of the banking model of education. The banking model is the model where the teacher holds the knowledge and deposits this

knowledge into the passive students, who assimilate this information. Through this, the teacher's dominance and control is reinforced through the educational process and, consequently, societal inequalities are reinforced (Freire, 1970).

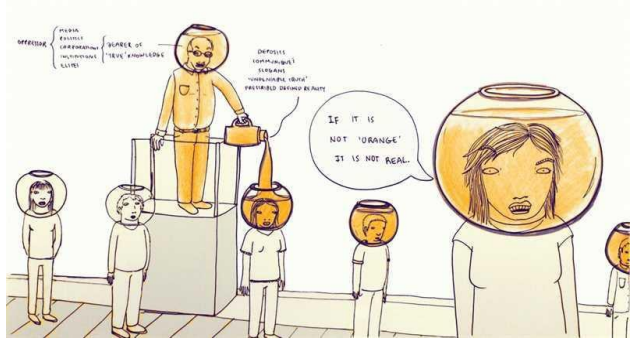


Figure one, The banking method of education (Rose, 2017)

To address the banking model, Freire (1970) proposes a more egalitarian relationship between the teacher and students, based on a problem-posing model of education. The aim is to support students to critically reflect on and make meaning from everything they learn, becoming an active participant in meaning making. This model encourages students to engage actively in their learning in order to co-create knowledge with the tutors, as opposed to being the recipient of the knowledge. Shor (1993) describes this as a shift in perspective from answering questions to questioning answers. In my research, I will consider how knowledge is created and reflected on in the dyslexia tutorials. In particular, I will consider whether the sessions are perpetuating a banking model of education, or whether they support a more collaborative problem-solving interaction between student and tutor. Potentially, both methods could be employed in the session. The utilisation of a critical realism ontology will enable me to explore whether students and tutors recognise/acknowledge these models and how the models may influence the sessions and tutor-student dynamic. Roberts *et al* (2021) suggest that a critical realist perspective can explore the interplay between structure and agency in tutor student relationships. An understanding of these models will, therefore, allow a critical consideration of the dynamics of these interactions.

Freire (1970) saw dialogue as a critical component of the problem posing model. Robertson (1994) states that through dialogue the teacher empowers students, giving them voice. This works to challenge students' oppression, enabling them to decode power relations and through this reconstruct reality. According to Freire, the relationship between the student and the tutor enables this critical 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 [...] [T]he teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach (Freire, 1970: 67).*

## A. Theories of Learning

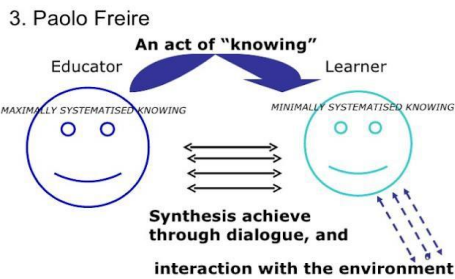


Figure two, A visual representation, Edtech (2012)

According to Beck and Purcell (2013), the starting point for this is the acknowledgement that neither the tutor nor the student knows the full picture, but that new knowledge is created between the tutor and student. Freire describes this as a horizontal relationship, in which the relationship is more democratic, whilst acknowledging that this does not mean that the students and tutors have the same professional role. He points out that, *"Dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally; but it does mark the democratic position between them"* (Freire, 1994:116-117). Rather, the teacher is aware of the power imbalances inherent in the tutor-student relationship, and as such both respects the students' knowledge and is aware of the limitations of their own knowledge. As Shor (1992) puts it, any dialogue must balance the authority of the teacher with the student's contribution. The tutor, therefore, acknowledges that knowledge is produced from the interaction between the student and tutor's knowledge. This aligns with critical realism; Bhaskar argues it is impossible to emancipate anyone and that all learning comes from within and from lived experience. Thus, the teacher's role is to draw out and explore that knowledge via critical pedagogy and link this to the students' developing identity, fulfillment, and self-worth (Huckle, 2022). The horizontal relationship concept will help me to consider the question of how aims and outcomes in the tutorial space are negotiated and the power imbalances within these negotiated relationships, considering the causal mechanisms underpinning the negotiation (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010).

The horizontal relationship concept is especially applicable to my research because the dyslexia tutors are not subject experts, but rather experts in academic study skills such as developing academic writing skills. The tutor, therefore, relies on students to provide their expertise in their chosen subject. It is the interaction between the student and tutor that creates new knowledge through the construction and reconstruction of this knowledge. As such, the development of knowledge stems from collaboration (Frog, 2015). Freire describes this as knowledge *"emerg [ing] only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopefully inquiry men [sic] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other"* (1970:58). As Freire acknowledges (1985:76), when considering the tutor-student relationship, issues of power are not neutralised through the use of a problem solving model:

*I have always said that whoever says that they are equal is being demagogic and false. The educator is different from the pupil. But this difference, from the point of view of the revolution, must not be antagonistic. The difference becomes antagonistic when the authority of the educator, different from the freedom of the pupil, is transformed into authoritarianism.*

As such, Freire is acknowledging that the aim is not to create an equal relationship dynamic between the student and tutor. Carino (1998) considers how this dynamic is conceptualised in a one-to-one situation, arguing that pretending that a hierarchical relationship between tutor and student does not exist is a fallacy. This is echoed by Trimbur (1987), who pointed out that there is an inequality in the tutor-tutee relationship in terms of knowledge of how to achieve academic success. He recommends that tutors

attempt to address through developing non-directive questioning, whilst acknowledging that this inequality will not be eliminated. This shifting of power and authority is seen by Carino (2003:106) as being necessary to the success of a tutorial; arguing that whilst the notion of an egalitarian tutorial is seductive:

*Tutorials depend on authority and power, authority about the nature of the writing and the power to process or resist what that authority says. Either the tutor and student must share authority presenting a pleasant, but rare collaborative peer situation, or one or the other must have it [...] most often the tutor.*

Here, authority is the expertise, and this quote highlights the importance of how the authority is used. In the dyslexia tutorial, the expertise shifts between student and tutor during the session, the tutor is the expert in learning development, whereas the student is the expert in their academic field. However, as Bowers (2005) points out, whilst the teacher and student may at times adopt the role of the other, the teacher maintains a leadership role in the sessions. Further, McNerney, (2009) and Deslauriers *et al* (2019) argue that students may be resistant to taking a more active, horizontal role in the class, preferring to defer to the authority of the teacher. Thus, when working to develop a more horizontal approach, it is important to consider whether this position is being imposed on the students, and consequently recreating power imbalances. The purpose of a critical pedagogy approach, therefore, is not to dismantle authority, but rather to engage learners in perceiving social, political, and economic contradictions, and take action against such oppression (Freire, 1970:17).

A critical pedagogy approach and critical realism ontology will, therefore, enable me to explore structural impacts on the dyslexia tutorial, on relationships and power dynamics within the tutorial, and on how knowledge is created between the tutor and the student. I will consider how students experience authority and whether they prefer to recognise and defer to the authority of the tutor or seek to challenge it. A key dimension of the research is the spatial aspect of the tutorials, by that I am referring to the room where the tutorials are undertaken, and what impact the space has on the experience of the tutors and students. In section two, I will utilise critical pedagogy of space to further explore this spatial dimension.

## 2.3 Critical Pedagogy of Space

Critical pedagogy of space adds a spatial lens to critical pedagogy; as Rolf (2013, Cited in Beighton, 2018) explains, universities are a collection of buildings constructed around a building where a student reads for a degree and writes their thesis. As such, the conceptualisation of universities encompasses both the physical space and the conceived space. Critical pedagogy of space was first conceived of by Peter McLaren in 1998 and acknowledges that rather than space being a neutral receptacle, space contributes to normalising and reinforcing structuring inequalities. The impact of space is recognised in critical pedagogy, for example Freire (1970:109) stated that, "*People [...] find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark.*" Hackett *et al* (2015) argues that applying a spatial lens when examining the entanglements between individuals and the worlds in which they are situated offers a new perspective on how space effects and shapes individual experiences. This will support my exploration of spatiality and the tutor and student experiences. McLaren (1998:494) states that, "*critical pedagogy should be encouraged to explore the spatiality of human life and couple this with its historicity-sociality [...] through the trialectics of space, knowledge, and power.*" According to



Morgan (2000), a neutral view of space serves to legitimise existing spatial arrangements, and that this inevitably favours certain groups over others. Morgan states that critical pedagogy of space must show space to be a social construction in order to problematise the notion of space. This is exemplified by Gordon (1996) who provides an insight into how the space is utilised in schools to produce and reproduce power relations. He points out that students do not typically have their own space in a school. Their desk in a classroom is only theirs temporarily, and they inhabit the space in full view of others; equally, with the exception of spaces such as toilets, they are required to wait until they are invited into a space, for example to be allowed into a classroom. Students move between spaces such as from classroom to classroom. Thus, the space for them is experienced as a public space, whereas this experience for teachers is very different. The classroom belongs to the teacher, teachers do not typically move between classrooms, and they guard this space. For example, access to classrooms is strictly regulated, students cannot access the space out of prescribed times. The space is a private space for teachers in which students are invited into the space. This experience is reflected in the university students' experience of space. Their access to lecture space is temporary and they can often only access the lecturer's teaching space during office hours, as such, according to critical realism, space acts to underpin causal mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1979). Thus, space, rather than being neutral, serves to produce and reproduce accepted forms of knowledge. Soja points out that,

*space and society are mutually constitutive: space is both the product of social relationships and is involved in the production of those relationships. The social production of human spatiality or the 'making of geographies' is becoming as fundamental to understanding our lives and our life worlds as the social production of our histories and societies. (Soja, 1999:262).*

In the case of the dyslexia tutorial, there are a number of ways in which students and tutors experience the space. Some universities provide a permanent tutorial room, some provide bookable rooms, and some expect sessions to take place in a public place such as a cafe. A critical pedagogy of space perspective will allow me to critically consider the impact of these different spaces on the tutors' and students' experience of the dyslexia tutorial. Lefebvre's (1991) production of space considers this spatial element in depth; this will be particularly relevant to the analysis of the dyslexia tutorial space. Lefebvre holds that rather than space being physically manifested, for example a room or a park, space is instead a social product or social construction (Cresswell, 2013) and considers how space shapes both practices and perceptions. He argues that there are different modes of production of space from natural space, which is described as absolute space, to spaces that are more complex where meaning is produced. To understand this production, Lefebvre created a spatial triad which considered the interplay of representations of space (the conceived space) everyday practices and perceptions (the perceived space), and the spatiality of the time (the lived space) (Shields, 1992) to produce the social space. The diagram below exemplifies the relationship between the three elements to produce social space.

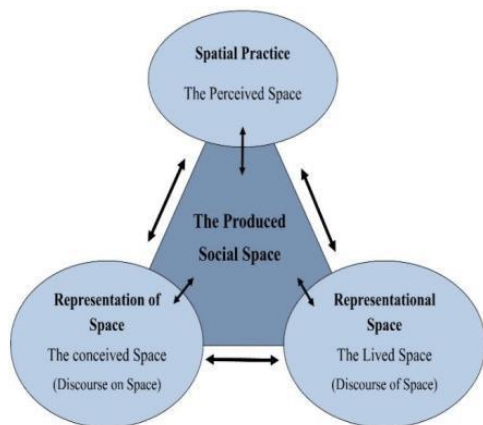


Figure 3, production of space, taken from Shtaya and Ghodieh (2019)

Here, it is useful for me to interpret the triad in relation to the dyslexia tutorial, as I experience it and consider the different elements may inter-relate. I recognise that this is unlikely to be how the space is experienced by all tutors and students

The conceived space is the plan for the space, for example a lecture theatre is a designed learning space for group learning to take place and the space is designed with resources and equipment in mind. Here, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between dominated and appropriated space. A dominated space is “*a master’s project*” (1991:165) in which the architects of the space decide its function. Lefebvre’s triad of spatiality considers that the function of the space is determined by what the space is designated as, in this context a teaching space, stating, the designers (or producers) of space deliver what is in essence expected whilst the “users” passively experience what has been imposed upon them (Lefebvre 1991). The space can act to reinforce oppressive teaching models, such as the banking model (Freire, 1970). This access to space is described by Siebers (2003) as more than just a physical phenomenon; it is also embedded in cultural and aesthetic representations and political practices. Thus, there are, what could be described as, associations around a space; these could be physical or conceptual. An example of this would be a classroom; when visualising a classroom, one may expect to see a whiteboard, a teacher’s desk and rows of desks opposite the teacher’s desks; equally, there are expectations of how the inhabitants of the space behave, such as the teacher talking at the whiteboard and the students responding. Cresswell (1992:16) describes how places reproduce these associations and by doing so reinforce them, “*we believe it is appropriate to be silent in libraries, and by being silent in libraries we contribute to the continuation of silence.*” This exemplifies how the space acts to uphold structural mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2016).

In the case of a dyslexia tutorial room, there are fewer associations around what the space should be in comparison to other teaching spaces. This could be because the space is not considered as a formal teaching space and so does not have the same associations. However, there are some considerations, the rooms are one to one rooms to accommodate one to one teaching and provide space for the tutor’s resources and files. Thus, a tutorial room is a ‘permanent’ representation of the purpose of the space and the function of the space. An example of this is McGregor’s (2004) study into spatiality and the place of material in schools, she considers how the material technologies of a classroom are linked with the pedagogical practices that constitute it and contribute to the prevailing view of what is currently determined to be knowledge. Material technologies are the artefacts that play a part in defining a space, for example a classroom would have desks, a chalkboard/ whiteboard, and educational posters on the

wall. An example of this would be a classroom that is set up with chairs in a horseshoe formation would appear to privilege whole group discussions, whereas a classroom set up in rows would appear to privilege a more passive approach. McGregor (2004) demonstrates that these artefacts are not fixed and change with time. For example, a 19th century classroom would include inkwells, whereas inkwells are unlikely to be a feature of a contemporary classroom. Therefore, how the teaching space is constituted forms a part of how the structures and associations are constructed and reconstructed.

The second element, the perceived space, is related to what happens within the space regarding specific practices that occur in the space and how these practices work to construct the space. An example of this would be that in every dyslexia tutorial session there will be a re-cap of the previous session at the start, the invoice sheet will be signed at the end of the session and some form of teaching will occur in the session. These everyday practices work to define and construct the space as having a particular purpose, in this case teaching.

The third element is that of how the lived space attributes different meanings to the space, and thus how the space is experienced, co-created and re-created. The lived space can be, therefore, where meaning is created in the space. In the case of a tutorial space, what it means to be a tutorial space is created in the lived space. Lefebvre (1991:362) suggests that this lived space is the subjective experience of the people in the space. It is here that identity can be constructed, reconstructed, and reinforced. Wenzel (2003) provides an insight into this, describing space as a place that is both an indicator of identity and a metaphor of value systems. Equally, Holland *et al* (2001) developed a framework of how people construct identity from, what they describe as, socially constructed worlds. An individual constructs their identity from available resources, which are located inside the constructed worlds in which they inhabit, drawing on experiences that are culturally and historically situated.

There are some spaces where the function of a space is less defined. These have been described by Bhabha (1994) as the third space, a transitional space, where power relations and norms can be challenged and subverted by political or everyday practices. According to Pitts and Brooks (2016:5), third spaces, "*encompass pedagogical possibilities that are inclusive of all types of learning environments.*" As such, the third space could provide opportunity for a problem-solving pedagogical approach (Freire, 1970). The third space considers how learning is positioned when it occurs outside traditional parameters such as lectures and seminars but remains part of a learning framework. An example of this would be a study skills tutorial. The tutorial is not part of the curriculum and work undertaken in the tutorial is not assessed, and does not form part of the students' grade, but at the same time the tutorial is part of the university's teaching offer. Learning is therefore extended beyond traditional arenas such as lecture theatres, with the value of alternative spaces for learning being recognised. In this context, the third space is a hybrid space that is neither wholly of the university, or wholly separate. This is described by Gutierrez *et al* (1999) as the space between the formal and informal; the official and unofficial spaces of the learning environment intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and a shift in the social organisation and what counts as knowledge. Gutierrez *et al* (1999:288) defines hybridity as, "*polycontextual, multivoiced, and multiscripted.*" Thus, conflict, tension, and diversity are an intrinsic part of learning spaces. It is through this tension and diversity that learning communities as a third space can challenge the existing hegemony to transform learning. Bhabha (1994:1) describes these third spaces as providing opportunities for, "*elaborating strategies of selfhood [...] that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.*" The third space, therefore, is not only a space in time and place; but is also a mode of articulation, a way of describing not merely reflective but productive space that produces new possibilities (Meredith, 1998). Lubicz-Nawrocka (2017) argues that the creation of these collaborative and reciprocal processes can promote equity and challenge the status quo of traditional ways of teaching in higher education.

Bovill *et al* (2016:197) describe this as,

*occupying the space in between student engagement and partnership, to suggest a meaningful collaboration between students and staff, with students becoming more active participants in the learning process, constructing understanding and resources with academic staff.*

The third space, therefore, does not have prescribed roles for tutors and students in the same way that a formal teaching space such as a lecture has, and as such, can become a site where through critical pedagogy students and tutors can work to challenge knowledge and structures that are oppressive in order to promote empowerment and freedom (Freire, 1970). Jones (2011) argues that in contrast to education in the first space, which they view as the practices and structures that seek to create a malleable skilled workforce, and the second space which focuses on individual autonomy and lifelong learning, from a critical pedagogy approach, the third space provides the opportunity and means to trouble and subvert existing structures and power dynamics.

As such, critical pedagogy of space provides a theoretical framework to consider tutorial spaces, which I am arguing are positioned in the third space, and through a critical realism ontology, I can consider the structural influences on the tutorials. Gabel (2002) argues, however, that critical pedagogy does not address disability, pointing out that disability might differ from the marginalised and oppressed groups of individuals addressed by critical pedagogy, and that disability requires transformative institutional change in order to meet disabled students' needs. This is also highlighted by Erevelles (2000) who argues that disability does not fit into the theoretical framework in the same way as other social categories. This is because whilst categories such as gender class can be associated with a social construction, Erevelles (2000) argues that this is not the case for the class of disability. Further, Goodley (2007:318) argues that there is a need for critical pedagogies that recognise that disabled subjectivities are constituted through "normative educational contexts" that are often designed both by and for able-bodied persons. To address this, elements of disability studies will form part of the framework. Specifically, this section will draw on the work of scholars such as Shakespeare and Watson, who take a critical realism approach. It will also include the work of disability scholars, Watson, Vehmas, Danermark, Thomas, and Pearson. The medical and social models of disability will be discussed and problematized from a critical realism perspectives and Hosking's (2008) proposed reformed social model will be discussed and proposed as a potential alternative, Finally, the next section will move on to a discussion around concepts of disability studies such as ableism and separate/ segregated spaces and will consider how these concepts relate to the experience of dyslexic students in higher education.

A disability studies informed framework will therefore provide an opportunity to recognise and challenge ableist educational discourses, and to consider the intersections of space and disability experienced by dyslexic students. The next section will explore disability studies and how it can inform the critical pedagogy of space through critical realism framework.

## 2.4: How Disability Studies Informs Critical Pedagogy of Space

This section will provide a discussion around disability studies, exploring how disability studies can inform critical pedagogy of space, in order to gain an insight into the experience of dyslexic students and tutors in the dyslexia tutorial. Liasidou (2012) suggests that critical pedagogy can provide a theoretical framework where disability can be deconstructed, problematised and repositioned in order to explore links among disability, race, class, culture and socioeconomic status, and Ringer (2005:762), states that, *“critical pedagogy seeks to disrupt socially-constructed ideologies that privilege the few while marginalizing many.”* Within this, disability studies allows for a consideration of ableism in education, and the intersections of separation, segregation and disability (Campbell, 2017), (Kitchen, 1998). As such, critical pedagogy of space informed by disability studies will enable me to critically examine the experiences of dyslexia tutors and tutors and the structural influences on these experiences, within a critical realism framework. Firstly, I will outline the development of disability studies and its relationship to the social model. I will then discuss the development of disability studies and introduce the key principles. Finally, I will draw out the aspects of disability studies that will inform critical pedagogy of space, namely ableism, separation, and segregation.

According to Mambrol (2018), disability studies emerged in the 1980s as a result of the success of the disability rights movement; the success of scholars such as Foucault and the development of interdisciplinary identity-based approaches that focused on revealing new aspects of the humanities and emphasising rights. A key aspect of disability studies is the development of the social model, which could be described as a response to the medical model of disability (Goering, 2015). The medical model of disability is concerned with a person’s impairment and how this impairment affects a person’s function. In this case disability can be defined as:

- Impairment: ‘Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function’
- Disability: ‘Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being’ ·
- Handicap: ‘A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role for that individual’ (Barnes, 2012:7).

This model, therefore, situates disability in the person, considering that rectifying disadvantage is predicated on curing or alleviating the disability in the individual. The removal of barriers restricting a person is contingent on the individual overcoming their difficulties. The disability is not considered to be connected to the social, geographical, or economic environments. This categorisation of the medical model as situating disability purely in the individual is, however, contested. Shakespeare (2013) argues that the medical model has allowed space for environmental and social factors in the construction of disability. The medical model can be argued to create a disabled/ nondisabled binary to categorise disability (Swain and French, 2000), creating a false paradigm of disabled/ not-disabled. This creates a notion where a person with a different ability is considered to be the opposite of ‘able’, or to be less than able (Harpur, 2012).

*The divide between disabled and non-disabled people is not that one group has impairments while the other does not. Indeed, many non-disabled people have impairments, such as short and long sight [...] impairment cannot be equated with disability (Swain and French 2000:570).*

In contrast to the medical model, the social model of disability holds that rather than disability being situated in the individual, it is situated in society, in that people with disabilities are further disabled by their environment. The “social model” is the formalised articulation of a set of principles that a group of U.K. activists advanced in 1976 in order to counter individual or medical conceptions of disability (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976, in Oliver, 1996). Proponents of the social model contend that because medicalized conceptions of disability represent that state of affairs as the detrimental consequences of an intrinsic deficit or personal flaw, they fail to distinguish between impairment and disability (Oliver, 1996). Indeed, this distinction between impairment and disability motivates the social model of disability. The social model defines impairment as *“the lack of a limb or part thereof or a defect of a limb, organ or mechanism of the body.”* (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation 1976, in Oliver, 1996:22). In contrast, it defines disability as a form of disadvantage which is imposed on top of the impairment, that is, the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation excludes disabled people from participation in the mainstream of social activities (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation 1976, in Oliver, 1996). According to (Lang, 2001:3); therefore,

*disability is the result of society’s failure to provide adequate and appropriate services” and, “it is [...] the inhospitable physical environment, in concert with the negative social attitudes that disabled people encounter, which result in the systematic oppression, exclusion and discrimination of disabled people.*

Hahn (1986:128) describes this as,

*the failure of a structured social environment to adjust to the needs and aspirations of citizens with disabilities rather than from the inability of the disabled individual to adapt to the demands of society.*

Thus, this model can be defined as, *“[locating] disability not in an impaired or mal- functioning body, but in an excluding and oppressive social environment”* (Marks,1997:88). Lang (2001:2) argues that while there are different variants of the model, *“common to all variants of the social model is the belief that, at root, “disability” and “disablement” are socio-political constructions.”*

There are criticisms of the social model of disability, these cluster around oppression and lived experience. In terms of oppression, the model can be accused of making an unproved assertion that people with disabilities are inherently oppressed. Imrie (1997), for example, argues that the locating of oppression in attitudes provides little sense as to the location or origins of the attitudes, or how attitudes translate into oppressive actions. Williams (1999) goes further arguing that situating disability as purely a result of oppression is an option only available to people who are not disabled and ignores the lived experience of those with a disability. The criticism of the social model of disability in terms of embodiment is that it can be interpreted as distinguishing between illness and impairment, making them separate entities. As a result of this, the relationship between impairment and illness may be overlooked, making the model too simplistic. Thomas, (2010:423) for example points out that,

*Impairment may also become disability through the experience of structural oppression; cultural stereotypes, attitudes, bureaucratic hierarchies, market mechanisms, and all that is pertaining to how society is structured and organised.*

Therefore, the social model of disability may not account for the variety of ways that people experience disability. It can be argued that by situating disability in societal oppression, the social model fails to provide a theory for what disability is.

Shakespeare and Watson (2001:27) argue that there are three key criticisms of the British social model the issue of impairment; the impairment/ disability dualism; and the issue of identity. Further, they argue that *“rather than trying to break the definitional link between impairment and disability, we should expose the essential connection between impairment and embodiment.”* (27). Drawing on a critical realist approach, Shakespeare (2014:26) considers disability to arise from *“a complex interaction of biological, psychological, cultural and socio-political factors, which cannot be extricated except with imprecision.”* As such, Shakespeare and Watson (2010) argue for a more complex and nuanced approach to disability.

The social model is the model most associated with dyslexia in higher education; ADSHE (2020) for example, states that the social model is the most appropriate. This, however, fails to address both the reliance of the dyslexia industry on the medical model and the lived experience of dyslexic students. Students are required to undergo tests in order to be ‘diagnosed’ with dyslexia, and, therefore, access reasonable adjustments. Equally, students report that dyslexia has an impact on their progression through their courses (Mortimore and Crozier, 2006). One way to begin to address these criticisms and to align dyslexia tutorials with a model that reflects the students and tutors’ experiences is to consider the use of a model that includes the embodied experience of disabled people. Thomas (1999) describes this as including the impairment effects in the social model in order to account for the limitations and difficulties that are experienced through medical conditions. Hosking (2008) suggests a reformed version of the social model which is the synthesis of the medical and social models. This approach balances the contributions of impairment, personal responses to impairment and the barriers imposed by the social environment to the concept of disability. It is based on three principles. Firstly, disability is a social construct, and not an inevitable consequence of impairment. Secondly, that disability is best characterised as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment. Finally, the social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of ‘normalcy’ (Hosking, 2008). This, therefore, differs from the social model in that it includes the embodied experience of illness and impairment and considers intersectionality, and differs from the medical model in that it does not situate disability in the individual, rather it takes the view that public policy must respond to both the biomedical and social aspects of disability. Hosking, (2008:7) points out that there is, however,

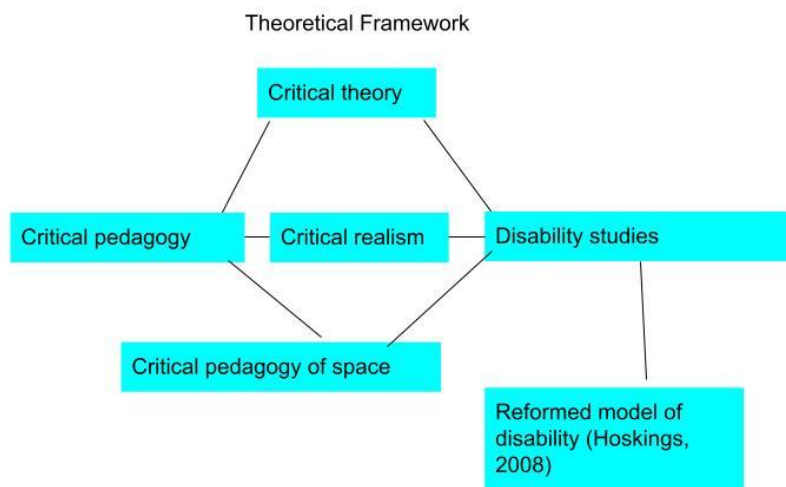
*an inherent dialectical tension between the medical model which seeks to abolish disabling impairments and a social model which accepts and truly values disabled people as equal, integrated members of society.*

The use of a reformed social model challenges the current discourse around dyslexia which appears to attempt to distance itself from disability, for example describing it as a difficulty or a difference. Pollak (2009) and Kormos and Smith (2012) for example, have authored books referring to learning difference, as opposed to disability. This distinction is crucial as difficulty suggests an individual struggle rather than an issue within society. Equally, the use of the term difference is problematic as it suggests that only dyslexia students are different and assumes that dyslexic and non-dyslexic students are in some way the same. It does not recognise that some differences disable people and can contribute to identity issues, especially with hidden disabilities.

Macdonald (2019) points out that whilst framing dyslexia as a difference rather than a disability appears to be a progressive framework, the adoption of a neurodiversity perspective could potentially both break ties with and stigmatise other disability groups, as it separates dyslexia (and other SpLDs) from other impairment categories. As Shakespeare (2017) argues, a consideration of terminology used around disability is important as it gets to the heart of disability. Further, Shakespeare (2011:60) makes the point that,

*Diagnosis with dyslexia is important both in promoting self-esteem among previously failing pupils, and in gaining access to extra educational resources, in the form of remedial or special education, as well as computer software and hardware than can mitigate the impact of dyslexia.*

Macdonald (2019) also considers how framing dyslexia as a difference could impact on dyslexic peoples' access to reasonable adjustments arguing that separating dyslexia from disabilities would potentially allow future governments to exclude dyslexia from legislation and policies. In contrast, the term disability is political, suggesting that society and social norms and regulations act in a way to cause a problem to some learners. As such, the reformed model is likely to reflect the experience of dyslexic students accessing dyslexia tutorials and the experience of dyslexic students. Disability studies will help to make visible the structural influences on the dyslexia tutorial, for example the ableism inherent in both the process of accessing dyslexia support and in higher education itself. Further, it will enable me to explore how these structures impact how the tutorials are experienced, the tutor-student relationship, and how the participants understand the overall purpose of the tutorials.



A key principle of disability studies that will be applied in the research is that of ableism in higher education. Shakespeare (2014) argues that the recognition of ableist social structures and processes that impact disabled is fundamental to conceptualizing disability. King *et al* (2019:2) describe ableism as “one



*important system of marginalization that is relevant to the estimated 15% of the population worldwide who have some form of disability.”* According to Loja *et al* (2012) ableism offers valuable ways to theorise disability and challenge disability oppression. Further, Bourdieu (1990) argues that the body is a form of physical capital, a site of power and status that can accumulate various resources and convert them into economic, cultural, emotional or social capital. As such, ableism is a privilege that impacts all people and all bodies (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009). Campbell (2017:287-288) describes ableism as

*a system of causal relations about the order of life that produces processes and systems of entitlement and exclusion. This causality fosters conditions of microaggression, internalised ableism and, in their jostling, notions of (un)encumbrance. A system of dividing practices, ableism institutes the reification and classification of populations. Ableist systems involve the differentiation, ranking, negation, notification and prioritisation of sentient life.*

In terms of higher education institutions, Dolmage (2017) argues that academia mandates both able bodiedness and able-mindedness and this requirement constitutes ableism. As Macdonald (2009a:353) states, *“the education system becomes an institutional barrier that masks structural discriminations for people with dyslexia.”* This is brought into sharp relief when we consider reasonable adjustments, which are situated in the individual. For example, dyslexic students are often provided with 25% extra time in exams, this necessitates the students being segregated from their peers, and undertaking the exam in a separate space, thus underlining difference and exclusion. Another way that ableism manifests in higher education is in terms of dyslexic students making decisions around disclosure. As will be discussed in section 2.8, dyslexia is a hidden disability, as such dyslexic students are in the position of deciding when and how to disclose a disability. Brown and Leigh (2018) problematise this, arguing that disclosure is understood in terms of ‘disclosing’ something that someone is potentially ashamed of, has kept secret and consequently revealed. If ableism is rejected and society is comfortable with illness or disability, there should be no need to disclose (Brown and Leigh, 2018). Campbell (2008) describes such ableist passing as beyond an individual hiding their impairment, ableism involves a failure to ask about differences such as disability/impairment. The term passing is described by Brune and Wilson (2013:1) as *“people concealing social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as “normal.”* The passing is undertaken to keep those in authority happy by not disturbing the peace, containing the matter that is potentially out of place (Campbell, 2008). An example of this is reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments focus on enabling disabled students to overcome barriers to learning and participation through individualised supports such as one to one tutorials, rather than addressing the barriers to learning and participation endemic to the curriculum, the assessment regimes and institutions (Lloyd, 2008). As Norwich (2010:74) puts it, dominant versions of educational inclusion are occasionally reduced to special educational subsystems that hastily and uncritically close down *“to a separatist resolution.”* Disabilities studies will, therefore, add to the discussion about spaces through providing a perspective of space that considers issues of separate and segregated spaces. It will also consider the power dynamics in the tutorials and the structural influences on the tutorial.

As mentioned previously, tutorials typically take place outside of the department. This could be part of the library service, disability service, or study skills service. As such, the tutorials are usually physically separate from the students’ department, requiring the student to leave their department to access the tutorials. As Oliver (1996) points out, disabled people have often experienced segregation within schooling, and, for students with dyslexia, this separation is carried forward into the higher education experience. The impact of accessing segregated spaces was considered by Baustien Siuty (2019:1039) in terms of perceptions on teachers. She found that *“when students traversed across the physical and imaginary borders, the adults in the building continued to associate them with segregated spaces.”*

This is described by Blaisdell (cited in Baustien Siuty, 2019) as spacing, where meaning is attached to students across different contexts and contributes to the surveilling of students leading to othering and perpetuating ableism.

Kitchin (1998) critically considers the separation of disabled people using a lens of space and power. He argues that space plays a part in the reproduction of exclusion for disabled people and identifies two ways in which this happens; firstly, he argues that spaces are currently organised to keep people in their place and secondly that spaces are social texts that convey to disabled people that they are out of place. An example of this is the use of special schools, which are spaces specifically designed to segregate students. He argues that this has the impact of marginalising disabled people and making them less visible to society. As the disabled people are marginalised through this space, the status of disabled people is propagated. In terms of the dyslexia tutorial, its position as a separate space could be argued to marginalise the dyslexic student and be a place where they are 'cured' of their dyslexia, in order to meet the requirements of their course. The tutorials, therefore, could be argued to be a tool to support the student to meet the academic standard required by the university, making the space a form of social control. This is described by Foucault, cited in Hoffman (2014), as disciplinary power, where students are sent to the sessions to ensure they conform to academic discourse. Thus, the tutorials could be experienced by the dyslexia student as having the purpose of teaching them to conform to the dominant academic hegemony. The tutor is positioned as the expert who ensures that the student is indoctrinated into academic culture, partly through the development of academic writing. Indeed, Grimm (1999) argues that writing centres can work to uphold and reinforce the dominant discourse of the university, as opposed to being a force for resistance. As such, the focus of the university is to provide specialist tutorials to enable disabled students to overcome barriers to participation, rather than the university critically reflecting on the barriers to learning that are recirculated and perpetuated, for example through curriculum and assessment (Lloyd, 2008). This is discussed in more detail in section 2.8.

Campbell (2009) makes the point that spaces can be separate rather than segregated, and that integration into the mainstream is based on the belief that this is superior, thus denying disabled people access to these spaces. Segregation is defined as a process that is enforced on the subject, manifested in the grouping of students with certain labels into separate provisions, whereas separation is a process of creating sanctuaries where members of marginalised groups can interact with one another and heal the wounds of internalised oppression. Thus, the dyslexia tutorial could be a safe space for dyslexia students. This was a feature of my data; many student participants described the tutorials as a safe space away from their department, where they had the freedom to take risks. 'Safe spaces' are described by Stengal and Weems (2010) as experiential spaces where the inhabitants of the space feel secure to explore and take risks. In the case of dyslexia students, the space could act as respite from needing to conform to the expectations of academia. This is described by Fry (1987) as a space that provides the social and emotional condition for psychological freedom. This freedom gives dyslexic students the opportunity to experiment with ideas, to experiment with identities and to feel safe when taking risks and making mistakes. Irvine and Lee (2018) argue that rather than a space being inherently safe or unsafe, through lived experience of the space a safe space is co-created. Thus, it is the dynamic between the student and tutor in the dyslexia tutorial that constructs the tutorial as a safe space, rather than the safety being located in the tutorial itself, this relationship between the tutor and student is a key part of the research. Holley and Steiner (2005) identified a number of characteristics they considered to contribute to this creation of a safe space, including welcoming discussion, approachability, supportiveness, being non-judgemental, not punishing students for unpopular views and setting up ground rules.

It is possible, therefore, that the dyslexia tutorial could be experienced by the participants as both separate and segregatory. Holt (2007) discusses the complexity of spaces being both segregatory and

separate, pointing out that whilst such separation does little to challenge ableism it does provide temporary respite from ableist assumptions for students. Campbell (2009) acknowledges this, pointing out that separated spaces can be considered inclusive only as long as they work to resist the system that brought about such exclusion. This will be explored in this research.

## 2.5 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

Part one has provided an overview and a justification for my theoretical framework and discussed how it aligns with my ontological position of critical realism. It has demonstrated how critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies, will enable me to explore structural influences on how tutors' and students' experience the dyslexia tutorial, for example Lefebvre's (1991) production of space, and ableism. Part two of the literature review will move on to consider the context and conceptualisation of dyslexia. It will look at a historical perspective of disability, models of disability, conceptualisations of dyslexia, and contestations in dyslexia, before moving on to discuss the dyslexia tutorial.

# Part Two: The Context and Conceptualizations of Dyslexia

## 2.6 Introduction

This section will consider the context within which the PhD sits in terms of how dyslexia is conceptualised, utilising a critical pedagogy of space informed by disability studies framework. It aims to explore how disability is conceptualised and the impact of this conceptualisation on dyslexia students in Higher Education and will comprise two sections, the historical context of disability, and, the dyslexia tutorial. According to Cresswell (1992), cultural norms are contextualised within a historical frame of reference, making exclusionary practices less visible and the dominant ideology less likely to be challenged. Freire (1970) makes the point that dominant ideology is largely invisible to both the oppressed group and the oppressors. This is because their perceptions of both groups are grounded in this ideology. A critical exploration of the historical context will, therefore, make visible these cultural norms and exclusionary practices.

I will begin the discussion with a brief history of how disability has been conceptualised, in order to consider how historical discourses of disability have constructed disability as other from ability and have located disability in the individual. The industrial revolution has been identified as a starting point as it is the point in which bodies were linked to production. I will then provide context around how dyslexia and dyslexia support is framed in a higher education setting, considering how the tutorials are situated in the university and negotiated outcomes in the dyslexia tutorials. Finally, I will move on to a discussion about the conceptualisation of dyslexia including the history of dyslexia diagnosis and assessment tools, legislation, and embodiment of dyslexia.

## 2.7 Section One- Historical Context of Disability and the Emergence of Conceptualisations of Dyslexia

Prior to the industrial revolution, most disabled people who were not in institutions would live with their families and would work where possible. As Historic England (2022) puts it, whilst life could be very hard, the idea of segregation or separation was barely a consideration. Gleeson (2002) argues that while impairment was a part of feudal England, disablement was not. The move from a feudal society to an industrial society was a turning point in conceptualisations of disability. Oliver and Barnes (2012) identify four 'disabling' elements of industrial societies: the growing speed of production associated with mechanised factory work, stricter discipline of workforces; more stringent time keeping; and the standardisation and regulation of production norms. These factors were seen as contributing to making workplaces hostile and unaccommodating environments for disabled people. This meant that people were either excluded from paid employment or relegated to marginal productive roles that were poorly rewarded. Consequently, people became 'disabled', stigmatised as unproductive and pushed to the margins of society. Gleeson (2002) describes this as people's value being ascribed to their ability to produce. As Goodley (2014:52) puts it; "*the marked identity of a neoliberal citizen is a worker: willing, capable and able.*"

Conversely, there is an argument that the dangerous working conditions such as in cotton mills resulted in disability becoming more visible and to some extent bodily non-normativity was a feature of workers in industrial Britain. Blackie and Turner (2018), for example, argue that disability was a form of identity, with different disabilities being associated with different occupations. Rather than disabled miners being excluded from work or marginalized, they were expected to return to productive employment if they were able to because they were valued for their skills and experience, especially during times when labour was scarce. It is during the industrial revolution that the medical model of disability began to displace the religious or moral model, due in part to advances in science and medicine (Retief and Letsosa, 2018). This is attributed by the Disability and the Victorians: Confronting Legacies Conference (2012:1) as being due to being,

*the period during which disability was conceptualised, categorised, and defined. The industrial revolution, advances in medicine, the emergence of philanthropy and the growth of asylums all played their part in creating what today's society describes as the medical model of disability.*

Towards the end of the industrial revolution, dyslexia began to be conceptualised. The origins of dyslexia lie in the concept of "word-blindness" as an isolated condition. This concept was developed by Adolph Kussmaul in the 1870s and later identified as a condition by Oswald Berkhan in 1881, who is credited with first identifying dyslexia, albeit without using the term dyslexia (Beaton, 2004). The term 'dyslexia' was later coined in 1887 by Rudolf Berlin. Berlin theorised that there was a physiological cause of dyslexia, lesions on the brain. The severity of these lesions would determine whether someone had a total inability to read (ataxia) or a difficulty in decoding symbols (dyslexia) (Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014). Therefore, initially, the parameters of what dyslexia was considered to be are very narrow; dyslexia was purely defined as a difficulty with reading acquisition, and it is this difficulty that causes difficulties with literacy acquisition. The second point of interest is that this frames dyslexia as something that is acquired as a result of a head injury or trauma. This is in opposition to the current focus of dyslexia research which sees dyslexia as developmental, whilst acknowledging the existence of acquired dyslexia.

The first research into developmental dyslexia was an article in 'The Lancet' by Morgan (1896). The

article was a single case study about a 14-year-old boy who could not learn to read despite outwardly appearing intelligent (based on the author and the participant's head teacher's opinion). The article concluded that the causes of the boy's difficulties were congenital word blindness and speculated that this was due to a brain defect (Morgan, 1896). What is of particular interest is that the author states that the participant's literacy skills did not improve despite input from tutors, which is a current criterion for determining dyslexia, and that the test used appears to be an early identifier of phonological processing skills.

The research again focuses on reading and identifies the problem as a visual problem located in the brain. Following on from Morgan, in 1925, Orton proposed a theory of how reading difficulties arose. His theory considered that dyslexia was related to dominance of one side of the brain: specifically, that the left hemisphere was not able to become dominant over the right (Hallahan and Mercer, 2001). This is the origin of a neuroscience approach to dyslexia. It was not until the 1930s, however, that learning difficulties were widely recognised, as a result of Strauss and Werner's findings on children with a wide range of learning difficulties (Kaufman, 2008). Their work specifically considered the wide variances of the problems and how they are manifested and foregrounded the need to assess people's particular educational needs individually, rather than looking for an overarching solution. Despite this research, it was not until the 1950s that specific reading difficulties were considered to not be a clinical issue in need of treatment by the medical profession. Thus, dyslexia as a recognised disability is a relatively modern phenomenon.

There is still a lack of consensus about dyslexia, and no one single assessment tool to determine if someone is dyslexic (Wagner, 2018). Further, there are a number of theories about the causes of dyslexia, including phonological processing, the cerebellar theory, and the magnocellular theory (Ramus, White and Frith, 2006), with no single theory being accepted as the cause of dyslexia. In addition to the causes of dyslexia being contested; equally, there is no one definition of dyslexia. Dyslexia has been considered to be a learning disability associated with reading and spelling acquisition. The British Psychological Society (1999) define it as,

*evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty, despite appropriate learning opportunities – that is learning opportunities which are effective for the great majority of children.*

Whilst this is an old definition, it is still employed today; for example, it is cited on the Dyslexia Action website (2022). The various definitions focus on a constellation of difficulties attributed to the label dyslexia, for example The British Dyslexia Association's definition (2007):

*Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be life-long in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities.*

This definition includes working memory in addition to difficulties with literacy development. Tellingly, it utilises the deficit model, stating that a comparison between other cognitive abilities can be used to identify dyslexia. In contrast, the Rose Report's (2009) definition of dyslexia focuses on a working definition and disputes the deficit model, arguing that there is no proven link between IQ and dyslexia.

*Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in fluent reading and spelling. Characteristics of dyslexia include difficulties with phonological awareness, verbal*

*memory and verbal processing speed. There is not thought to be a link between IQ and dyslexia, and it can be found across the range of disabilities.*

There is evidence to support the view that the discrepancy model is invalid. van Bergen *et al* (2014), Tanaka *et al* (2011) and Fletcher's (2012) research all find that the phonological deficit in dyslexia is independent of IQ; another issue is that neither of the definitions make reference to the impact of poor instruction on literacy acquisition. Snowling (2013:7) acknowledges that,

*it is now recognised that dyslexia occurs across the IQ spectrum, although it needs to be borne in mind that, in terms of reading comprehension, those with higher IQ are likely to do better.*

A current debate in dyslexia surrounds how dyslexia is defined and how this impacts on the label. A number of aspects of the definition have been problematized: that of a definition beyond that of literacy acquisition, lack of reference to impact of teaching, and how dyslexic students are differentiated from poor readers. Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) have argued that dyslexia is being used as an umbrella term to cover a number of diverse difficulties and that a number of different definitions are currently in use, rendering the term meaningless. They argue that there is no difference between dyslexia and other reading disabilities, and as such the term dyslexia is not necessary. This view is challenged by Macdonald (2010) whose findings were that people's experiences of dyslexia encompassed speech, memory, and organisation, as well as literacy. Macdonald points out that the anti-labelling position adopted by Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) does not take into account people's personal experiences and argues that there is both a neurological and social impact to dyslexia. This is supported by Cameron (2021) who argues that scientific insights into dyslexia should be considered alongside sociological understanding of how labels impact on people's lives. Further, as Danermark (2002:58) points out,

*Reading and writing abilities are very important in contemporary society. They are also a precondition for the dysfunction in the brain that produces inability to process a certain type of information, thus causing what we today label as dyslexia. Hence dyslexia is partly a socially determined phenomenon. We cannot speak of dyslexia in a society where the art of reading and writing is not developed. In that sense one could say that Gutenberg 'invented' dyslexia. However, this does not imply that dyslexia is just a social construction. Without the type of society we live in today and the dysfunction in the brain, there would be no dyslexia*

The definitions from the American Psychiatric Association and the International Classification of Diseases do not discuss characteristics, but rather on what is believed to be the underlying causes. The American Psychiatric Association state that

*the learning difficulties are not better accounted for by intellectual disabilities, uncorrected visual or auditory acuity, other mental or neurological disorders, psychosocial adversity, lack of proficiency in the language of academic instruction, or inadequate educational instruction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013:67).*

And:

*developmental dyslexia (under the name of specific reading disorder) is a specific and significant impairment in the development of reading skills that is not solely accounted for by mental age, visual acuity problems, or inadequate schooling (World Health Organization, 2011).*

Defining dyslexia is, therefore, problematic. Tunmer and Greaney (2010:239) argue that any definition should include four components:

- persistent literacy learning difficulties
- in otherwise typically developing children
- despite exposure to high quality, evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention,
- due to an impairment in the phonological processing skills required to learn to read and write.

One issue with this definition is that it situates dyslexia in the individual and does not include the lived experience of the student. Macdonald (2009b) states that there is a biological aspect to dyslexia but argues that discrimination is constructed via social organisation; this is not addressed in this definition. As such the definition is more in line with a medical model. The definition does, however, address the concern of Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) of dyslexia being an umbrella term and addresses concerns about reading difficulties being a result of poor teaching; therefore, for the purposes of this PhD, Tunmer and Greaney's (2010) definition of dyslexia, outline above, will be employed.

Dyslexia, therefore, is a contested concept, and this could contribute to dyslexia as a recognised disability in the UK being a relatively modern phenomenon. It was not until 1994 that the Department of Education officially recognised the existence of dyslexia (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2018). Indeed, whilst there was support for disabled students from 1986 (Wilson and Martin, 2017); dyslexic students were not eligible from this support, it was restricted to students with what was described as physical or mental impairments (Wilson and Martin, 2017). There is an argument that can be made that the medical model is employed in the field of dyslexia as a way to attempt to legitimise dyslexia as a disability. For example, students are given a battery of tests to determine whether they have dyslexia and how this is manifested. Whilst this has the patina of objectivity, the bestowing of a dyslexia label is contingent on the interpretation of the tests. Dyson and Kozleski (2008) point out that, because the identification of non- normative categories of disability such as dyslexia is dependent on professional judgement, the assessment could be subject to mistakes and discrimination. This is underscored by Macdonald (2013: 56)

*Unlike other impairments, which are diagnosed and 'treated' within a medical environment, people with dyslexia are diagnosed and supported entirely within an educational setting. According to the National Health Service, a parent who is concerned that their child might have dyslexia must contact a teacher (rather than a GP) who should refer the child to an educational psychologist*

The assessment for dyslexia is, therefore, medicalised, as evidenced in the language used such as 'diagnostic report', 'case history' and 'prevalence'. The discourse around disabled students, therefore, could be interpreted as deficit-focused, and situated in the individual, whilst at the same time, professionals in the field are proponents of the use of the social model of disability. Shakespeare (2004:5) highlights this tension, observing that "*many professionals and agencies profess allegiance to the SSM [social model] while continuing with business as usual.*" Further, Alexander-Passe (2015:263), points out that,

*mainstream education is centred on the 'medical model of disability', in that all individuals are taught the same curriculum, expected to attain to the same level, and if one is found to be unable to achieve this, interventions are given to overcome any deficiencies (in essence so they are fixed or cured).*

In the case of dyslexia, this intervention could be additional time, or tuition, with the end goal that the students are able to attain the same level as students without a disability. This process of assessing students to determine a disability acts to deflect attention away from the systemic and social factors that preserve existing social relations (Tomlinson, 1982) and undermine attempts to challenge power

inequalities and disadvantages (Sleeter, 2001). These diagnostic systems are utilised to give a sense of legitimacy to dyslexia as well as to provide an explanation of the students' needs; thus, the requirement of a dyslexia label is not inherent to a "condition" but is exercised against a backdrop of a cultural discourse of normalcy.

The first Act of legislation which protected the rights of dyslexic students was the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). The Act goes further than legislating against direct and indirect discrimination to provide in law that someone can take action if they have been disadvantaged by policy, criterion, or practice as a result of their disability. An example of this could be an institution's failure to provide a hearing loop, making a seminar room inaccessible to a deaf person. SENDA (Special Educational Needs and Disability Act) 2001, amended the Act to establish legal rights for disabled students in pre- and post-16 education, an area that was not encompassed in the DDA 1995. The Act provides that students with disabilities are not discriminated against in education, including higher education institutions. The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) amended the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act to include a new statutory duty on public bodies including universities to promote equality of opportunity for people with a disability. In practice, it made it unlawful for general qualification awarding bodies to discriminate against disabled people.

The Equality Act (2010) extended and strengthened the existing legislation. It also put the disability into minority categories, with the intention of giving it as much attention as forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism. As Solanke (2011) points out, this results in a system of single dimension 'silos' through which complainants of discrimination are required to present their case in order to seek a remedy. In doing so, it fails to account for intersectionality and develop a more holistic approach to discrimination. The key difference from previous legislation is that it provided that institutions must not treat disabled students less favourably, and that in some cases students with disabilities should be treated more favourably. Further, institutions are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure a student is not placed at a disadvantage because of their disability. A reasonable adjustment can be defined as an accommodation or alteration to academic programmes, if necessary, to ensure students have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities (Equality Act, 2010). The adjustments, therefore, are intended to allow the students to reach their potential, whilst meeting academic requirements; however, what is considered 'reasonable' is contested, resulting in different institutions interpreting reasonable adjustments differently and thus resulting in uneven adjustments. Access to dyslexia tutorials is considered to be a reasonable adjustment, students are not guaranteed access to these tutorials, the tutorials need to be recommended as a reasonable adjustment by a qualified needs assessor. In order to access support, students, therefore, are required to prove their disability through undertaking assessments and disclosing personal information. Kerschbaum (2014) describes this as making previously private spaces public; once a disclosure has been made, the student loses some control over what information remains private, it becomes part of learning plans and records which are shared among university professionals such as tutors and disability advisors. Mingus (2017) in her blog post on leaving evidence, describes this requirement for people to disclose information as forced intimacy. Forced intimacy is when disabled people are "*expected to share (very) personal information with able bodied people to get basic access.*" This forced intimacy requires disabled students to prove their disability and to make themselves vulnerable, disclosing often painful information about their past in order to access the dyslexia tutorial space and gain access to tutorial support. The tutor, meanwhile, is not required to make any disclosures, thus moving away from a mutual understanding, and further shifting the power dynamic in favour of the tutor. The power dynamic will be considered in section 2.8. Dyslexia students are required to tell their stories to a number of professionals in order to access reasonable adjustments and are required to prove that they are disabled enough to meet the criteria to be eligible for support, thus, as discussed in the context section, the label of dyslexia is granted by a professional, as opposed to being a self-identification, thus utilising the medical model. As Mingus



(2017) puts it in her blog post, “*People are allowed to ask me intrusive questions about my body, make me “prove” my disability or expect me to share with them every aspect of my accessibility needs.*” This is discussed in Abes and Wallace (2018) who argue that a dependence on university support acts to silence disabled students’ voices. They claim that whilst disabled students recognise the ableist control over their stories, the oppressions they experience make it difficult to directly challenge this control.

Thus, as Solanke points out (2011), the legislation locates disability in the individual, shifting the focus onto the individual student and away from structural inequalities. Legal protections and reasonable adjustments, therefore, individualise disability (Davis, 2002). Lightman *et al* (2009) found that people with, what they described as, episodic disabilities were frequently required to prove that they were disabled enough to receive assistance, exploring how disability is constructed in legislation and whether this influenced people’s embodiment of disability. While these protections and adjustments may make individual lives more survivable, they do not challenge both disabling neoliberal environments and their global effects. There is, therefore, an argument that legislation surrounding disability is predicated on the medical model of disability. It is through this legislation that policies and procedures in relation to disability in higher education are developed and implemented. The legislation aimed to shift the focus of discrimination away from physical barriers, such as ramps and towards the consideration of learning barriers in teaching learning and assessment (Fuller *et al*, 2009). Whilst this enshrines the rights of students with disabilities, it medicalises disability by framing it as something in need of special treatment. From a disability studies perspective, this could be described as structural violence, as it encourages a concept of normality; those deviating from this normality receive adjustments in order to be assimilated; equally, it sees societal barriers as having only one dimension, with the assumption that once this barrier is removed/reduced societal disablism is also removed/reduced (Baber, 2017). Medicalisation in this sense refers to the dominant discourses of disability, which derives from a medical sphere of thought and is based on curing or reducing symptoms of the impairment. Lehane (2017), for example, found that the legislation does not make mention of pedagogy, models of teaching, or inclusive practice, but rather on reasonable adjustments for individual students such as access to dyslexia tutorials, or extra time in exams, thus linking to ableism (as discussed in section 2.4). Peña (2014) points out that such accommodations grant access to ableist institutions and therefore perpetuate rather than challenge ableism. This discourse is evident in the policy surrounding disabled students in higher education.

The focus on deficit and medicalisation has three possible implications. The first is that it could perpetuate the single story of a disabled student. The single story is described by Adichie (2009) as reducing a person or an experience to a single narrative. There is a danger that students are viewed in terms of their disability and, although other aspects of their lives are considered, this is often interpreted through the lens of disability. The second is the restriction of additional resources to those students deemed ‘disabled enough’ to need them, creating an arbitrary cut off point of disabled enough/not disabled enough. The third is forced intimacy, discussed above (Mingus, 2017).

There is an argument that current models of disability are largely based around physical disabilities (Alexander-Passe, 2015). As specific learning disabilities are not based on physical barriers, this can be seen as a hierarchy of disability, both amongst disability groups and in society, as there is a perception of what disability looks like and does not look like (Reeve, 2002). The consequence of this is that people without physical impairments are required to make decisions on whether to disclose their disability and to whom they disclose their disability. This is described by Valeras (2010) as a situation where, unapparent to the unknowing observer, a person with a hidden disability can assume a number of different identities and make daily decisions about which identity to embody, in the awareness that they have to negotiate disclosing a disability or give society the impression of being able bodied. Equally, Wendell (2001), in relation to illness, discusses this ability to pass as non-disabled. Wendell recognises

that an ability to pass allows people to avoid the discrimination and prejudice; however, it can create a paradigm where the person passing fears being accused of seeking special treatment, and that their disability is not recognised as a real disability. She references the politics of resentment, in which people question whether someone is really disabled or is exaggerating their disability, because they do not fit the image of what disability should look like. Indeed, Blankfield (2001) found that many dyslexic people did not perceive themselves as being disabled; equally, Cavet's (1998) research findings were that people who had a hidden disability would both limit people's knowledge of the existence and impact of the disability and also would frequently not consider themselves to have a disability and thus not assume a disabled identity. Shakespeare (1996:99) underscores the importance of identity, "*identity [...] connects the social and the personal and involves the individual putting themselves in a collective context.*" Further, whilst Watson (2002:534) found that many disabled people did not assume a disabled identity, this was in terms of them "*not claiming an identity based on impairment*", rather than a denial or minimization of impairment. The implications of a lack of a disabled identity include legal ramifications. Pearson and Watson (2007) found that many disabled people did not think that they were eligible for legal protection under disability equality legislation, with disability frequently defined as being a physical or sensory impairment.

Valeras (2010) identified a number of concerns in her research with young people who had a hidden disability. Namely, the people in the study did not feel they fit into the label of disabled, feeling that they were in the middle in that sometimes they felt disabled and sometimes less so. Thus, they viewed disabled as permanent and unchanging. As Calder-Dawe *et al* (2020) discussed, perceptions of disability are often binarized as disabled and non-disabled, and Valeras (2010) points out that a conceptualisation of ability and disability as a continuum is not currently supported by either the disability community or non-disabled people. She describes this as bi-ability; people with a hidden disability negotiate the liminal in-between space in between disabled and non-disabled. This tendency of students with dyslexia to not assume a disabled identity is reinforced by the changing language of dyslexia, as discussed in section 2.4. Whilst this was an attempt to recognise diversity in learning, it fails to recognise the structural oppression that is faced by dyslexic students. A possible implication of this minimisation and lack of a disabled identity is that students may feel that they are not entitled to additional support and that they internalise the difficulties they are having in their course. For example, Dale and Aiken (2007) found in their research that dyslexic nurses try to conceal their difficulties. This is supported by Morris and Turnbull (2006); they also found that the student nurses hid their dyslexia, especially in a clinical setting. Thus, rather than the reframing of disability as difference being empowering for students it has the effect of reinforcing the structural oppression that it is trying to resist.

In summary, this section has outlined the contestations of dyslexia in terms of causes of dyslexia, definitions of dyslexia and the impact this has on dyslexic students, for example the adoption or otherwise of a disabled identity. In particular, Valeras' (2010) research on hidden disability has revealed the tensions around bi-ability and the issues around liminal spaces and disclosure of disability. The next section will move on from conceptualisations of dyslexia to focus on the dyslexia tutorial, considering elements such as literacy models and positioning of tutorials.

## 2.8 The Dyslexia Tutorial

The above sections have considered conceptualisations of dyslexia and how this impacts on the experience of dyslexic students in higher education. This final section will focus on the dyslexia tutorial itself. It will begin with a discussion of academic literacy models and then move on to an exploration of how tutorials are positioned in the university, before considering outcomes arising from participating in the session, such as developing skills etc. Whilst there is literature around dyslexic students in higher education, there is little literature on the dyslexia tutorial itself. For example, Pino and Mortari's (2014) systematic review of papers reviewing the inclusion of dyslexic students in higher education did not refer to tutorials. More recently Jacobs *et al's* (2022) study about the experience of dyslexic students' experiences, devoted only two sentences to one-to-one tutorials, despite the tutorial being identified as a key element of support:

*Two participants in this study received specialist one-to-one study skills support with a tutor every week. With respect to receiving a tutor, Millie said that 'this extra bit of support I get, I find is invaluable (Jacobs et al, 2022:17).*

This section, therefore, leans heavily on research on other forms of one-to-one teaching, such as writing centres.

There are a number of academic literacy models and approaches that are utilised in writing centres. Lea and Street (1998) have highlighted three main approaches to academic literacy. They (1998:157) define academic literacy practices as *"reading and writing within disciplines-constitute central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study."* The first approach considers academic literacy to be a skills set model, in which students can independently acquire a set of writing skills that are considered to be necessary to achieve success in academic communities (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The emphasis, therefore, is on developing the student's knowledge and use of structural elements of writing, such as syntax, grammar and essay structure. This is predicated on a deficit model in which students are lacking academic writing skills, which is fixed by the students attending writing skills workshops and tutorials and could conform to Freire's banking model of education (1970). In this way their writing is decontextualized, with academic literacy being a bolt on skill to be acquired alongside other skills, as opposed to the skills being viewed as a discourse between the student and the course.

There is some evidence that an emphasis on study skills can have a positive impact on student attainment. Gettinger and Seibert (2002:350) found that *"effective study skills are associated with positive outcomes across multiple academic content areas and for diverse learners."* This indicates that this approach could potentially be useful for dyslexic students. They divided study skills into four areas: repetition-based skills, procedural study skills, cognitive-based study skills, and metacognitive skills. A detailed reading of the paper highlights that academic writing is not specifically mentioned under any of the above areas, rather, the paper frames study skills in terms of information processing, organising learning, and the development of strategies. There are a number of articles criticising the skills approach. Wingate (2012:3), for example, argues that *"academic writing support at many UK universities has remained remedial, extra-curricular and divisive"*, and Burke (2008:200) goes further, stating:

*Individuals do not simply learn the 'right' skills and then use them to produce writing [...] Writing is deeply enmeshed in wider power relations that construct the 'author' [...] Writers are socially situated subjects and the meanings they produce through their writing are constituted through*

*the contested and multiple discourses at play in different social fields [...] What counts as 'knowledge' in different higher education contexts? Who can be recognised as a legitimate 'knower'?*

Equally, as Dobrin (1999) argues, from a critical pedagogy lens, such an approach could be oppressive because it reduces students' agency by utilising defined processes, for example writing and drafting, and as such imposes a singular academic writing perspective on the students. An alternative model is considering academic literacy to be academic socialisation, whereby students are introduced to a new culture, that of academia. According to Lea and Street (1998) this was developed in response to the criticisms of the skills model approach. This approach focuses on how students approach an assignment and argues that writing is a transparent medium of representation (Lea and Street, 2006). French (2010) for example argues that writing and writing development in higher education, can be viewed more productively as a social and communal practice rather than the acquisition of a set of individual attributes or skills. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) would support this approach. They criticise the separation of skills and academic development, arguing some skills courses are little more than tips and techniques for passing examinations, and, therefore, surviving the system rather than developing the skills of learning needed to engage with studies. Wingate (2006) also points out the shortcomings of this standpoint, because the implication is that study skills are just a means to an end that of succeeding at university, as opposed to being valuable skills in themselves. In this model, the role of the tutor is to introduce students into an academic culture, and from this the students are expected to develop interpretation of learning tasks, through conceptualisation, for instance, of a distinction between 'deep', 'surface' and 'strategic' approaches to learning (Marton *et al*, 1997). According to Lea and Street (2006:369), this model makes the following assumption:

*The academic socialisation model presumes that the disciplinary discourses and genres are relatively stable and, once students have learned and understood the ground rules of a particular academic discourse, they are able to reproduce it unproblematically.*

They further argue that the academic socialisation model is associated with the growth in constructivism. The model situates learning in organising frames, and draws upon the fields of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and genre theory.

There are a number of criticisms of this model. Firstly, the model appears to consider academia as being a homogeneous culture, throughout higher education, and may not, therefore, consider some of the nuances and differences in culture across different departments. For example, in one university the engineering and English departments may have different academic literacy practices. Secondly, the approach appears to assume that by engaging with these cultures, students will automatically improve their writing; equally, Hounsell and Taylor *et al*, (cited in Lea and Street, 1998:158), state that,

*despite the fact that contextual factors in student writing are recognised as important; this approach tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning.*

The final model is the academic literacies model, which is described by Lea and Street (2006:369) as being, "*concerned with meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context.*" Here, students recognise and negotiate differing and often conflicting literacy practices. An example of this would be a student being required to utilise different literacy practices to write a laboratory report, compared to writing a reflective account. This recognises that the development of academic writing goes beyond skills to decode and encode text, requiring the development of an insight into plural and diverse literacy

practices (Archer, 2006).

The academic literacies approach differs from the academic socialisation model in that it recognises that students are not acculturated into the academic culture through engaging with the discourses of their chosen subject, rather as Lea (2004:1) argues, *“students are active participants in the process of meaning-making in the academy, and central to this process are issues concerned with language, identity and the contested nature of knowledge.”* In essence, the academic literacies model is a development of both the skills and academic socialisation models, with an additional emphasis on the issues surrounding power, authority, meaning making, and identity that students will encounter within literacy practices in an academic setting (Lea and Street, 2006). As such, this aligns with critical pedagogy in that it recognises structural power and authority. The role of the tutor, therefore, is to introduce students into an academic culture from which students can start to develop their interpretation of learning tasks, through conceptualisation (Marton *et al*, 1997). The academic literacies model is likely to be the one employed in dyslexia tutorials. In the tutorial, in addition to supporting the student in engaging with the department’s discourse, the tutor is also supporting the student to engage with different discourse practices.

Part of the role of the tutor in the dyslexia tutorial, therefore, is to have a conversation about the student’s work, from writer to writer, with neither praise nor criticism, but rather questions which prompts further thinking, re-drafting, and refining (Murray, 1979). Thus, it could be the case that the teacher identity in a one-to-one tutorial differs from the identity of a teacher in a traditional classroom setting. Indeed, according to Reeve, from a sociocultural perspective, teacher identity is constructed in relation to others, including other teachers and students (Reeve, 2009). The development of a teacher identity is considered by Sachs (2005:15) to be at the core of the teaching profession.

*It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience.*

Hsieh (2010) identified three ways in which teacher identity was developed in an early career. The first is individual factors such as personal experiences as students and pre-professional teaching experiences. The second factors are practice-based or classroom-related such as curriculum, schemes of work and subject content. Finally, the third type was external discourses related to teaching and learning, for example learning theories, policies, and models/codes of practice. In the case of teachers who undertake both one to one sessions and classroom led teaching, it is possible that the identity shifts according to the environment. Another factor in developing a teacher identity could be the interaction with the space within which the teaching occurs. This is described by Taylor (1989) as territoriality, in which space can be changed and adapted to reflect preferences, and by doing so be a visual representation of identity.

Student academic identity, in contrast, has been described as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community (White and Lowenthal, 2011). As such, academic identity is an important aspect of becoming academically literate. White and Lowenthal (2021) describe student academic identity as consisting of five elements: self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation, and dispositions. There is limited research presenting a holistic view of the phenomenon examining all of these five elements. Carey and Grant (2015:5) identified four key themes in successful one to ones: *“customising teaching to the learner, the teacher–student relationship, negotiating issues of student dependency versus self-sufficiency, and situating one-to-one in a broader institutional context.”* The

dyslexia tutorial aims to support the students to develop in all of these areas, working to support a student to develop a student academic identity, through the relationship between the student and tutor, and through the practices in the session such as developing authorial authority and developing critical thinking. Kahu and Picton (2019) also found that teacher-student relationships are an important influence on the student's learning experience and that these relationships have academic and affective dimensions. Hulme, Cracknell and Owens (2009) have suggested a framework for working within the third space, considering three modes of learning; a recognised space where students and tutors negotiate their learning and teaching, an excursion space where the space is used to travel, for example learning activities such as role play, drama and dialogues, and finally, a transmission space where ideas are exchanged.

Tang (2009) argues that authority is a crucial element of academic writing. Indeed, Starfield (2002:121) states that it is vital for students to develop a "*powerful, authoritative, textual and discursive identity*", in order to be successful writers. This aligns with the academic literacies model in which, Lea (2004:1) argues,

*students are active participants in the process of meaning-making in the academy, and central to this process are issues concerned with language, identity and the contested nature of knowledge.*" The student, therefore, "*gains credibility by, projecting an identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their idea* (Hyland, 2002: 1091).

Thus, as the focus of the session shifts towards the process of development via developing authorial authority and critical thinking, amongst other attributes, this helps to shift power from the tutor to the student. Consequently, this shifts the identity of the tutor to that of a facilitator of the process as opposed to taking a more directive approach, thus demonstrating the horizontal approach to teaching (Freire, 1970). This situating of the student as an expert is also considered by Hubbuch (1988). She considers a tutor's subject expertise to be a two-edged sword, whilst the tutor is able to provide the student with technical information about the writing conventions of a discipline and evaluate the quality of writing, this both can impact on the student's development as a writer and set an authoritative tone, where writing is framed as a series of rights and wrongs. This demonstrates a potential issue in dyslexia tutorials in that the process of teaching academic writing authority is ceded to the tutor. In contrast, a tutor without subject expertise shifts the responsibility for the paper to the student, focusing instead on the process of writing. Again, she reiterates Murray's point of the tutor as a fellow enquirer.

The tutorials, therefore, could provide a space to explore both literacy practices and to negotiate learning. Archer (2008) interviewed 40 first year students about their perceptions of a writing centre and its influence on their writing. The conclusions are that students view writing centres as not just a way to develop bolt-on writing skills, but rather that students recognised that they "*became more adept at negotiating the epistemology of a subject*" (Archer, 2008:221) and in developing their academic voice. Thus, students engaged with the academic literacy practices of academic writing, in terms of their recognition of the need to engage with the discourse of their department, whilst equally developing as independent thinkers through their writing. Archer describes this as the writing centre validating the students' voice and by doing so ensuring the complex reciprocal conversation about knowledge is considered alongside the grading of essays. This opportunity to develop writing practices without worrying about grades is also referenced by Wingate (2001:10): "*At the Writing Center, we get the chance to stretch our minds without competition for grades.*" This demonstrates that there is some evidence in the literature to support the assertion that dyslexia tutorials provide a third space which supports the transformation of knowledge. Lubicz-Nawrocka (2019:37) describes this as a third space in which there develops, "*a cosmopolitan learning environment in which students and staff bring different*

*forms of expertise.*” This is described by Potter and McDougall (2017) as the third space of porous expertise. Equally, Grasha (2002) found that one to one teaching resulted in the development of different teaching practices from more formal teaching practices. He found that teaching styles are influenced by students’ learning needs with the teaching styles such as the personal model, facilitator, and delegator being used with greater frequency than in classroom teaching, with the expert and formal authority styles less likely to be used. Britzman (2003) conceptualises this as the sessions providing both a navigational space which allows for the exploration of different discourse and knowledge and a conversational space in which change occurs as knowledge and discourses are contested, debated and drawn together. Further, Juel (1996) found that one to one teaching had a positive impact on the attitudes of both the learners and the tutors. Trimbur (1987) argues, the tutors' roles shift throughout the session. Bereiter and Scardamalia, (1987) describe this as shifting from knowledge telling towards knowledge transforming.

There are, however, controls and structures imposed on activities in the third space. Malcolm *et al* (2003:303) point out that the use of learning plans, target setting and use of reviews points to an attempt to take the tutorial from a liminal space and into a more prescribed space, describing this as, *“formalising the informal – for example through externally prescribed objectives, curriculum structures, assessments and funding.”* The dyslexia tutorials are required to create auditable ILPs and adhere to the key principles of the professional body. Nevertheless, the third space is seen by North (1984) as key to preventing writing centres becoming a fix it shop for academic writing.

Wingate (2001) argues that academic writing centres can be situated as sites of academic culture and a space for students to transform knowledge through challenging the dominant university discourse. Archer and Richards (2011) support this, arguing that writing centres and writing specialists can help raise questions about the hidden curriculum of higher education. Wingate acknowledges, however, Grimm’s assertion that writing centres could instead act as a force that maintains the dominant discourse, as opposed to challenging it. By this, Grimm (1999:108) suggests that writing centres act to neutralise difference and to shape students into the university’s discourse, rather than, *“Hold[ing] ourselves responsible for changing the cultural practices, the institutional conditions, the unconscious habits that contribute to structural oppression”*. This is described by Carter (2009) as the writing centre paradox. She acknowledges the tension between equality and plurality that exists in writing centres. That is the centres represent the student, not the teacher, but equally they represent the system not the student, and therefore the centres are at the centre of a power nexus where both the students’ individual expression and the literacy discourse demands of the higher education institution are represented. Thus, the role of the tutorial is to ensure that the student conforms to the academic requirements of their department, and as such disciplinary power is exerted (Foucault, cited in Hoffman, 2014).

This links into materialism, whereby individuals are recognised according to their ability to produce (Gleeson, 1997). Gleeson argues that there was a change in the status of disabled people after the industrial revolution in that disabled people were no longer seen as a productive part of the workforce. The case could be made that these ideas about productive bodies are still present today; with the addition of knowledge-based productivity being valued as well as manual productivity. Universities aim to produce students who are of value to the economy and this forms part of the status of the university. Indeed, Lawrence and Sharma (2002) argue that universities have been reconceptualised on an economic model, adopting management techniques more commonly used in business, such as total quality management and balanced scorecard. As part of this commodification, space is seen as a resource to be used as efficiently as possible, rather than as a designated space for a particular teaching practice. This links to Lefebvre’s (1991) production of space in which he considers the impact of the design of the space.

## 2.9 Summary of Context

In summary, therefore, there are a number of structures influencing the context within which the dyslexia tutorial operates. These structures include historical concepts of ability and disability; models of disability, such as the medical model and social model; conceptualisations of dyslexia; and the teaching model employed in dyslexia tutorials. My research will consider how these structures influence the students' and tutors' experiences of the dyslexia tutorial space. Specifically, it will help me to explore how students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space; how tutorials are navigated, and the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey.

## 2.10 Summary of Literature Review

The dyslexia tutorial is a space that is only accessible to dyslexic students and dyslexia tutors; equally, many universities do not have an in-house dyslexia service, but rather outsource this to agencies. As such, the tutorials could be perceived to be on the periphery of the university. This research aims to critically reflect on the experience of the inhabitants of this space, and to make visible both the dyslexia tutorial space and the structural influences on the space. Utilising critical pedagogy of space informed by disability studies, through a critical realism framework will enable me to unpack the marginalising discourses and the related regimes of practices that are embedded in the dyslexia tutorial. For example, it will enable a critical exploration of the tutor student relationship and the structures that influence this relationship, such as requirements of the department. Critical discourses, such as critical pedagogy are essential to disability studies because no single theory or discipline can handle both the complexity and scope of disability (Sleeter, 2010). Dyslexia is a hidden disability and, as such, many people feel ambivalent about applying the label disability and the associated reasonable adjustments. Equally, students are required to make decisions about the disclosure of disability and often to prove their entitlement to disability based reasonable adjustments. This supports the case for a framework encompassing both pedagogy of space and disability studies, as this will enable the structural influences of the space and the influence of concepts such as ableism to be considered when reflecting on the experience of tutors and students. An example of this is the separation of the tutorial space from the students' department, and how this influences students' experiences of the space. Specifically, a critical pedagogy of space (Morgan, 2000) and critical disabilities studies perspective (Kitchin, 1998) will allow a critical consideration of the construction of spatiality of the dyslexia tutorial, which is a space only accessed by dyslexia tutors and dyslexic students and an exploration of how students and tutors experience the space.

In terms of the conceptualisation of dyslexia, the causes of dyslexia are poorly understood, and its impact is contested. Equally, how it is diagnosed is also far from standardised, with no one universally accepted test for dyslexia. Indeed, Riddell and Weedon (2006:63) describe dyslexia as *"the product of historically contingent social constructions that grew out of the development of the educational psychology profession"* and that there is no current scientific consensus about the causes and definition. Thus, dyslexia exists within a contested space. Elliott and Gibbs (2008), for example, argue that dyslexia as a socially defined construct with no clear-cut scientific basis for determining a difference between dyslexia and low literacy skills. They make the contentious point that a dyslexia label can be a convenience, but that consequences include stigma, disenfranchisement and a gatekeeping of resources. In contrast, there is the concept of dyslexia as having a neurodiverse profile, in which there are a number of cognitive indicators of dyslexia, beyond reading and writing acquisition, for example memory working memory, processing speed, attention, organisation (Asghar, Williams, Denney, and



Siriwardena, 2019).

In addition to there being different conceptualisations around dyslexia, there are a number of teaching models advocated in teaching in the field of academic skills in higher education. The academic literacies model would appear to be the most suitable model for supporting dyslexic higher education students in developing academic writing. This model has the flexibility to incorporate different learning frameworks such as a genre-based approach, multi modalities, and systemic functional linguistics, and acknowledges the importance of engaging with the discourse of the course and responding to different literacy practices. Wingate (2012), for example, argues that the academic literacies model can support students in developing critical awareness, in addition to improving academic writing. Equally, whilst social model discourse is prevalent in the field of dyslexia in higher education, there is evidence that the medical model of disability is a key part of both the assessment of dyslexia and the gatekeeping of resources. This is relevant to my PhD as it underpins the experience that dyslexic students have in terms of stigma, issues around hidden disabilities and the discourse around dyslexia.

A key gap in the literature is around the dyslexia tutorial. Whilst there is literature about writing centres and other one-to-one tutorials such as personal tutorials, literature around dyslexia primarily focuses on problematising the causes and scope of dyslexia, and the impact of dyslexia on learning outcomes, as opposed to the dyslexia tutorial itself. Another gap in literature is in terms of how students and tutors experience in the tutorials; the literature tends to focus on the processes and outcomes of the sessions, rather than considering how they are experienced. This PhD will move on from a process and outcomes focus to explore how students and tutors experience the dyslexia tutorial, whilst considering the underpinning structures that influence both the space and the tutors' and students' interactions with the space.

# Chapter Three, Methodology

*With our thoughts we make the world (Godiego,1978)*

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research design that was developed to address the research questions. It will explain the reasons for the methods' selection in order to *"answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible"* (De Vaus, 2001:9). The research questions are:

- How do students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space? Do they experience it as a space outside the university, or of it, or both?
- How are the tutorials navigated by students and tutors, in terms of power dynamics, negotiation and resistance?
- What is the influence of the space on the tutors and students' journey?

The aim of these questions is to consider how both dyslexic students and dyslexia tutors experience the dyslexia tutorial.

The methodology chapter will begin with a consideration of my positionality. Maher and Tetreault (1994:164) define positionality as a term used to define people, *"not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analysed and changed."* I have considered my positionality in terms of disability, research positionality and teaching role. I then move on to ontology. Ontology has been described as ways of constructing reality in terms of how things actually are and how things work (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). It is vital that a researcher considers their ontological position, as this will inform epistemological assumptions, and, ultimately, methodological standpoints. Grix (2004:68) states that ontology:

*Set [s] out clearly the relationship between what a researcher thinks can be researched (ontological position) linking it to what we can know about it (epistemological position) and how to go about acquiring it (methodological approach), you can begin to comprehend the impact your ontological position can have on what and how you decide to study.*

In an education research context ontology is, therefore, the philosophical study of the nature of reality in an educational setting and how there may be different perceptions of what is known. Within the field of social science, ontology can be broadly divided into two schools of thought, idealism and realism. Idealism asserts that reality is socially constructed and mind dependent; it is knowable only through the mind, and there is no external reality; world and knowledge created by social and contextual understanding. In contrast, realism asserts that there is an external reality which exists separately from people's beliefs or understanding. Within these two schools of thought, there are different positions, and the position taken will be influenced by the positionality of the researcher (Ritchie et al, 2013). Realism holds that "reality here refers to whatever it is in the universe (i.e., forces, structures, and so on) that causes the phenomena we perceive with our senses" (Schwandt, 1997:133). Reality is considered by realists to be ontologically

independent of interpretation, for example, through ideology, or linguistic practices. There are two main principles of realism. Firstly, realism considers existence, for example, rocks, mountains, and rivers all exist, as do mathematical facts, such as  $2+2=4$ . Secondly, is the concept of independence, for example the fact that  $2+2=4$  is independent of a person's perspective or ideology (Miller, 2014).

I take an approach where I acknowledge the existence of an external existence, whilst believing that the experience of the reality of this existence is constructed. I have, therefore, adopted a critical realism ontology. Critical realists accept an objective existence, whilst believing that this is not sufficient to understand reality (Bhaskar 1975). Taylor (2018:217) describes this as "a philosophy that defines an objective reality that exists independently of individual perception, but also recognises the role that individual subjective interpretation plays in defining reality." This provided me the framework to consider both how the experience of the tutorial is constructed and co-constructed, whilst exploring the constructed structural influences on meaning making in the dyslexia tutorial. Further, critical realism aligns with my theoretical framework of critical pedagogy of space as it seeks to make visible structures that influence how people experience reality, and to explore the origins and impacts of these structures. This is explored by Braa and Callero (2006:359) who argue that advocates of critical pedagogy reject empiricist, positivist, and post-modern approaches in favour of a critical realist paradigm where scholars pursue research that includes praxis as the basis of science and emancipatory knowledge. Further, Bhaskar (Cited in Braa and Callero, 2006:359) makes the point that, "critical realists argue for an understanding of the relationship between structures and human agency that is based on a transformational conception of social activity."

The chapter will then consider my epistemology; epistemology can be defined as "the nature of the relationship between the knower, or would-be knower and what can be known" (Guba and Lincoln, 1998:201). It has been further defined by Crotty (1998:3) as the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology. The study of epistemology focuses on our means for acquiring knowledge and how we determine what constitutes knowledge, and how we determine the true from the false. Current epistemology could be broadly described as a debate between knowledge through reason (rationalism), and knowledge through experiential learning (empiricism) (Audi 2010). Epistemology and ontology are closely aligned and need to be in agreement. A particular ontological stance implies a particular epistemological stance and vice versa (Crotty, 1998). Further,

*it is vital to recognise that both ontology and epistemology are mainly based on the researchers' beliefs and personal persuasion about the conception of the world and have certain methodological consequences. (Hay, 2002: 61).*

My epistemological position is a constructivist approach, where meaning is constructed, co-constructed and reconstructed in relation to other actors/structures. This aligns with a critical realism ontology as constructivism does not reject that an independent object world exists, but rather focuses on the experiences and perceptions that individuals have developed about the world that they inhabit (Taylor, 2018). Within this framework, the research methodology will be naturalistic inquiry, whereby it is acknowledged that the inquiry is value bound to the interpretations of the researcher in their aim, and that themes cannot be determined a priori, but rather emerge through the research process. The methods, therefore, will reflect this. I am using in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall observations. These will be analysed using framework analysis, a form of thematic analysis. Finally, ethical issues have been considered. This includes a consideration of procedural ethics, ethics in practice and reflexivity.

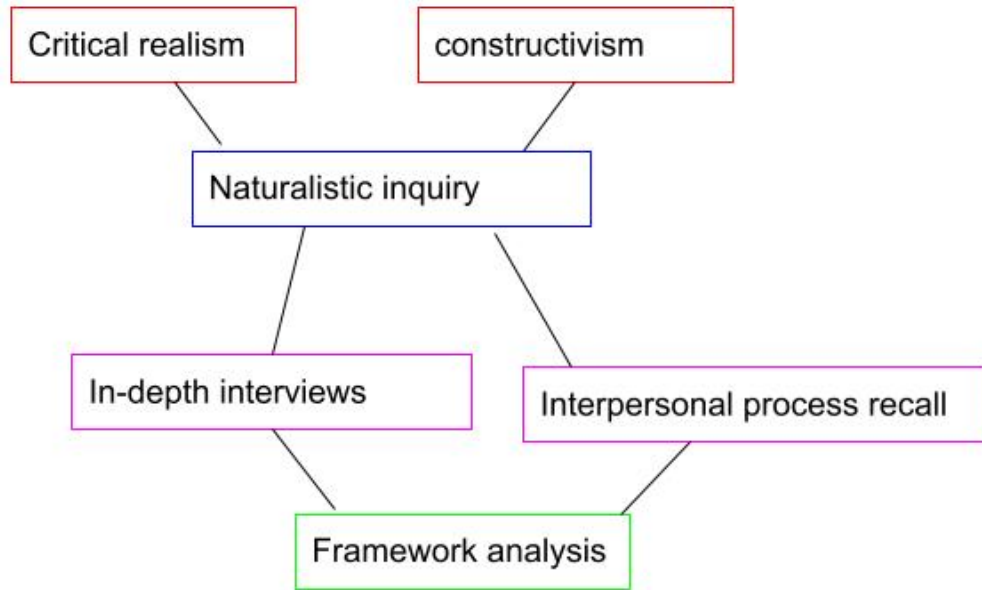


Figure 5, flowchart of my framework

## 3.2 Positionality

When undertaking research, it is vital to consider positionality as our positionality influences both how research is carried out and how data is interpreted and discussed (Given, 2008). Positionality can be defined as the *'fact that a researcher's social, cultural and subject positions (and other psychological processes) affect: the questions they ask [and] how they frame them'* (Gregory et al, 2011:556).

This includes an exploration of,

- relations with those they research in the field or through interviews [and] interpretations they place on empirical evidence
- access to data, institutions and outlets for research dissemination; and
- the likelihood that they will be listened to and heard (Gregory et al 2011:556).

I am going to consider my positionality in relation to SpLDs, my research positionality and my teaching role.

Whilst I have had, on the whole, a positive learning experience, I have experienced difficulties in some areas. I have many of the indicators of dyscalculia, although, I do not have enough of the indicators to be considered dyscalculic, according to the screener. This gives me some insight into the need to be 'disabled enough' in order to get support, echoing the experience of students who are required to prove that they have the right amount of SpLD/dyslexia to qualify for support. Equally, it gives me an insight into hidden disabilities such as negotiating the label of disability and issues around disclosure and identity. I also have

prosopagnosia, which can cause difficulties in a teaching and working situation, as I find it difficult to remember people's faces until I know them very well. This gives me some insight into a disability that is not well understood and can cause issues with interpersonal relationships. Equally, I have three family members who have dyslexia, and who often call upon me to proofread documents for him. In terms of positionality, this could be a positive, as I will not be viewing dyslexia solely through the prism of my own experience; however, equally, in terms of my student participants, it reinforces my outsider status and reinforces a research on, as opposed to research with positionality. An insider would be a researcher who belongs to the group to which their participants also belong, while an outsider would not be a member of that group (Gair, 2012). It is important that I am aware of the risk of othering student participants and the possibility of seeing them as a homogenous group, as opposed to individuals experiencing multiple realities within a shared experience. The next section will consider my positionality as a researcher.

The research is based in the field in which I work: a higher education institution. I have worked in higher education since 2009, prior to this, I was a teacher in further education, working primarily as a literacy tutor. Consequently, my fieldwork took place in a setting with which I have some familiarity, that of the tutorial, whilst acknowledging that there are diverse settings, such as freelancing, that I have not experienced. As a consequence, I am likely to have developed a number of preconceptions about the tutorial space that I am not aware of, but that nevertheless colour my perceptions. One preconception that I have become aware of is that I have considered in-house tutorials to be the ideal model for dyslexia tutorials and this may colour my perceptions of external agencies. Further to this, my familiarity with the field will require me to consider dynamics of to what extent I am an insider or outsider researcher as I am both a dyslexia tutor and a researcher. This issue is considered by Dwyer and Buckle (2009:61), who suggest that researchers explore notions of occupying the space between the insider and outsider in qualitative research, stating that,

*as qualitative researchers we are not separate from the study [...]we are firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it. The voices of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals with us as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting.*

This is particularly pertinent to my position as being a tutor at the university gives me an insight into dyslexia tutorials from a tutor perspective, whilst, at the same time, I am not part of the population of the student participants. A further consideration regarding insider-outsider status is that my role at the university is not just as a staff member. I have a second role: that of a PhD student undertaking research. Thus, within the research I am assuming two identities. This became an issue during my interviews. The tutors would often talk to me as another tutor, assuming insider knowledge of the profession and referring to ongoing issues in the field. This is an issue from an ethics basis as my role is to research their experiences rather than engage in professional conversations. To address this, I would reiterate my role as a researcher, whilst acknowledging that I had insider knowledge of the field. Thus, whilst there is an argument that I am, to some extent, an insider researcher, I would position myself as an outsider researcher. I am working from a position of power and this power imbalance precludes me from being an insider researcher. I have used the naturalistic inquiry framework of different levels of research participation in order to identify my position. This is discussed in the naturalistic inquiry section.

In summary, using Savin-Baden and Major's (2013) framework, there are three primary ways that my positionality impacts my research. Firstly, by locating myself in my research and recognising that my position influenced the research. In particular, my current role as an dyslexia tutor impacted how I related to both the student and tutor participants. This potentially resulted in tutors being more candid in the interviews as they viewed me as an insider; conversely, when interviewing students, my knowledge of the tutorial potentially influenced the narrative created between me and the tutor. I recognise that a researcher cannot separate themselves from their research and acknowledge that research will be value

laden. Secondly, by locating myself in the experience of the participants and considering how I relate to the participants and how they view me. For example, my experience of having indicators of dyscalculia impacted how I related to student participants and their perceptions of the dyslexia tutorials; this could potentially have influenced how I engaged with students discussions around dyslexia and how their lived experience was conducted. As Holmes (2020:3) points out, it is important to note that researchers may not be *'fully aware of how they and others have constructed their identities'*. Thirdly, by locating myself in the research context and process, the choices I have made in terms of ontological and epistemological framework, down to my choices of methods of data collection. The next section will move on to discuss my ontological position.

### 3.3 Ontology: Critical Realism

An understanding of a researcher's ontology is important in understanding the lens through which the researcher is collating and interpreting the data. There are different ontological positions that can be taken, and the position taken will be influenced by the positionality of the researcher (Ritchie *et al* 2013). As mentioned in the introduction, my position is that reality and existence are distinct but related concepts. The difference between reality and existence could be described as existence being what is out there in the universe, whereas reality is grasped by consciousness, as such there can be degrees of reality, but not degrees of existence.

If, however, reality is based on how an object is experienced, what does this mean for conceptual realities, which are not grounded in a metaphysical object; does this understanding rely on a material object? An example of this is a football match. A football match is not located in the ball or the pitch, it has a purely conceptual reality. Indeed, what we understand to be a pitch only becomes a pitch through our designation as such, a patch of ground and some lines are only a pitch if we accept this interpretation. If we look at this in terms of the dyslexia space, the space is a purely conceptual space. The room that holds the space may have a physical existence, but the dyslexia tutorial is not located in the room, it merely operates temporally for the duration of the session. Tutorials could be, and often are, held in a café or library space, so the space is only a dyslexia space for the duration of the session, after which the space reverts to being a café space, a library space, or just an empty room waiting to have another reality created in it. This is discussed by Lefebvre in the production of space (1991). Lefebvre (1991) describes how space is constructed and where these constructions originate, utilising the triad of conceived space (what the space is designed for) perceived space (the everyday practices that construct the space) and the lived space (this is how meaning is derived within the space). Soja (1999:262) describes how, *"space is both the product of social relationships and is involved in the production of those relationships."* Critical realism allows and exploration of this, as it switches attention from events onto what produces event, through a exploration of different domains of reality (Danermark, Ekström, and Karlsson (2019).

Critical realists argue that the world is 'layered' into different domains of reality, these are the empirical, the actual and the real (Roberts, 2014). The empirical domain comprises observable experiences. The actual domain includes events which have been generated by mechanisms and the real domain is the structure or mechanisms that have generated the event. This is demonstrated in the diagram below.

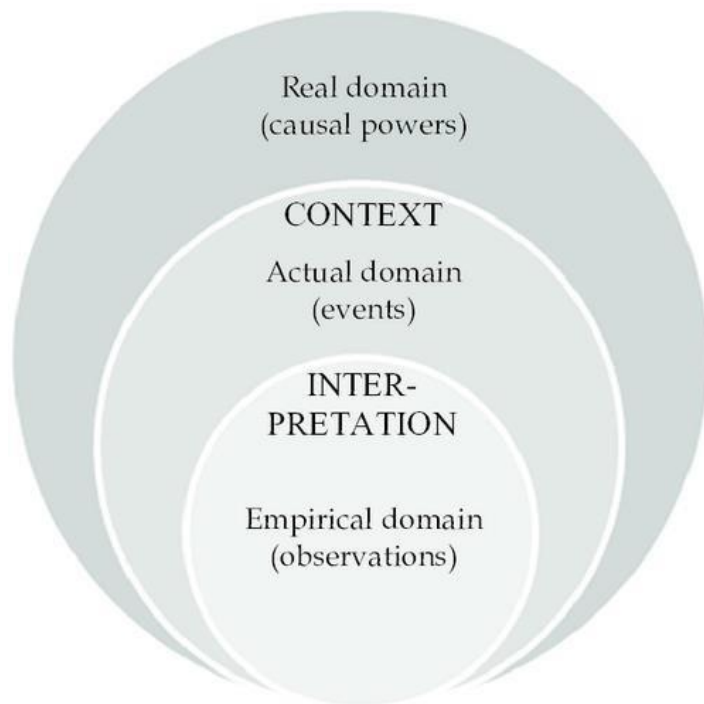


Figure 6, domains of reality Järvinen (2016)

In terms of teaching therefore, an example of these layers of reality is the social structures of a lesson. The structures determine the actions of the teacher and student in the social setting, for example the teacher-student dynamic. This is the real domain. The actual domain is the actions that maintain or challenge the existing structures, for example a teacher who encourages students to call them by their first names would be challenging the traditional tutor-student relationship. Finally, the empirical domain is the observations and experiences of individuals caused by the actions in the domain (Anderson, 2019). Benton and Craib (cited in Roberts, 2014:3) state that,

*Critical realists also believe in the fallibility of knowledge insofar that the complexity of the world implies that our knowledge of it might be wrong or misleading and so the job of social investigators is to keep searching for knowledge about causal mechanisms in different research contexts.*

As such, critical realism seeks to uncover the structures that drive actions through a focus on causality. Radulescu and Vessey (2008), argue that this focus on causality can provide a wider ontological perspective:

*Causality is identified via a stratified ontology that consists of three overlapping domains: the real, the actual, and the empirical. Using this ontology, researchers can go beyond empirically observed events to determine the causal mechanisms in the real domain that result in those events, (Mingers, 2004; Reed, 2001; Wuisman, 2005, Cited in Radulescu and Vessey (2008:11).*

Further, critical realism recognises different modes of reality, namely materially, artefactually, ideally and socially real. Materially real refers to planets, mountains, and stars etc; ideally real is discourse, concepts, beliefs and theories; socially real refers to organisations, class, gender of disability structures.

and artifactually real is buildings and tools, for example (Fleetwood, 2005). Consequently, in order to understand the participants' experience (ideal domain), I would be able to include an exploration on the structures that impact on the space (social domain) and the impact of the building itself (artefactual domain).

Critical realism could enable a consideration of the frameworks that structure teaching such as laws, curricula, and schemes of work, that underpin our understanding of the conceptual understanding of the reality of teaching, through the socially real mode. In terms of the dyslexia tutorial space, this framework can be located in government requirements. For a session to receive government funding, the tutor needs to have an SpLD qualification and be on a professional register and the student must have a diagnosed SpLD such as dyslexia. Thus, there are two forms of control; firstly, the access to the support is strictly governed and controlled and secondly, the students are forced to provide proof that they are disabled enough to qualify for support, by having their disability externally verified, thus the system operates to re-assert disability whilst ostensibly providing a service to reduce the impact of disability. Whilst initially, I thought that investigating the structures would take me away from the aim of my research, I now see that it is an integral part of understanding the dyslexia space. Indeed, it is important to consider that whilst reality can be constructed and co-constructed, this can be constrained by structures, for example a teacher would set goals for a student, whereas a student may give feedback to a tutor, but would not set goals for them. As Bhaskar (cited in Houston and Montgomery (2017:5) states, *"actors shape their social worlds but, in turn, are constrained by social structures embedded in the fabric of social life."* Critical realism seeks to reveal these structures; this aligns with my theoretical framework which explores how structural inequalities are maintained and resisted. As Kirylo (2010:332) puts it, *"critical pedagogy challenges the social, environmental, and economic structures and social relations that shape the conditions in which people live, and in which schools operate."*

In terms of what happens in the sessions themselves, whilst acknowledging the structures around teaching in general, there are few other structures that make a session specifically a dyslexia session other than the inhabitants of the space (the tutor and the student) agreeing that they are participating in a dyslexia tutorial. This is what Lefebvre (1991) describes as the everyday practices that shape the space. Examples of everyday practices in the in dyslexia tutorial space are re-caping what happened in the previous session and ending the session with a summary of what has been undertaken in the session. So, perhaps the structures are around access to the service rather than the service itself. The tutor and student could meet outside the conceptual tutorial space and could have similar interactions, and this would not be considered a tutorial session, in the same way that kicking a ball is only a football match if the participants collectively agree that a football match is taking place. It is not the conventions that make the match, but the shared understanding. Consequently, conceptual reality is not located externally, in the same way that relativism frames reality as how we experience a material object, but as a shared understanding.

This shared understanding can be considered in terms of culture and language. Reality is expressed through both language and a shared cultural understanding. Thus, football is understood through the name football and the cultural associations we have for that term. Equally, the dyslexia tutorial space has a conceptual reality because we have a name and the associated cultural understanding of a teaching space, if not a specific dyslexia space. The tutorial is a teaching space for students with a specific learning disability. Without the dyslexia the space is no longer a dyslexia space but could still retain the teaching aspect. Therefore, we conceptualise and frame reality through cultural understanding and linguistics. This is discussed by Berkeley (2012) who argued that we cannot compare ideas with material objects since to have knowledge of a material object would require that we know it via some idea. It could be argued, therefore, that the reality is located in the idea regardless of whether



the reality is conceptual or relates to physical existence. Thus, reality is in this shared understanding. In my research, there is a strong argument that the SpLD (dyslexia) is situated in the idea, as such how ideas are created, re-created, and recirculated, and what this means for the inhabitants of the dyslexia tutorial is of interest.

The next section introduces my epistemological position. Epistemology and ontology are closely aligned and need to be in agreement. A particular ontological stance implies a particular epistemological stance and vice versa (Crotty, 1998). Further, *'it is vital to recognise that both ontology and epistemology are mainly based on the researcher's beliefs and personal persuasion about the conception of the world and have certain methodological consequences'* (Hay, 2002: 61). I will be taking a constructivism position where meaning is constructed, co-constructed and reconstructed in relation to other actors/structures. This aligns with a critical realism ontology as social constructivism does not reject that an independent objective world exists, but rather focuses on the experiences and perceptions that individuals have developed about the world that they inhabit (Taylor, 2018).

### 3.4 Epistemology- Constructivism

My epistemological approach will be constructivism an approach developed to study human behaviour. Whilst it is associated with idealism (Barkin, 2003) constructivism is compatible with a critical realism ontology. Critical realism makes a distinction between ontology (what is real) and epistemology (what we know). As such, critical realism *'recognises that knowledge is a subjective, discursively bound and constantly changing social construction'* (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Barkin (2003) makes the case that constructivism can be utilised within a realist ontology, stating that a realist constructivism could be employed to explore the relationship between normative structures. This is supported by Fiaz (2014); who argues that critical realism can provide constructivism with a greatly expanded conceptual framework. Fiaz utilises a critical realism and constructivism approach in her research, concluding that, *"while constructivism can show that Pakistan's role in the war on terror was preceded by a legitimizing narrative, it is a critical realist depth analysis that sheds new light on how a complex social reality was achieved through the convergence of multi-causal explanatory factors"* (Fiaz, 2014:491). A critical realism and constructivism approach was also used by Bogna *et al* (2020) who made the case that, *"critical realism offered a complementary but essential framework to explore causal mechanisms that led to a deeper understanding of the findings by searching for the processes and causality that lay beneath the social and organizational phenomena observed."*

A constructivist approach allows me to explore the perspectives of the participants and the way they experience the dyslexia tutorial, within the causal reality framework of critical realism. This will enable me to develop an understanding about the participant and why and how their actions fit into and are the consequence of what they take to be the reality of a situation. A paper that has helped me to develop a sense of how reality can be constructed within a causal reality framework is that of Alfred Schutz (1945). Schutz makes the point that thought by itself does not influence reality. He states that if a thought is created and not acted on, then the world remains unchanged, the thought must lead to action to influence reality; thus, he is foregrounding the action of the thought in the construction of reality. I would argue, however, that all thought influences all actions, if only slightly, and the thought cannot exist in a vacuum as we interact with the world. This is seen in Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) research in which teachers were told that some students were expected to be 'growth spurters' (to make fast progress). Despite these students being chosen at random, this led to a change in teacher expectation which resulted in these students fulfilling the growth spurt expectation. Therefore, the teachers' construction of the reality was influenced by the real domain in which being a growth spurter is indicative of success. Consequently, the tutors' actions changed in the real domain,

resulting in an observable outcome in the empirical domain. As such, it is important that I recognise how my expectations of the dyslexia tutorial space, and that the language I used both consciously and unconsciously can influence the construction, and possibly co-construction of the participants' reality. For example, I occasionally used the term 'taking up space', and during my transcription, I noticed that this phrase was used by tutor participants. Thus, my understanding of the dyslexia tutorials influenced the participants' construction of the space. In this research, therefore, the aim is to gain an understanding of these multiple realities and what this tells us about the tutorial as a third space. It is important for me to acknowledge, however, that whilst I might interview different participants, their experiences are analysed and interpreted through my lens and through a specific theoretical framework (critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies).

I therefore believe that reality is constructed, co-constructed and reconstructed between the inhabitants of a space, and, in alignment with critical realism, I contend that this construction is influenced by the layers of reality highlighted in the critical realism section. In a dyslexia tutorial, therefore, whilst the reality is primarily constructed by the interaction between the tutor and the student, there are a number of influences on this construction. This links to my theoretical framework of critical pedagogy of space in terms of how space is experienced, particularly, Lefebvre's (1991) triad which identified how space is constructed, and Freire's conceptualisation of how knowledge is constructed (1970). Examples of influences on the space include constructions of a teaching space, prior educational experiences, and previous teacher training. This, therefore, recognises the ideally real domain of the reality being created, whilst also acknowledging the socially real domain of the structures that shape and influence the way the reality is created. Meaning is derived from interaction with the world, and, therefore, people construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same event. For example, when talking to a peer about an exam, it may be constructed as a stressful situation, but the same event may be constructed in a different light during the interaction between a student and a tutor. This relates to critical realism in that it recognises that *"the investigator and the object of investigation are interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds"* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:207). Crotty (1998) describes this as meaning being created through the interaction between the interpreter and that which they seek to interpret. The interpreter acknowledges that interpretation is shaped by external structures such as societal influences and as such any findings are a construct in the interaction between the interpreter and the interpreted as situated in society. An example of this would be a teacher reproducing the banking model of education (Freire, 1970) as this is the framework within which they conceptualise teaching. Thus, knowledge is not discovered, but rather, constructed. I recognise, therefore, that meaning will be derived from my interpretation of the participants' data and on the extent to which I understand this world view. The emphasis is, therefore, not on reaching an objective unassailable conclusion, but rather the emphasis of this approach is on discovery and the uncovering and discussion of these multiple viewpoints (Brannigan, 1981).

A constructivist stance will, therefore, align to the concept of multiple realities; reality is symbolically constructed, and meaning is observer dependent. This is evident in the different interpretations of the D in SpLD, as outlined in the context with some people seeing the term difference as progressive and emancipatory, whereas others experience it as oppressive. This epistemology adds to the critical realism ontology in that it adds the dimension of how reality is constructed, with consideration to the layers of reality and domains of reality. As such, I recognise that there isn't one objective truth in social science and therefore, I will not come to an objective conclusion about how students and tutors experience the dyslexia space. In my research, there will be viewpoints from dyslexic students, tutors, and my own viewpoint. Through this, I aim to create a collaborative reconstruction of meaning from the multiple realities that exist (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). The next section will move on to a consideration of the methodology through which I will explore this construction

### 3.5 Methodology: Naturalistic Inquiry

In this research, I have taken a qualitative approach. Qualitative evidence is primarily concerned with process, rather than the outcomes of the research, where the aim is to achieve a complete, detailed description of the subject of the observation. The nature of qualitative research means that the researcher is likely to become more involved in the subjects and less likely to remain impartial or remote. Because the approach considers human interaction it will often be used by teachers, for example reflecting on their practice and the success of a session.

My methodology will be naturalistic inquiry; I have chosen this as my methodology as it focuses on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives through storytelling and is situated within constructivism. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed naturalistic inquiry as a constructivist methodology that could challenge the positivistic paradigm. Naturalistic inquiry is described by Armstrong (2010) as an approach in which the researcher attempts to understand the social world through observing, describing, and interpreting the experiences of specific people and groups within a specific context. Naturalistic inquiry holds that reality is subjective rather than objective; therefore, subjective, and multiple realities are possible because all knowledge is socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), as such, it aligns with my ontology and epistemology. Further, in naturalistic inquiry, the world and reality are seen as human constructs that cannot be considered and appreciated in isolation from their context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Through my ontology of critical realism, I will be revealing the layers of reality in the dyslexia tutorials and thus the structural influences on the space. Naturalistic inquiry is conducted in the field and is context driven; further, the researcher, the participants, and the field in which the research is conducted influence each other. This both blurs the boundaries between the participants and the researcher and acknowledges the influence of the researcher on the research, and thus, recognises that the narrative is constructed between the participant/s and researcher. There is an understanding, therefore, that the research findings will live between participant, researcher and context and, further, that observations in the field will influence and promote changes not only to the findings, but also to the design of the study.

Another benefit of naturalistic inquiry for my research is that it provides a framework for thinking about how, and to what extent I am a participant in my research. As outlined in my positionality, I am a dyslexia tutor within the field and, therefore, could be considered to be an insider researcher. The naturalistic inquiry approach provides nuance to this through a consideration of the extent of the researcher's participation.

- Complete participant: Fully involved in a social setting and does not let people know they are being studied; "going native;" (consider ethical dilemmas).
- Participant-observer: Involved as fully as possible in a social situation where people know they are being studied; agenda is revealed.
- Observer-participant: Primarily observes and participates only to a limited extent; marginal member of the group.
- Complete observer: Does not interact with the group, strictly an observer; greatest objectivity Frey *et al* (1999)

Having considered the different levels of participation, I would place my level as that of an observer-participant. Whilst I recognise my influence on the research, the research is based on the stories of my participants, I have not included my own stories or reflections, or any element of autoethnography.

There are three ways of reporting the findings in naturalistic inquiry. The first is confessional: confessional tales are first-person accounts of a researcher's experience in the field. The second is impressionist tales. These tales take greater artistic licence to bring the reader into an unfolding narrative of the field experience, The final way is realist. This way places emphasis on a rich description and interpretation of the participants' experiences. I have chosen the realist way of reporting findings. This is because it aligns most closely with my ontological and epistemological positions; I am interested in the participants' constructions of the tutorials and how the layers of reality influence these constructions. This approach allows an exploration of the construction of the dyslexia tutorial and what this means for students and tutors. Finally, the writing up of research should resonate with participants, reflecting their experiences. Researchers also reveal their positionality for participants and audiences, giving readers insight into the investigator's personal experiences and biases. Naturalistic inquiry draws on qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews, observations and other sources of descriptive data, as well as considering their subject experiences in order to create rich descriptions and interpretations of the data (Armstrong, 2010). My methods are in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall; I will discuss how I conducted these and their relation to my ontology and epistemology in detail in the methods section. The next section will outline the methods.

## 3.6 Methods

### 3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

The research utilised in-depth interviews, a method closely associated with narrative inquiry. In depth interviews are described by Mears (2012:170) as,

*purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another knows about a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what he or she thinks about it, and what significance or meaning it might have.*

Furthermore, Boyce and Neale (2006:3) define in depth interviews as “a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation.” In depth interviews use open ended questions and their goal is to source rich, detailed data to be analysed. In depth interviews will support me to explore how the participants experience the tutorial space; this will bring to the surface structural influences on this experience. An example of this would be tutors reflecting on how their teacher training acts on decision making within the space. As such, through the use of in-depth interviews, the layers of reality that influence the construction of the dyslexia tutorial can be made visible.

Legard, Keegan & Ward (2003) identified four key features of in-depth interviews. Firstly, they argued that the in-depth interview can combine flexibility with structure. While interviews are broadly unstructured, I had areas that I wanted to explore, namely the experience of the tutorial space, the experience of the interactions within the space and the perceptions of the purpose of the space; therefore, the interviews were guided by the research aims and objectives. As such, I had some prompt questions, which were used to spark a discussion. These included prompts such as, *how the tutorials fit in with the university*. The second feature identified is that interviews are interactive. The interviewees' responses generated further areas of enquiry during the interviews, thus shaping the interview. This was the case in my research in which the prompts introduced the area to be discussed, which would be a starting point to a broader discussion. Thirdly, the in-depth interview provides the opportunity to

achieve a depth of answer which may not be achieved through other methods. This provided me with rich data around segregated and separated space, which I hadn't considered in my initial formulation of prompts. Whilst initial responses may be at a surface level, the format allows for follow up questions to gain a fuller understanding of the interviewees' experiences. It also allows for an exploration of factors surrounding the responses, such as habitus, prior experiences and background. This allows for a consideration of how the layers of reality influence the construction of experiences. Finally, in-depth interviews provide an opportunity for new knowledge to be created. Boyce and Neale (2006) suggest that in-depth interviews are particularly useful when focus groups are not appropriate, for example when participants do not feel comfortable talking in a group, or when confidentiality is an issue. In-depth interviews thus give my participants the freedom to explore potentially sensitive issues, such as stigma, in a safe confidential environment.

Kvale (cited in Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003) describes two positions in in-depth interviews: the miner metaphor and the traveller metaphor. The miner metaphor is described as

*Knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interview is a miner who unearths the valuable metal. The knowledge is waiting in the subject's interior to be uncovered, uncontaminated by the miner. The interviewer digs nuggets of data or meanings out of a subject's pure experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions. (Kvale, cited in Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003:140).*

In contrast, the traveller metaphor is described as:

*The traveller asks the questions that leads the subject to tell their own stories of their lived world and converse with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation, as wandering together with. Kvale (cited in Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003:140).*

The first metaphor, therefore, positions the method as accepting that knowledge is static and unchanging; whereas, in contrast, the traveller method considers knowledge as something that is created during and after the interviewing, giving consideration to the positionality of both the researcher and the participant. That is, reality is constructed during the interview, as such, the approach I took was the traveller metaphor.

The main advantages of in-depth interviews are that the interview style allows the participant to answer the questions in as much depth as they want, allowing for richness of data. As a result of this it is possible to explore the participant's values, experiences and opinions of the dyslexia tutorial. Thus, the researcher can gain a deeper insight into the contextualisation of the phenomenon. In depth interviews allow time for the participant and the researcher to feel comfortable with each other, which can encourage an open and honest exchange. Finally, this method allows the researcher the flexibility to change direction and follow up on the participant's comments, as they are not restricted to predetermined questions. In terms of disadvantages, the interviews can be time consuming, and there is no determined time for the interview to finish, which could be tiring for both the participant and the researcher. Analysing the data is likely to be equally time consuming in terms of transcribing and coding. Equally, the time consuming and intense nature of the interview precludes the researcher from conducting a high number of such interviews, thus reducing the sample size. As a consequence, the results are less likely to be generalizable to the population being considered, in this case tutors and students experiencing the dyslexia space. Similarly, the adaptable nature of the interview makes it difficult to compare the results of the interviews, as they may all have taken different directions. Finally, Boyce and Neale (2006), state that in depth interviews can be prone to both researcher bias and participant bias. Researchers, for example could pursue lines of enquiry that validate their views and fail to explore other lines of enquiry.

### 3.5.1 Interpersonal Process Recall

Interpersonal process recall (IPR) is a qualitative data collection approach which is designed to elicit interviewees' responses close to the moment of interaction. It is a method that originated in counselling and utilises audio and video technology to uncover hidden feelings and reactions in interpersonal situations (Kagan, 1997). Kagan who coined the term IPR and developed the method explained that the initial aim was to "*capture the relevant stimuli in the situation in such a way that we could recreate it at a later time, we could help the person relive the original situation*" (1967:6). Macaskie *et al* (2015:226) describe this approach as facilitating,

*the collaborative identification of processes and storys as key moments for further analysis and increasing awareness of the potential blurring of genres between therapeutic and research conversations." As such IPR is "a process which invites the holistic self-directed self-exploration of the participant, leading to self discovery, which might then be used as a springboard for reflexivity*

The method was used to access individuals' experiences as they occurred at the time of the interpersonal interaction under investigation (Larsen *et al*, 2008), thus situating the participant(s) at the heart of their experience (Kettley *et al*, 2015). As the participants can pause the video at any time, IPR serves to give participants time to reflect on and discuss their experiences (Larsen *et al*, 2008). Kettley *et al* (2015) describe this as an opportunity to reflect on an experience, recall it and explore it. An example of IPR in educational research is Bloom (1954) who used this method to conduct classroom research. He captured audio recordings of a classroom lesson and played it back to the teacher. The audio was stopped at different times and students were asked about what they were thinking at the time. I am using IPR in a slightly different way. Firstly, the tutor recorded the session and the tutor and student decided whether to participate in IPR after having recorded the session. Secondly, both the tutor and the student were present and responding to the video at the same time. Thirdly, the participants controlled the video recording and decided when to pause it and reflected on what they had seen. In this case, the interaction is a teaching session which was recorded by the tutor participant for this purpose, with the permission of the student participant. The tutor and student were both informed as to what the purpose of the IPR was, how the data would be used, and that they could withdraw permission at any time. Prior to the IPR, both the student participant and the tutor participant had participated in an in-depth interview. The participants viewed their video recording and stopped the video periodically to describe what they were thinking and feeling during their interactions. As such, the video prompts the interviewees to recall various reactions and ideas that occurred during the session. Macaskie *et al* (2015) recommend that the IPR interviews/observations occur within 48 hours of other forms of data collection. Consequently, the first IPR observation was conducted within two days of the in-depth interviews, which gave the participants time to reflect on their interviews, whilst at the same time ensuring the interviews were fresh in their minds.

This method adds to my data collection in three key ways. Firstly, the student and tutor reflecting on and discussing a teaching session that occurred previously. This allows for an exploration of decisions, dynamics and other elements of the tutorial that had not been recognised by the participants. As such, this can contribute to making layers of reality, as described in the critical realism section, visible and structural influences on the dyslexia tutorial space could be uncovered and explored. Secondly, it created a dialogue between the student and tutor, as opposed to the interviews which were conducted between me as the researcher and the participant on a one-to-one basis. This allowed for an interaction between the tutor, student and the session that they had engaged in. I was able to consider and compare the interpretations of the tutor and students dynamically, that is their interpretations as the session is unfolding. This was an important part of the research, as the dyslexia tutorial is experienced

between a tutor and a student on a one-to-one basis, and this enabled me to see both the interaction in a session and the reactions of the student and tutor to the session. Equally, this gave me the opportunity to watch a session unfolding and to consider the unfolding dynamics. Thus, I was able to experience the students and tutor's relationship first hand, as opposed to hearing the participants' views of this relationship, as is the case with the in-depth interviews. Finally, rather than the narrative being constructed in dialogue based on my interview questions, the narrative was prompted by the recording of a tutorial session, thus providing a different perspective on the dyslexia tutorials. The participants are responding to stimuli rather than to the researcher's questions; thus, I as a researcher took a less proactive approach in data collection. This is beneficial as it provides me data that is generated from the student and tutors observing and responding to a teaching session. It must be noted, however, that I had recently undertaken interviews with both participants, and as such, the participants may be reflecting on the interviews as well as responding to the videos. This was evidenced in one session where a tutor commented that they felt that the sessions were tutor led, but, having watched the video, she recognised that she was leading the session. This could have been a reference to the interview in which she described her teaching as student led and emancipatory. Whilst I had less input in this method, it was not possible for me to wholly remove myself from the data.

To summarise, utilising in depth interviews and interpersonal process recall provides me with the opportunity to both explore the tutorial experience with the participants and to observe how the students and tutors explore their experiences and reflect on how this aligns or otherwise with their perceptions about the dyslexia tutorial. The next section will discuss the research process including, recruitment, pen portraits of the participants, interview schedule and IPR observation.

## 3.7 Research process

### 3.7.1 Recruitment of Participants

The criteria for inclusion were to have dyslexia be a higher education student, and be engaging or have engaged in dyslexia tutorials. Initially, three students were recruited via the University of Sheffield; posters were put around the university's dyslexia service offices. From this, three students responded that they were interested in participating in the research. The students were provided with an information sheet and a consent form and were informed that they could drop out of the research at any point with no detriment to their tutorials. The students were screened to ensure that they had dyslexia, and all of the students were engaging in tutorials with the university. The students had undertaken between 10 and 50 tutorials with the university, and of the three, one student had experience of dyslexia support at a different university. All three students participated in in-depth interviews. The fourth student was recruited via their tutor and participated in both the interview and the interpersonal process recall.

Tutor participants were recruited via the ADSHE JiscMail, which is the email for ADSHE, the professional body for dyslexia specialists in higher education. Again, they were provided with information sheets and consent forms. Five participants were initially recruited, one dropped out and their data was destroyed and not used for the study. Of the four remaining tutors, one of the tutors informed me that they had a student who was interested in participating in the research. I sent the student the information sheet and the consent form, and they took part in the research. Three of the tutors took part in the in-depth

interviews only, and one took part in the in-depth interviews and the interpersonal process recall. One student took part in both the interviews and the interpersonal process recall. The reason why there were only two participants in the interpersonal process recall was that this required a relationship between the tutor and student participants, and only two participants had this relationship. Nevertheless, this data provided additional insight into the experience of the dyslexia tutorial. All of the interviews and the IPR observations were conducted face to face, at 301 Glossop Road.

### 3.7.2 Pen Portraits of Participants

#### **Student participants**

At the start of the interviews, I asked the participants for some demographic information; this enabled me to determine the context in which they were experiencing the dyslexia tutorial, for example which year of their degree they were in, and how many tutorials they had attended. There were no controls for whether students were full or part time students, or whether the students were home students or international students. The students, however, are all home students on full time degree courses. All of the student participants' pseudonyms begin with a consonant.

**Rowan** - Rowan is a third-year undergraduate student at a university, she is studying biomedical science and is in the age range 19-21. Rowan has attended over 60 dyslexia tutorial sessions and has seen the same tutor for all these sessions. Rowan was assessed as dyslexic in her first year of university.

**Suzi** - Suzi is a PhD student at a university in Scotland and is in the age range 21-25. She does not currently access regular dyslexia tutorials. Prior to her PhD, she attended sessions at a different university at undergraduate level. At undergraduate level, she attended over 50 sessions over her three-year degree programme, this was with the same tutor. Suzi is a scientist in the field of biology. She was assessed as dyslexic whilst at school, during the second year for her A-levels.

**Blaine** - Blaine is a mature history student at a university. He is in the age range 25-30. He is in the first year of his course and has had between 10 and 20 sessions with the same tutor. Blaine was assessed as dyslexic whilst at school when he was 13 (according to his recollection). Prior to starting his degree, he attended a lifelong learning course, which gave him access to a degree course.

**Shep** - Shep is a history student who has undertaken an undergraduate degree in and has now just started a master's degree. He is in the age range 25-30. He is undertaking the master's degree at the same institution where he undertook his undergraduate degree. He has attended at least 50 sessions and has had the same tutor throughout his academic career. Shep was assessed as dyslexia in his second year at university.

#### **Tutor participants**

The tutors provided demographic information around their workplace, how long they had been working as a dyslexia tutor and their access to dyslexia tutorial spaces, as well as their age and nature of their contract. All of the tutor participants' pseudonyms begin with a vowel.



**Oscar** - Oscar is in his 30s and is a full-time tutor at a university, with a permanent contract; he is employed by the university. He and his colleagues used to have their own room, but the service has been merged with student support and now all student support use hot desking in one large room. If tutors need a private room, this has to be booked in advance. Oscar has been teaching dyslexia tutorials for 5 years and is in his late 30s. He has worked at two universities. Both institutions initially provided private rooms for tutors. He has been working at his current university for 18 months.

**Ellen** - Ellen is in her 40s and has been teaching dyslexia tutorials for 9 years. She has only worked at one university and has a permanent full-time contract with the university. She has her own room which she uses for tutorials, and this is the system for all tutors at this university. Ellen has been a dyslexia tutor for 15 years. Prior to being a dyslexia tutor, Ellen was a literacy tutor for an education provider.

**Imogen** - Imogen is in her 40s and has a permanent part time contract at a university. She has been teaching dyslexia tutorials for 5 years and worked at the same university throughout this time; prior to this, she was a mentor at an FE college. Imogen used to have her own room, but the university has recently required tutors to book a room for tutorials.

**Alice** - Alice is in her 50s and has been teaching dyslexia tutorials for over 20 years, prior to this, she was a secondary school teacher. She works for an agency and works at a number of universities. She does not have an allocated dyslexia tutorial room and is required to use public spaces such as libraries and cafes to conduct tutorials.

### 3.7.3 Research Schedule

The interviews took place over the period of a month in April 2018, each interview lasted between 50 minutes and an hour and a half. I had a set of questions that I asked to all of my students, my follow up question would vary, depending on the participants' responses (See appendix D). When I began my analysis, I realised I had not asked questions that would be important to my research and so I conducted follow up interviews to address these gaps. I was fortunate in that all of my participants were available for follow up questions. These follow up interviews were undertaken in May 2019. An example of a follow up question is, *'you talk about, 'doing a triage' to individualise support for students. Could you tell me more about this and how it works' (Vicky, researcher)?*

One tutor, Ellen, was not initially available for an interview, and instead, I would send her questions and she would send back her reflections; I would send her follow up questions to these reflections. There are issues with this approach; in contrast to the other participants, she would have time to consider and craft her response. Nevertheless, I felt it was important that she got the opportunity to have her voice heard and, therefore, did not exclude her from the study. Ellen was available for the follow up interview. The interpersonal process recall observations were also conducted in April and early May 2018. The tutor and student, Oscar and Rowan, had recorded two sessions a week apart. One was recorded on the 23rd April and observed on the 25th April and the second was recorded on the 30th April and observed on the 2nd May. I aimed to leave a short gap between the video and the session, in order to create a distance and, hopefully, enable the student and tutor to reflect on the video. I did not have any questions prepared, as I wanted the participants' reactions and did not want to lead this.

All of the interviews were concluded in April, and I completed my transcribing in six weeks, by mid-June. The analysis took 12 months to complete and is detailed below.

## 3.8 Analysis

### 3.8.1 Analysis Approach

I used a thematic analysis approach to analyse the data, specifically framework analysis. Thematic analysis has been described as a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). Alhojailan (2012) explains that thematic analysis provides a systematic element to data analysis, allowing researchers to understand the potential of a theme in relation to the whole content. This is explained by Namey *et al* (2008:138),

*Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence of displaying code relationships.*

Therefore, thematic analysis enables the researcher to create links between the data and interpret themes across the data as a whole. As such, the goal of a thematic analysis is to identify and interpret themes and to use the themes to address the research questions, this allows me to foreground the voice of the participants. This is more than just summarising the data, and as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, it is not enough to use the research questions as themes, rather, in order to ensure that the data has been analysed and interpreted thematically, the researcher must be taking decisions about the emerging themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006:78) suggest that thematic analysis should be the first analysis method learned by researchers as it “provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis.” Equally, Mcguire and Delahunt state (2017) that thematic analysis provides flexibility for researchers as it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective. Braun and Clarke argue that much analysis is essentially thematic, whilst being considered another form of analysis. Further, they argue that it is a method that is independent of theory and epistemology, and as such can be applied across a range of approaches, rather than being located within a theoretical framework. This gives thematic analysis a flexibility not afforded to other methods of analysis. This is not to say that thematic analysis is not a rigorous tool for analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that rather than themes organically emerging from the data, the researcher plays a key part in identifying themes, selecting those of interest and interpreting them. Even if a researcher aims to give participants a voice, they will still bring their perspective to the analysis. Braun and Clarke highlight the importance of researchers matching the theoretical framework and methods to what they want to know and to recognise and acknowledge these decisions.

I have chosen to use a thematic analysis approach because it is appropriate for studies that seek to discover using interpretation and provides a systematic process for data analysis (Alhojailan, 2012). Further, it can be used to make sense of a large amount of data that often appears unrelated at first reading (Boyatzis, 1998). Equally, thematic analysis will help me to progress from reading the data collated to determining patterns and themes, in order to answer my research question. In my case, it will help me to bring together the experiences of diverse inhabitants of the dyslexia tutorials, namely tutors and students, whilst recognising their individual experiences.

I had a broad idea of what I wanted to find out, in that I wanted to discover how the tutors and students experienced the tutorial space, and whether this experience changes as the tutors and students work

through the sessions. This impacts on my analysis, as I will be analysing the data through this lens. Beyond this, my approach was broadly inductive. This approach allowed me the flexibility to respond to the data sensitively to draw out themes that would provide insight into the tutors and students experiences. An inductive approach starts with the observations, with theories and themes proposed towards the end of the research process (Goddard and Melville, 2004). The main purposes of this approach are:

- To condense large amounts of data into a summary
- To establish links between the research questions and the findings from the data, ensuring that these findings are defensible and transparent
- To develop a model or theory from the data

(Thomas, 2006)

My adoption of this approach is reflected in the way my themes changed and developed. These began with a consideration of the dyslexia tutorials as a third space and how this is experienced by tutors and students in the space and allowed an expansion into other themes including developing academic identity within the space and the influence of departments within the space. The sub-themes of becoming and the departments as agents were not initially considered, and instead emerged through the stages of framework analysis. The implication of this approach is that it is driven by developing an understanding of the participants' experiences and not by questioning participants on predetermined themes. It would be disingenuous, however, to claim that as a researcher I did not have any preconceived notions about the themes. For example, I initially considered the third space to be a theme of interest, and this will have influenced both my line of questioning and my analysis. As pointed out by Braun and Clarke (2006), whilst inductive thematic analysis is not driven by the researcher's theoretical interests, or predetermined analytical frames, researchers can never totally disengage from their theoretical and epistemological position.

My purpose for using a broadly inductive approach, therefore, is to address the research questions from the themes emerging in the data, whereby I developed themes from the data into a framework. I have also worked towards a latent thematic analysis approach, as I am approaching my research from a critical realism lens and, therefore, I am interested in both the way the students and tutors experience the space and how this experience is influenced by structural factors such as constructions of educational spaces and associations around learning. A latent approach *"starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data"* Braun and Clarke (2006:13). An example of this is when I consider how the participants' understanding of the construction of a teaching space influenced how they reflected on their experience of the tutorial space. This aligns to my constructivist approach and is based on a critical realism ontological approach, because I am looking at the forces that influence the space that the actors within the space may not be aware of. Even if they are aware of them, they may not realise the extent to which they influence their experience.

### 3.8.2- Framework Analysis

In terms of the process of the analysis, I used a framework analysis approach. Framework analysis is a form of thematic analysis, albeit less well known than Braun and Clarke's approach. Smith and Firth (2011:3) describe how thematic analysis and framework analysis differ stating,

*analytical frameworks such as thematic networks and the framework approach appear to have a*

*greater emphasis on making the process of data analysis transparent and illustrating the linkage between the stages of the analysis.*

Ritchie and Spencer (2002) describe framework analysis as a process which involves a number of different, but interconnected stages. It provides, therefore, a structure for analysis, allowing for the data to be collated and themes to be identified. According to Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006), this coding process involves recognizing an important element in the text and encoding it prior to a process of interpretation. This process allows for open coding and thus was in alignment with my broadly inductive approach. Indeed, framework analysis has been described by Parkinson *et al* (2016:7) as “*emphasising how both a priori issues and emergent data driven themes should guide the development of the analytic framework.*” According to Ritchie and Spencer (2002) one of the advantages of framework analysis is that it is not bound to a specific epistemological position and can be used flexibly to meet the aims of the research. Goldsmith (2021) suggests the use of framework analysis for the following reasons:

- It provides coherence and structure to help manage large amounts of qualitative data, such as interview transcripts.
- It facilitates systematic analysis and makes the analysis transparent.
- allows the researcher to be creative with the data

One of the key reasons why I have chosen framework analysis is because the series of five interconnected stages of the framework approach enable me as the researcher to make several sweeps of the data (Ritchie *et al*, 2013). Through moving back and forth across the data I was able to ensure that I had engaged with the emerging themes of the data and refined the themes. The framework also provided me with a process to work through, which enabled me to work with the large amount of data I had accumulated. The five stages, according to Srivastava and Thomson (2009) are described as familiarisation; indexing; charting; mapping and interpretation. This process began with the data collection (Rabiee, 2004), as the researcher looks for broad themes. This stage is key in identifying themes to create the framework. Srivastava and Thomson (2009) explain that in this stage, the researcher immerses themselves in the data, by listening to the audio tapes, reading transcripts, and reviewing the themes from the document analysis. Here, I began to identify themes around becoming within the space; the tutorial as a third space; and tensions within the space. The next stage is to read transcripts in order to index the material. From here, emerging themes may begin to develop, and it is vital to ensure that the data dictates the themes and issues, as opposed to the researcher attempting to fit the data into the themes that they were expecting. This stage will form the basis of the framework (Srivastava & Thomson 2009). During this stage, I developed and re-organised the initial themes. Through reviewing the data, the third space theme was broadened to space. This is because there were a number of sub-themes that were broader than the third space. Equally, the theme, tensions within the space, was broadened to the tutor-student relationship as the theme, tensions within the space, did not encompass the experience of the participants. The next stage, indexing, has been described by Ritchie and Spencer (2002), as identifying which data corresponds to which theme. Srivastava and Thomson (2009) suggest that a qualitative analysis tool, such as NVivo could be used to index this data. After completing the NVivo training, I opted to use manual coding. I felt removed from the data whilst using electronic coding, and using manual coding made me feel closer to the data. The fourth stage is charting. Here the data is taken from its context and charted according to the headings and sub-headings taken from the themes identified. It is recommended by Ritchie and Spencer (2002) that data should still be identifiable in terms of how it was created, i.e., through interviews, or questionnaires. Here, I identified a problem with my themes. The issue was that the first two themes, physicality of the space and third space, merged into each other, and I had created a false binary, whereas the two themes were actually part of the same theme. This highlights the importance of being clear about theme boundaries. I

therefore, re-considered my data. After moving back and forth through the data, I eventually identified four themes. The first two broadly correspond to the participants' experiences of the space, and the second two refer to the participants' experiences within the space.

- the impact of the space
- accessing the space
- the evolving tutor-student relationship
- the purpose of the tutorials

The final phase is mapping and interpretation. The data was interpreted according to Krueger's (1994) seven criteria, which are: words; context; internal consistency; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; and big ideas. I have chosen this approach, as it helps me to uncover latent meaning and consider the structural influences on the participants' experiences.

### 3.8.3 Considerations

During the process of transcribing, coding, and interpreting the data, the researcher makes a number of decisions which will influence the direction that the research takes. It is important for my research that, as far as possible, the research is allowing the narrative to emerge from the data and avoiding arranging the data to support their theory in order to explore the experiences of participants.

Firstly, when transcribing the data, the researcher can either transcribe when all the data has been collected, or as they go along. Equally, the researcher can choose to transcribe their data or employ someone to undertake transcription on their behalf. I transcribed my own data as I felt that the transcription is part of the process of familiarising yourself with the data. This view is supported by Bird, (cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006: 17), who describes transcription as "*a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology.*" I took the decision to transcribe as I went along, rather than wait until the end. This had the benefit of enabling me to be familiar with the data and gain a sense of the emerging theme. One concern, however, is that this may have impacted on interviews. It is possible that the future interviews were influenced by the emergence of initial themes. By this I mean that I might have pursued a line of questioning because it resonated with something that a previous participant had said, rather than because it was significant to the current participant being interviewed.

Equally, the researcher will take decisions at the interpretation stage; Castleberry and Nolen (2018), suggest a consideration of the following questions:

- Is it a theme or just a code?
- If it is a theme, is it relevant to my research question?
- What are the boundaries of the theme, what am I including and excluding?
- Is there sufficient data to support the theme? Is the theme thick or thin?
- Are the data too diverse?

A consideration of these questions supported my data analysis. For example, one of my issues with my coding and interpretations was the boundaries of the theme. The result of this was that some themes were either too broad to be meaningful, or too thin. I reviewed the data in its entirety and reconsidered the themes. Here, I identified a problem with my themes in that they were too broad and reconsidered

the theme boundaries and whether the themes were thick or thin. For example, it became clear that using a theme of space was too broad, and I reconsidered this. Equally, some of the themes were not relevant to the research question and were set aside. For example, in the case of this research, data around the themes of confidentiality and massification emerged. These were not used as they do not support understanding of the question of how the space is experienced. This is explained in more detail in appendices G and H, which detail my analysis process. The final section will consider ethics and how I navigated potential issues.

## 3.9 Ethics

Ethics are a key issue in research (Gregory, 2003). Ethics has been described as the branch of philosophy that considers issues surrounding morality. In research, this can be described as considering what constitutes moral behaviour in a research process. Ollis *et al* (2022) argued that there are two ethical dimensions that a researcher must consider when conducting research. These are described as “procedural ethics”, which usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake a research project; and “ethics in practice”, which are the everyday ethical issues that may arise as the research is being conducted. This section will firstly address the issue of procedural ethics, considering foreseeable ethical issues and how to minimise them. It will then discuss ethics in practice and discuss how reflexivity could be a tool to use in responding to ethical issues arising as the research progresses.

### 3.9.1 Procedural Ethics

The key tool in developing ethical research is the ethical review system. Through working through the ethical review system, I was able to identify a number of potential ethical issues and work to mitigate these risks. This section will consider the ethical concerns identified and how these were mitigated, using the ethical review system.

Whilst all research will require ethical considerations to be discussed and mitigated, this is especially the case when working with people who may be considered vulnerable (Hugman, Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2011; Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). As this research is constructivist in nature, it uses a number of data collection methods that may be considered intrusive, such as in-depth interviews. Further, as I am a tutor at the university, I have a pre-existing professional relationship with a number of the participants. This has a potential for harm, because participants may feel obliged to take part in their study and to answer questions that they may otherwise feel uncomfortable about answering. A further issue is that students may give the answers that they think I want to hear, impacting on the validity of the findings.

It is vital, therefore, that I consider this potential for harm. This harm that could be a result of this could be the perceived stigma surrounding having a learning disability. Shifrer (2013), for example, found that students labelled with a learning disability were likely to be perceived as less able by educators and parents/ caregivers. The issue of stigma was mitigated by the research’s focus on the experiences of the student, rather than a focus on their disability. Indeed, I did not ask for details of the nature of any of the participants’ disability. The participants having a specific learning disability could also be considered as an ethical issue, because they could be perceived as vulnerable. There is a strong argument, however, to counter this view of students being considered vulnerable because of a specific learning disability. Firstly, the dyslexic students in this study are not considered to have a general learning disability. None of the participants in this study have disclosed a general learning disability. This means that they

have the capacity to understand the study, to comprehend the implications of participation, and to give informed consent. Thus, concerns about the participant's ability to give informed consent are not a consideration in this study.

Regardless of the issue of whether an SpLD such as dyslexia constitutes a vulnerability, it is very important that the participants know what the purpose of the research is, what it will be used for, and what will happen to their information (Miller *et al*, 2012). This has been addressed through the ethical review information sheet, which details the research, the process of the research, and what will happen to the data. The information sheet also ensures that the participants know that participation is voluntary, and that non-participation will not impact the service they receive from the dyslexia service. Furthermore, my relationship with the student was not a determinant in whether they agree to be a part of the research, this was clearly stated on the information sheet. To begin to address this, a consent form was provided (see appendix B). This was accompanied by the information sheet (see appendix A) (this information sheet was given out before consent form, to give the potential participants sufficient time to process the information and come to an informed decision). This information was provided to potential participants.

Further, I ensured that participants knew they could withdraw from the study at any time. The information sheet makes this explicit, whilst ensuring that the participants are clear about up to which point, they can withdraw from the study and have their data disregarded.

Finally, to ensure anonymity of the participants (Hugman, Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2011), the students' user IDs and personal information such as their name was removed from the data once the data collection was completed. The students will not be identifiable in any presentation or publications resulting from the research. It has been made clear to the students that their department is not involved and will not be informed of individual participation. Finally, the data will be kept in a locked cupboard, will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisor, and will be destroyed after it is no longer needed, subsequent to the final examination of the thesis. I then submitted my research proposal for ethical review. This is a vital part of the process and allows for any ethical concerns to be identified and addressed. My research was found to be low risk and was approved.

### 3.9.2 Ethics in Practice

Whilst every effort was made to ensure there were no ethical issues prior to the commencement of the research, it was important to consider how to respond to issues that may arise during the study. Meadows *et al* (2003) for example, point out that ethical concerns that are not always immediately obvious in the research setting can arise at any stage of the research, from recruitment to data collection. To manage ethical considerations as they arise, Guillemin and Gillam (2004:276) suggest that reflexivity, usually considered in relation to positionality, be utilised to develop ethical practice; stating:

*Being reflexive about research practice means a number of things: an acknowledgment of microethics, that is, of the ethical dimensions of ordinary, everyday research practice; sensitivity to what we call the "ethically important moments" in research practice, in all their particularities; and having or being able to develop a means of addressing and responding to ethical concerns if and when they arise in the research*

In the case of this research, using reflexivity in this context enabled me to recognise and respond effectively to ethically important moments, for example when a student participant made a comment

regarding being reliant on her tutor for a good grade. Rather than explore this with her as a researcher, I slipped into a tutor role and challenged this comment. I reflected on this and why this had happened, re-considering my positionality. I was then better prepared to manage such situations if something similar were to occur.

Reflexivity is also suggested to support the research in managing emotions that arise throughout the course of the research. Malacrida (2007) advises that reflexivity is a tool that can be used to manage the researchers' values and emotions in terms of ensuring they do not impact on the research process and to support the researcher in coping with the emotional demands made by the research. *"To manage the epistemological concerns of analysis, positional reflexivity leads the analyst to examine place, biography, self, and other to understand how they shape the analytic exercise"* (Macbeth, 2001, cited in Bowtell et al, 2013:654). In this research, an issue that arose, which was not anticipated, was that of tutors sharing stories about their students. As these students have not consented to share their stories, this raised an ethical issue. For example, a tutor participant talked about a student who struggled to manage an academic environment and would often smash up university spaces such as labs, lecture theatres and tutorial spaces. Whilst the student has retained his anonymity and is unlikely to be identified, this student has not consented to have his story shared or to be represented in this way, and have his story analysed by me for the purposes of research. Josselson (cited in Ellis, 2007:6) points out that, *"language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation,"* I think that for my research, therefore, the question is, who owns the story? This issue was discussed by Forrest (cited in Welch, 2008:5).

*Why would anyone want to tell a story from [someone else's] life? There are people who say adamantly it's a folk process; if you tell a personal story, you're putting something out into the stream of oral tradition. But really, ownership becomes an issue of economics.*

On reading Barton's (2011) article, 'My Auto/ethnographic dilemma, who owns the story?' Two further questions were raised, namely,

*What is my responsibility...to people I [whose stories I experience] during field work who are unaware that I am collecting data? Do the value and validity of the data outweigh these ethical issues?"* (440).

Having read Ellis' 'telling secrets, revealing lives' (2007), I felt that her telling of the stories of others was a concern and there was an exploitative element to the research, particularly when she talks about her mother. It is important that I need to consider the ethical implication of other people mentioned in participants' stories. In order to reduce the ethical harm to people mentioned in participants' stories, therefore, I considered any other actors in the participants' stories to be secondary participants. By doing so I was able to ensure that I took responsibility for their wellbeing in terms of my duty of care towards them.

My primary supervisor, Tim Herrick, offered the perspective that,

*the stories we tell about other people say a fair amount about us - and I wouldn't see them as implying or requiring any kind of insight into the other people themselves. I wouldn't look for veracity in the tutor's story about a student - I would try to focus on what it is the tutor is conveying to me through telling this story, including creating a character of "the student" in this story.*

This is described by (Crossley, 2007:131) as an exploration of *"issues of identity construction and self-exploration."* To ensure that no student is exposed during the construction of the 'student' I could



redact the data if necessary to ensure that no individual is identifiable and that the stories are treated just as that, stories. Indeed, in order to respond to ethical dilemmas; indeed, Morris (2004:55) asks, *“is it possible that ethical action might depend less on analytical reasoning than on responding to a dilemma as we might respond to a story?”*

One final consideration is that of the lost voices. By this I mean the voices that did not get an opportunity to be heard. The main loss here is the students who only came to the tutorial service once and did not come back, or the students who never came at all. The only voices heard are those who use the service at least somewhat regularly. So, in reality, the ones for whom the tutorials are a positive and useful resource. The students who didn't use dyslexia tutorials have, in essence, been silenced in favour of those for whom the current system is effective. Equally, the recruiting for tutors was done via ADSHE, the professional body for tutors who are currently practicing, thus the voices of the tutors who have left the profession are also lost to the research.

Perhaps the stories, therefore, belong to all of us and none of us. No story is a distinct autonomous unit, rather all the stories are intertwined with different actors within the stories and with influences beyond the story such as cultural narratives and societal narratives. As I analyse my data, it is important that I consider all of the realities represented in the stories that I have had the privilege of being shared with me and how they relate to a shared experience, and that I am as mindful of my duty of care to secondary participants and lost voices as I am to primary participants.

### 3.9.3 Relational Ethics

Ellis (2007) has suggested a third element of ethics, that of relational ethics, described by Buber (cited in Ellis 2007:4) as doing what is needed in order to be, *“true to one's character and responsible for one's actions and their consequences on others.”* Relational ethics, therefore, go beyond anticipating ethical issues and attempting to reduce harm, but rather recognises that the researcher is part of the research and needs to acknowledge this in order to act ethically. This is described by Pollard (2015:363) as, *“the self not [being] viewed as individualistic but rather as embodied, interdependent, and connected.”* This happened to me quite early on in my data collection; when I was interviewing one of my participants, she told me how she didn't get any prior information about her students, she didn't get access to the university campus, and that the university didn't even know which students she saw. In this moment, I realised I had based my research on my privileged position as a tutor with a permanent university contract, with my own office and thus a presence in the university, which is afforded by this. Consequently, I feel a responsibility to the tutor to give her story a voice in this research and to consider the impact on the tutorial space when no physical space is offered. Even when the tutorial room is standing empty, it is still a physical presence within the institution.

Another ethical issue that arose was in relation to Suzi, a student participant. This participant had been my student for three years and then had gone to a Scottish university to do a PhD. As such, I have had a long working relationship. I did not fully consider the implications of this and during the first interview, the student began to discuss very difficult events from her past and how this intersected with her dyslexia. During the interview, I was very concerned about this disclosure, whilst being mindful that I didn't silence the student's voice because of my own discomfort. After considering the nature of the disclosure, and the fact that it relates to a tragic event, I have decided to redact the details prior to the analysis and instead analyse how the event impacted on her support needs. Whilst the student made the disclosures voluntarily, I feel my previous relationship may have made her more likely to reveal details and it would not be ethical to include the details.

### 3.9.4 Summary of the Ethics

Procedural ethics have been considered, and the research has been approved by the University of Sheffield's ethical review system. This was, however, just the starting point in ensuring that the work was as ethical as possible. Everything that I did had an impact and the best possible outcome is to minimize harm rather than eliminate harm. By redacting the account of the tragic event, for example, I have minimized the potential harm to the student, but have also silenced her voice. Equally, whilst I have reflected on the issue of my slipping into a tutor role from a researcher role, I cannot undo the potential harm to the students, who found herself in a situation that she had not consented to. She had provided consent to being interviewed by a researcher and not challenged by a tutor.

Further, the ethics only covers the participants, and does not protect the secondary participants, and the lost voices, who do not get to manage how they are portrayed in the research. Whilst I had some tools to minimize harm, there is no way to represent the voices of those not directly involved in the research. Finally, the participants' stories will not be told, only my fragmented, incomplete interpretation of their stories. Perhaps all research is an ethical compromise, and only by recognising this can we reduce harm to our participants.

## 3.10 Summary of Methodology

This chapter has provided an overview of the qualitative methodological approach that this research will take. The ontological position of critical realism allows me to consider the experiences of the participants who inhabit the dyslexia tutorial space, whilst recognising the structural influences on their experience, such as the perceptions of what a teaching space should and should not be. From this, a constructivist epistemological stance is taken where narratives are constructed, co-constructed and reconstructed. This approach aligns with critical realism as it considers how the participants in the space create the reality, whilst also acknowledging the structures that shape and influence the way this reality is constructed. Within this, my approach is naturalistic inquiry which views the world as a system. The parts of the system are interrelated, meaning that one part influences the other parts. Therefore, parts cannot be separated, but must be examined in the context of the whole (McKechnie, 2008). Thus, the participants cannot be separated from the context in which the research is situated, again allowing me to consider the structural influences on the participants' experiences. The methods of in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall allow me to both explore the participants' experiences, whilst recognising how stories are constructed between participant and researcher; equally, interpersonal process recall provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and their practices within the dyslexia tutorials.

In terms of analysis, framework analysis provides a systematic model to both manage and map large amounts of data; further it provides a structure to the data making it easier for the researcher to generate and develop themes (Gale *et al*, 2013). The analysis will, therefore, allow me to ensure that the themes emerge from the data, rather than me trying to fit the data into pre-conceived ideas. Finally, my ethics section has considered ethical issues that may arise during the research. The next chapter is the analysis of the data and will detail the findings from the framework analysis.

# Chapter Four, Analysis

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyses the tutors' and students' experience of the dyslexia tutorial space and comprises four themes. The first theme considers the impact the tutorial space has in terms of both the participants and the university, purely by its existence. This space can be physical, such as a room set aside for tutorials, or a conceptual space. By conceptual, I am referring to how the space is conceived, perceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991). The theme will consider how three different dyslexia tutorial spaces are experienced; a permanent designated room, only used for dyslexia tutorials; a temporary designated room, bookable for dyslexia tutorials but not exclusively used for the tutorials, and a temporary non-designated space, where tutorials are conducted in a public place such as a cafe.

The second theme focuses on how students and tutors gain access to the tutorial space and how this experience influences the initial power dynamics within the tutorials. It will explore how students are required to prove their disability and disclose personal information, in order to gain access to the tutorials, in comparison to tutors who are required to prove their professional credentials. The theme will then go on to explore the extent to which the space is experienced as separate or segregated by the student participants. This will draw on the work of Campbell (2009), Kitchen (1998) and Holt (2007).

The third theme moves on to a consideration of how the tutorial aims and outcomes are negotiated between the tutor and the student. These negotiations occur in the initial sessions in the tutorial and shape the dyslexia tutorial space, in terms of power dynamics and who controls what happens in the space. This is described by Morgan (2000:281) as "*the power relationships involved in the production of space.*" To explore this, there will be a discussion of the associations around tutorials and how these are followed or transgressed and why. Associations are best described as a shorthand for how a space is conceptualised, both in terms of the physical manifestation and what happens in the space. For example, when visualising a classroom, it is likely that a room is pictured with rows of desks and a blackboard at the front, and typical conceptualization of what happens in a classroom would be a teacher at the front of the classroom talking to the students, with students putting their hands up when they want to participate, as discussed in the literature review, section 2.4. Specifically, this theme will firstly consider the student- tutor relationship, and how this is experienced by the tutors and the students and whether this is a shared experience, or whether there is a diversity of experience. Secondly, and connectedly, there will be an exploration of who controls the tutorials, for example how aims and outcomes are decided and who leads the session.

The final theme considers the lived experience of the space (Lefebvre, 1991). It will explore how the students and the tutors perceive the purpose of the tutorials, and how this relates to students' academic goals. It will consider elements such as developing criticality and developing authority over the text through an assignment-based approach and will compare and contrast the tutors and students' journey within the session for example the reinforcement/reframing of teacher identity, students becoming acculturated into their department, and the development of a student academic identity.

These themes help address research questions by considering the experiences of the tutors and students as they move through the space, beginning with accessing the space and the initial formation of the emerging tutor student relationship, before moving on to a consideration of the students and tutor's perspectives of the purpose of tutorials and how this purpose is achieved.

As mentioned in the methodology section 3.6.1., for ease of distinguishing between tutors and students, all of the tutors' pseudonyms begin with a vowel, Ellen, Imogen, Oscar and Alice, and all of the students' pseudonyms begin with a consonant, Blaine, Shep, Suzi, and Rowan.

## 4.2 Theme One: How Tutors and Students Experience the Positioning of the Space in Relation to the Institution

### 4.2.1 Introduction to Theme One

This theme focuses on how the space is perceived by the participants and how this perception interacts with how the participants experience the space. This theme is separated into four sections. The first section explores the tutors experience of a designated space, that is a space specifically set aside for dyslexia tutorials. The second section shifts the focus to how tutors experience non-designated spaces, these are spaces that are not set aside or designed for dyslexia tutorials, such as libraries. The third section broadens this discussion to the relationship between the positioning of the space and the tutors' identity. The final section moves to an exploration of how the students experience the positioning of the dyslexia tutorial space and considers why this may diverge from the tutors' experience. Finally, I will provide a brief summary of the theme.

### 4.2.2 Tutors' Experience of the Designation of the Space

This section considers the importance that the tutors place on the dyslexia tutorial room and how they believe it may influence how they experience tutorials, beginning with Ellen, who has a private office for tutorials.

*In other universities, tutors have to book a room or even go to the library or a café. They don't take up any space and can't be found on campus. They may have a digital space such as a website and an email but aren't claiming a stake in the university. The physical room shows the value that is placed on us by the university. By [having our own room, we are] taking up space, we have a stake in the university and are part of the structure, our names are on the door and people can come and find us. (Ellen)*

Ellen, therefore, views the physical space as contributing to how dyslexia tutorials are positioned in the university, that the room represents the tutorials' relationship with the university and, by extension, the tutors' relationship. Oscar also equates the value placed on a service with the provision of rooms, '*space is at a premium and the services that the university values are given a permanent physical space to. So, the space, or lack of, feels quite political.*' Here, Oscar explicitly links the provision of rooms to the university's priorities. The space does not belong to the tutor or student, but to the university. This is reflected by Imogen who is required to book a room for dyslexia tutorials, having recently moved from a

private office to a shared space, *'I've gone from having a defined space [...] with our own reception just for us, to working in a shared office and having to book rooms for the students [...] we have an impersonal and inflexible space.'* Imogen uses the term 'defined space' and references a reception area solely for the SpLD/dyslexia service. Here, she appears to be linking a physical presence with the legitimisation of the tutorials. They no longer take up a permanent physical space but exist only for an hour at a time.

She discusses the impacts of this stating that, *'we share a workspace with other support services such as counselling and mentors. We are based in the library, and this feels like we are treated like a resource and not as teaching staff, it isn't our own space.'* Thus, the space is conceived (Lefebvre, 1991) by the university as a resource to be used as efficiently as possible rather than specifically for teaching. In the absence of a permanent defined space, the tutors experience the workspace as more akin to a public space, as described by Gordon (1996), rather than a private space. This could be similar to the students' experience of the space, as students only access the space for an hour at a time, for a particular purpose. Indeed, Imogen makes the claim that universities are maximising efficiency of usage of the space over the needs of the students.

*The university wants to use the space efficiently as possible and this is the answer, to have bookable rooms so that no rooms are ever empty. It shows a real lack of understanding about what is happening in the space. (Imogen)*

Imogen explains how the temporality of this space impacts the students. *'There is less flexibility, there is no way they can drop in because the space isn't an SpLD space if it isn't booked. It has become a different space.'* Therefore, students', and indeed tutors', access to tutorials is restricted. Similarly, Oscar highlights how a temporary space can be detrimental to the students. *'I now have to book a room [...] It could be any of the bookable rooms, so this is contrary to what I am trying to do, which is to keep continuity for the students, so they come to the same room every week.'* Imogen also highlights a concern about a loss of confidentiality.

*People think a room is a room...it's not a case of any room will do. The students need to feel safe and secure [...] in these rooms (bookable office space) the library staff have to check that they are being used properly so they come and look who is in the room [...] I feel I am being watched, surveillance, [...] worse the students are having their session interrupted and feeling that it isn't a confidential space, anyone can come in at any time. (Imogen)*

The room being temporary rather than permanent appears, therefore, to have changed how both users of the room and other stakeholders, such as administrators and managers perceive the space. Imogen experiences the room being monitored as eroding her professionalism, as well as expressing concern for students' sense of safety. Therefore, it appears to impact both the tutors' sense of professional identity and the students' experience. One possibility for this is that the space has become a hireable, multi-functional space, as opposed to a designated teaching space and this has impacted expectations about how the space is utilised; As Lefebvre's production of space discussed (1991), the conception of the space influences how it is experienced.

The experiences so far have been around how university rooms are accessed and experienced. In contrast, Alice has experienced being unable to access university facilities. As a freelance tutor, she is often unable to book a room for students, but instead has to use a public space, such as a café.

*The only place available was a café. The head of disability said I could work there as long as there were no complaints [...]*

This indicates that when the tutorials are situated outside the university space this creates an othering of the tutorials. Dyslexic students' support is shunted to the periphery of the university experience. In addition to the physical separation from the university, Alice argues that the separation is indicative of the low priority of dyslexia tutorials, *'the needs of customers having a coffee was prioritised over a disabled students needing to access support.'* (Alice). Further, she experienced this space as being ephemeral, stating *'it was more the tenuous nature of the support that was a problem, there was always this feeling of impermanence.'* Whilst Alice was the only tutor who had worked in a cafe, Ellen referred to this practice in her reflection:

*Many tutors don't have much choice over the tutorial space. They don't have their own room and have to book a room or even work in a coffee shop or a café. This is really inappropriate, as there are confidentiality issues, and the student may feel that the session is being taken seriously. If the university can't even provide a room, then clearly the university aren't valuing the space.*

A result of the tutorials being held in a non-designated space, therefore, is that it can be experienced by tutors and students as the sessions being viewed as a low priority. Further, as both Alice and Ellen reference, the students lose their right to confidentiality, they are required to both have confidential meetings in a public place and to self-monitor their behaviour in order to fit into the space. Alice explicitly references this conforming saying, *'a student was violent and would smash this up. He coped better in a public space. I think he'd been taught to control himself in public.'* This might have a positive impact on the experience of tutors in terms of safety, and may promote the sessions being more productive; however, I would ask the question, better for whom? Holt (2004:224) describes this as the students being required to *'regulate their mind'/bodies in conforming ways.'* Thus again, the designation of the room impacts how the tutorials are experienced and how they are perceived.

### 4.2.3 Tutors' Perceptions of the Impact of the Tutorial Space on Tutor Identity

The value that the tutor places on the room is, therefore, both practical and symbolic; tutors both recognise practical issues such as access to rooms and confidentiality and at the same time associate the granting of a physical room with the value that the university places on the activities that occur within the room. This is particularly seen in an interview with Oscar, who has experienced both a permanent private room and a shared, bookable room. *'We have all been shoved into a shared office together and the individual identity of all the services has gone.'* Here, Oscar links having a permanent room to a sense of belonging and identity of dyslexia tutors. The room being framed as a flexible space was felt by tutor participants to contribute to their teacher identity being eroded. Imogen, for example stated, *we aren't seen as teachers, not like academics, I think that we are viewed as a resource. We aren't considered for our skills and knowledge.* Alice describes this as being in part due to the fact that teaching is considered to be the preserve of the lecturer, *'it is difficult for dyslexia tutors, as they are on the periphery. It's not [viewed as] a proper job like being a lecturer.'* *It is seen as a support role done by women and isn't seen as professional in the same way.* The tutorials are not part of the students' course, but, nevertheless, form part of the teaching offer from the university. Therefore, they provide the freedom to work in a different way from formal programmes. This informality, however, creates a lack of clarity about the provision. Imogen goes on to say that,

*No-one knows what happens in the sessions or how it fits into the wider university picture, so we have become a strange shadow service [...] I think that informal learning has a strange lack of status; some lecturers have called us disability officers, study mentors and other names which take away our identity as tutors [...] [these] take away from what we do, which is teach.*

(Imogen)

This would indicate that some tutors perceive a permanent dyslexia room as a way to assert identity and to provide clarity of the role of the dyslexia tutor. Interestingly, some of the student participants also sometimes used language other than tutor or teacher to describe their dyslexia tutor. *'I love coming to my tutor and seeing him. It is going to sound a bit strange, but the best way that I can [...] describe it is that I kind of have a parent at university [...]'* Rowan. And Suzi stated, *'my tutor is great, to be honest I think of her more as a friend, like a critical friend.'* The difference here, I would argue, is that the students acknowledge that the dyslexia tutors are tutors and then layer an additional identity, rather than erasing the dyslexia tutor identity and replacing it with a different identity, for example whilst some student participants used comparisons with other identities such as parent, they nevertheless referred to 'my tutor' during the interviews.

#### 4.2.4 Students' Experience of the Designation of the Space

Whilst the tutors had a strong sense of the room designation contributing to identity and belonging, this was not shared by the student participants. Rowan, for example, created a distinction between her department and other university services:

*There's my department and then there's everything else, student union, study skills [...] To be honest I see tutorials as completely different from my department.* (Rowan)

Similarly, Blaine viewed dyslexia tutorials as part of a wider university support package in addition to the department. *'I think it works really well together with the department [...] the department does stuff, and the tutor does stuff, it all comes together.'* This suggests that for students their sense of belonging comes from their attachment to their departments. This aligns with Sung and Yang (2008) who found that student identification is a process whereby an individual develops a student identity within the context of their institution. Suzi has had a different experience from the other student participants in that she has experienced two different forms of dyslexia tutorials, at two different universities.

*[at x university] I sort of said, I'm dyslexic what sort of support is there, and the lady I met was lovely, but had a lot of time off [...] I kept telling people, I need a Sheila [ anonymised name of SpLD tutor]! but she's in Cardiff [ anonymised name of previous university]!*

Suzi is, therefore, locating the dyslexia support in the tutor, rather than in the dyslexia space itself, whilst acknowledging the importance of the room for maintaining confidentiality and a safe space. *'I thought it was a safe space, it's not like a great big room, so once the door is closed, I've always felt relaxed.'* Blaine and Rowan, also mention feeling relaxed in the space,

*I feel relaxed and I can be myself, I like that. I don't feel I am being judged' and, 'I can relax and be myself, and be rubbish and it doesn't matter, because no-one is judging, and no-one will find out.*

The experience of the room as a safe space is considered in more detail in theme two, accessing the space. With the exception of Suzi, students do not have a frame of reference for dyslexia tutorials, in the same way that they may have a frame of reference for formal teaching. As such, they do not have expectations of the space in the same way that they might for a lecture or classroom-based session, what Lefebvre (1991) would describe as how the space is conceived. Rather, the tutorial is located in the tutor, and what makes the session a dyslexia session, is the status of the tutor as a dyslexia specialist.

## 4.2.5 Summary of Theme One

In summary, there are a number of diverse experiences of the dyslexia tutorial space amongst tutors and students, with tutors tending to locate the dyslexia tutorial in the physical room, compared with students locating the tutorial in the tutor. Another key difference is how the provision of resources was perceived by the participants; tutor participants in particular equated this provision as both a reflection of how the university values the tutorials, and their sense of belonging. The designation of the room impacts how the space is experienced in terms of relationship to the university for tutors due in part to a lack of connection to the university. This is particularly the case for casual workers who often felt marginalised from the university, for example, Alice stated, *'we aren't even being thought about at all.'* In terms of Lefebvre's conceived space (1991), if the space is conceived by people outside of the space as being a multi-purpose space, rather than teaching space; therefore, the logical conclusion of this is that the users of the space, dyslexia tutors, are not considered to be teachers. In contrast, the students attributed their sense of belonging to their relationship with the department, seeing dyslexia tutorials as something additional to their core university experience. As Suzi puts it, *'the tutorials remind me that, yeah, there is a bigger thing out there, not just me and my studying.'* This view of dyslexia as addition is significant in that it demonstrates a view of the tutorials as separate from the students' departments as opposed to an integrated aspect of their learning. The next theme will move on to an exploration of this view of the dyslexia tutorials as a separate space, focusing on how the space is accessed and whether the space is experienced as separate or segregated, as discussed in the literature review, section 2.4.

## 4.3 Theme Two: Accessing the Space

### 4.3.1 Introduction to Theme Two

The first theme has analysed how the students and tutors perceive the positioning of the tutors in the university. This has included an exploration of how tutors view the different types of spaces allocated for dyslexia tutorials, designated spaces and non-designated, and whether students share this experience. This theme moves on to analyse how tutors and students gain access to the dyslexia tutorial, and whether the access requirements influence how the dyslexia tutorial space is constructed and experienced. This section will commence with a discussion about how the tutors and students access the space, before moving on to a discussion around whether the space is perceived as integrated into the university, a separate space, or a segregated space.

### 4.3.2 Entry Requirements for Students and Tutors

As discussed in the literature review, section 2.4, to gain access to dyslexia support in the UK, students must provide a diagnostic report from an accredited assessor/educational psychologist. The assessor uses a combination of diagnostic tests, family history and student's history to determine whether a student is deemed to have dyslexia. Shep describes experiencing this process as labelling him as



different and inferior to his peers. *'I got a diagnosis, and it was pretty horrible; I felt like I was labelled as not as good, and I didn't want it.'* The diagnosis process was also reported as a negative experience by Blaine. *'I had to meet a stranger and talk all about my past and my family [...] It was horrible, having to talk about all of these [...] personal things to a stranger.* This is described by Mingus (2017) as forced intimacy. There is a danger that students are viewed in terms of their disability and, although other aspects of their lives are considered, this is often interpreted through the lens of disability. Using a single lens is described by Adichie (2009) as framing someone through a single narrative (Literature review, section 2.7). Oscar also acknowledged this requirement to disclose private personal information during the assessment process.

*They have to give all their history and family history; then it's off to an assessment centre [...] requiring again that you tell your personal details to another stranger. If that comes back that you have dyslexia, you have to have an assessment of needs [...] that's another stranger to hear all about you. Finally, you are given a tutor and guess what? You have to tell them all about your history and struggles. (Oscar)*

Ellen goes further, explaining that withholding information and resisting the forced intimacy, experienced by students as being obliged to share personal information to gain access to the space, might impact on the student gaining access to the tutorial support.

*The student can't control what you know. I suppose they could withhold information during the process of applying for SpLD support, but then they might not get awarded the support. To ensure they get the support, they have to tell stranger after stranger private stuff about their childhood, their family history, their education and all kinds of stuff. (Ellen)*

Ellen acknowledges, therefore, that students are obliged to trade personal information for access to the support. Ellen juxtaposes this with access to other professionals, *'Often when you see professionals, you get to choose what you tell them, for example counsellors only know what you tell them.'* What is particularly telling is the use of the term 'awarded support', as if support has to be earned, rather than something that the student is entitled to. Once the space has been accessed, the student is still required to disclose personal information in order to commence the tutorials and does not have control over the information that they have already disclosed. Here, Imogen discusses the first session,

*What happens in the sessions varies; in the first session, the session is very tutor led. The tutor's aim is to get to know the student, determine what they want to achieve in the sessions and get some ideas of some aims [...] there is a funny dynamic [...] all the student has is a name, whereas I know lots about them, it is quite an unbalanced start to a student tutor relationship. (Imogen)*

Imogen is, therefore, acknowledging the imbalance in the student-tutor power dynamic that exists at the start of every dyslexia tutor-student relationship. The tutor, meanwhile, is not required to make any disclosures, thus shifting the power dynamic in favour of the tutor. This was highlighted by Blaine,

*I found my first session a bit uncomfortable [...], I had to talk about my [...] school and my family members to someone I had just met [...] I thought I had to, but really, the information wasn't even used in my teaching. I never thought to not give the information, I just thought I had to.*

What is interesting about both of the quotes above is that both the tutor and the student had concerns about requiring very personal information, but neither challenged this, accepting it as part of the process. The tutor did not justify it or explain why it was necessary; equally, whilst Blaine did challenge the usefulness of the information being elicited, he complied because he thought it was a prerequisite of accessing the tutorials. This could be an example of Lipsky's (2010), street bureaucracy, in which people comply with the paperwork that the system demands. Blaine proposed that the tutors be more proactive in supporting the students in resisting this.

*Just say [...] you don't have to answer all my questions, it won't affect your support, I am just learning about you so I can know what the support you need [...]? [...]so it's the student's choice, not the tutor's what is said and what isn't. Students need to know that it's up to them what they tell and what they don't. (Blaine)*

This approach would resist the oppressive practice of students trading information for access to the session and, therefore, would shift control of information sharing back to the student, creating the foundation for a more horizontal relationship (Freire, 1970),

Another aspect of access to the dyslexia tutorial discussed by the student participants is time allocation, with the students discussing having access to the space for one hour per week. For example, Rowan reported,

*you have this person that you can see once a week. You have an hour with someone who has time for you [...] and doesn't just have [...] office hours [...] office hours are very limited [...] you get like ten minutes with the tutor. (Rowan)*

Here, therefore, the student references the hour once a week as an improvement on a ten-minute slot with their personal tutor, whilst recognising that access to the space is restricted. At the same time, later in the interview, Rowan states that, '*access to the service* is something I have control over. I can see him, or not see him, it is completely up to me.' Therefore, the student has bounded that control over the space to one hour once a week, thus demonstrating how time is an element of Lefebvre's (1991) conception of the perceived space in which the space is shaped by everyday practices of the space. Equally, Blaine, while again being positive about the space, stated that, '*It is that someone has time for me, there is an hour set aside for me to talk about what I want with a sympathetic person*'. The term 'set aside' is very illuminating, Blaine appears to be situating the space as one granted to him with which to access the dyslexia tutorial. This is described by Lefebvre (1991) as a dominated space, with the user of space experiencing what is imposed on them, in this case a time restriction. Similarly, to Rowan, Blaine juxtaposes his experience of the dyslexia tutorial with his experience with her personal tutor, '*personal tutors are massively busy, all the time. They don't have time to get to know you and work with you in the same way, they may see you like, perhaps once a semester and that is it*.' Rowan uses a different framework to construct the space, locating a comparison outside academia. She likens the space to a beauty therapy session rather than part of a higher institution, '*it doesn't feel like an office or part of the university, it feels separate and nice. I think it feels like when you go to a massage and the room is calming and relaxing*.' This comparison could point to Rowan experiencing some agency in the tutorials, as the tutor is positioned as providing a service. On the whole, however, while some tutor participants see access to the rooms as granted to them by the university, some student participants situate the control of the space in the tutors. Suzi mentioned this in her discussion of the space saying, '*it's like your office*', referring to the fact that the space was 'owned' by the tutor, with the student a visitor into the space. The next section focuses on the students' experiences of accessing the space, in terms of whether it is experienced as a separate space or segregated space, see literature review, section 2.4.

### 4.3.3 Separate Space Versus Segregated Space

As discussed in the previous section, 4.3.2., access to the tutorials is limited to both students and tutors who fulfil strict criteria; as such, the tutorials are a space that is separate from the rest of the university. Thus, the tutorials are often both physically separate from the students' department, in that they are in a separate building and separate in that they are not part of the standard provision of the department.

Shep described the space as being separate from the mainstream of the department and discussed how this might impact on inclusion, explaining that accessing support required the student to leave their department and go to the disability centre, where the support would be delivered.

*We keep being told that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of, yet we are hidden away [...] I am not sure why. I think it would be better if each department had a dyslexia tutor in it [...] it would be a thing that everyone saw and [...] in the open, not stuck in the special help building. (Shep)*

This concern about being singled out for special treatment, as Shep puts it, could arise from previous educational experiences, especially in terms of additional dyslexia provision. Indeed, a link between previous educational experience and university is made explicitly by Shep, 'I do really like my tutorial space, but I don't get why it can't be delivered in my own department, [going to a separate room is] a bit like when I was in school.'

His experiences of dyslexia support in school are, therefore, influencing his framework of understanding for dyslexia support in university and he associated a separate space with being removed from mainstream teaching and experiencing this as being excluded. Consequently, he experiences the dyslexia tutorial space as exclusionary because of its separation, as discussed by Campbell (2001) (see literature review, section 2.4). Ellen also points to this separation as contributing to the othering of dyslexia support, stating,

*No-one [referring to academic departments] knows what happens in the sessions, or how it fits into the wider university picture. If you asked lecturers, I bet lots would say we do proofread, or teach study skills, so we have become a strange shadow service. (Ellen)*

Thus, Ellen is taking the view that separation could result in academic departments viewing supporting dyslexic students as purely the remit of disability services. Oscar makes a similar point.

*The department just think that the tutors are going to deal with it [dyslexia support]. They don't think they have to take any responsibility, this system that we have at this university is part of the problem. Lecturers aren't made to take responsibility for understanding dyslexia. (Oscar)*

Further, Imogen argues that 'the service takes away the problem of supporting the dyslexic students.' Both tutors and students, therefore, directly challenge the way the dyslexia tutorials are delivered, positioning them as having the potential to challenge stigma by situating them within an academic department, rather than as a space removed from the department. Kitchin (1998) describes this separation as keeping disabled students in their place. Improved integration with the department was also recognised as being of value by Oscar, who felt this would lead to a more joined up service, 'I think that the service needs to be more integrated and do more with departments.' Some of the students, in contrast, preferred a distance between their department and the dyslexia tutorial. Suzi, for example, felt the dyslexia tutorials to be an opportunity to take risks and make mistakes.

*What is great is that it is completely separate from my department. I know that what we chat [about] is completely separate from my department. I know that what we [...] do won't be reported back to my tutors [...] My department has writing advisors, but I am scared to use them in case they think, oh she's not a very good writer, and it gets back to my tutors. (Suzi)*

The benefits of a perceived distance from the department are also mentioned by Blaine,

*[the dyslexia tutorial room has] a nice calm atmosphere, my course is very competitive, I like to come away and have that one hour where I can just be and don't have to impress. (Blaine)*

The space could be experienced, therefore, as a place where students are freed from the demands of their course. Hall (2004) suggests that disabled students may seek out safe spaces to remove themselves from spaces that they experience as intimidating or discriminatory. By leaving their department and going to a different building, they are able to see someone who is outside their course and discuss their work and their progress, safe in the knowledge that the person they are in dialogue with will not contact their tutors and will not have any influence over their assessment. Equally, the sessions are not mandatory; within the confines of funding limits, the student is in control over how many sessions they attend, if any. McLaughlin and Faulkner (2012) argued that students want to be treated as independent autonomous learners. Having control of whether to make use of the students is a way for students to demonstrate this autonomy. Equally, and pragmatically, students who do not find the sessions useful, are under no obligation to continue to attend. As Shep puts it, *'I don't have to go every week, I decide when I get to have tutorials.'* As such, the space is an informal learning environment, positioned somewhere between the university institution and student led learning.

Whilst some participants support the provision of dyslexia support as being separate from the student's department, there is some evidence that this is because of the student's anxiety about being judged by their department and they, therefore, prefer a separate space to avoid stigma. This is discussed by Suzi.

*It's good that there is confidentiality. I don't want people making opinions [...] on me and I can just disappear and not be in my department. (Suzi)*

And, in video observation two, Rowan expressed a desire to manage her department's opinion of her, saying, *'they are marking my work, I want them to have a good impression.'* The tutor participants' comments also position the tutorials as a safe space within the university, for example the importance of privacy and confidentiality,

*privacy and confidentiality are important. Giving the students a space shows that they are valued [...] the students must give space to build a relationship and create a trust.' (Alice)*

*The students were familiar with the room, and where it was, it also created a bit of a routine. It was a safe space for them. (Oscar)*

This fear about being judged may not be reflected in the department, and indeed it could be to the case that the department is supportive of dyslexic students; however, the perception of stigma points to the structural stigma that students have experienced and that they are responding to by seeking sanctuary in a safe space.

#### 4.3.4 Summary of Theme Two

In summary, therefore, the view of the tutorials as separate from the students' university experience is underscored in terms of both the positioning of the tutorials as both physically separate from the department and separate in terms of access to the space, which is proving dyslexia via an assessment. This separation is potentially stigmatising for students, especially those with previous lived experiences of exclusionary education environments. Equally, the separation from the department was experienced by some students as empowering, as they were able to explore their learning and make mistakes in a non-judgmental environment. The students who reported a preference for the tutorials being separated, framed this as being able to make mistakes in a safe space. This could indicate that the students are anxious about disclosing dyslexia and, as such, tutorials allow the students to 'pass' as non-disabled in their department. Essentially, the stigmatising aspect of the separation is via the students

being required to prove their disability to gain access, thus situating the disability in the student. The next theme, the evolving tutor-student relationship moves on from a discussion of accessing tutorials to an exploration of how the tutor-student dynamic is navigated in the initial few sessions, considering setting the agenda, developing a working relationship, and negotiating power dynamics.

## 4.4 Theme Three: The Evolving Tutor-Student Relationship

### 4.4.1 Introduction to Theme Three

This theme moves on from a discussion about access to the dyslexia tutorial to an exploration of the initial sessions. Unlike more traditional programmes of learning, dyslexia sessions do not follow a core curriculum and, thus, there is no predetermined scheme of work. Instead, the students and the tutors work together to negotiate what areas to work on. This theme will consider this agenda setting process considering the tutor and student perceptions of the tutorials. Specifically, it will consider who sets the agenda, the emerging tutor-student relationship, and how the tutor-student dynamic evolves, thus exploring what Lefebvre (1991) describes as the lived experience of the space.

### 4.4.2 Setting the Agenda: Power Dynamics, Framing and Reframing

As mentioned in the introduction to the theme above, the tutorials do not have a curriculum or scheme of work. In the first tutorial session, therefore, the tutors and students set potential aims and outcomes for the sessions, for example, structuring writing. Imogen frames the role of dyslexia tutors as being separate from the students' programme of study, whilst contributing to the student meeting the course requirements.

*we are holistic, humanistic teachers, developing the persons [...] what we are doing, it provides an opportunity for learning and to facilitate and support that. We are there to help the students to meet the requirements of the course, so [are] complementary to the course. (Imogen)*

Imogen describes this as being fundamentally different from formal programmes in a number of ways:

*It feels more like a half-way space between formal learning and between a chat with friends about studying [...] Nothing is ever done; students can return to say revision skills as many times as they want, we never say, you've done this. And yet progress is made. The progress isn't always vertical, sometimes it's broadening understanding, sometimes revisiting.*

The tutors, therefore, are positioning themselves as facilitating learning as opposed to leading the session. Despite this assertion of non-directive learning, there is some structure to the sessions. This takes the form of an individual learning plan. The plan is not binding on the student; however, (prior to DAS QAG going bankrupt) it was audited by DAS-QAG and formed an important part of the tutorials. This ILP is reviewed every three months and either changed or updated. Alice describes this process:

*Together we create a plan of work to enable the student to reach their potential. I [...] don't decide what the student needs [...] to be successful. That's what they often think will happen*

*because they are given a diagnostic and then an assessment of needs, so their perspective is that they have something wrong with them and that I will know how to resolve this. Not all students have this perspective, but a lot do, I need to work really hard to overcome this. (Alice)*

This quote begins with the words 'together' which indicates that it will be about how the student and tutor come together to decide the aims and outcomes. It quickly turns into a discussion of the tutor working to change the student's perceptions, however. This would indicate that the tutor believes that the student has a frame of reference about what will happen in the tutorials, and that this frame of reference needs to be challenged. Alice references a number of students that have had the perception of the sessions as teacher led.

*not all students have this perspective, but a lot do. I ask the students what they want to get out of the session [...] They are often surprised by this. They want me to tell them what to do next. I had one student who wanted me to create a teaching plan, but it doesn't really work like that. The course demands change, the student needs change and I am a responder, not an initiator. I respond to what is needed at the time, I don't tell students what to do. (Alice)*

At first glance, the quote appears to be about the students being empowered to take control of their learning, rather than giving control to the tutor. Whilst this goal appears to be challenging what Freire (1970) describes as oppression in education, if someone is taking the decision to concede power to another person, then the power remains with the original holder. Thus, the tutor is setting the agenda, taking the decision that the student should take ownership of their learning, rather than the student asserting that position. The power dynamic created during the students' disclosure of personal information is, therefore, reaffirmed by the tutor's requirement for the students' participation in the goal setting. Equally, the tutor is taking the decision that the sessions should be based on being responsive to the student, even though she acknowledges that at least one student expressed a preference for a more structured teaching plan. This demonstrates that the tutor believes that they know what is best for the student and that their beliefs are the dominant ones in the session. This experience of the tutor setting the agenda is discussed by Imogen:

*It's all about negotiation. Sometimes students have had support in college or in school and they think the sessions will be proofreading and suchlike. I need to be clear that this is about supporting the students to become more independent and therefore more able to respond to academic demands [...] this is completely different to most learning that the students do, and it can be difficult for the student at first. (Imogen)*

Here again, there are a number of things happening. Imogen opens with the phrase, 'it's all about negotiation', yet the subsequent phrases are about the tutor asserting what will and won't happen in the sessions. There is an acknowledgement that this might be difficult for the student, but in both Alice and Imogen's quotes, the students' input in the process of agenda setting is absent in terms of a positive contribution. Rather it is about the students' misconceptions and how the tutor needs to address these. The tutor's perspective, therefore, seems to be cognitively dissonant, believing the process to be a negotiation, but on closer examination leading the session, determining what will and will not be on the agenda. Hubbuch (1990) argues that the belief that tutors are empowering students can be used by tutors to quell their anxieties about the power dynamics. Even when the tutor explicitly references agency and ownership, it is the tutor who is taking the decision that this is in the student's best interest, as opposed to the student taking the decision themselves,

*Our student support is all about agency and this starts with the student taking control over their learning needs. We want to create independent learners and enforcing what we think they*

*should be doing is completely contrary to this. (Imogen)*

It is in this extract that we get to the heart of the tension that the tutors experience. Whilst developing independence and agency sound laudable, it is the tutors who are setting this agenda. Ellen, discussed how some students only attend one or two sessions, and reflected on why this might be the case,

*Sometimes, the students only come for one or two sessions. I have always put this down to them not needing support, but it could be because they find the space to be uncomfortable or even challenging. (Ellen)*

Here, Ellen is acknowledging that the initial sessions could be experienced as unsafe for students. In contrast to this rather bleak picture of power and control, the student participants reported finding the first session to be an opportunity for them to set the agenda. Rowan stated,

*we talked about what [...] I wanted to do, and my tutor made some suggestions, based on what we had said in the session. The tutor then put them in a plan, but to be honest, we didn't really stick to it, we more did stuff as it came up (Rowan)*

This experience was also echoed by Shep, who said,

*She [the tutor] knows how I work and what works well for me. We work together and I like her very much. She doesn't tell me what I need to do, she works with me, and we get there in the end. (Shep)*

It would appear, therefore, that whilst there is an initial, unacknowledged, power imbalance between the student and the tutor, this shifts somewhat as the sessions progress, with the students taking more control of the agenda. This will be considered in more detail later on in theme four, the purpose of tutorials, when authorial authority is discussed. What is clear is that, similarly, to forced intimacy (Mingus, 2017), neither the students nor the tutors challenge the need for target setting in the first session, despite the sessions ostensibly being informal learning sessions, thus having no curriculum, this is described by Malcolm *et al* (2003) as making the informal formal. Thus, the students and tutors are not resisting the associations of a teaching space, namely formalised aims and outcomes. Equally, both the students and the tutors acknowledge that this plan is rarely followed, further highlighting its lack of relevance to the teaching setting. *'[the sessions are not planned in advance] it is more responsive to the students' needs there and then [...] it's into what the student wants to do.'* (Alice)

Thus, the tutors and the students are both ascribing to formalised associations of learning such as learning plans and goal setting, whilst acknowledging that these plans are rarely followed and that the sessions are informal. Again, we can look to the associations influencing the space to account for this. Creating a plan is a part of the ADSHE principles (awarding body for dyslexia tutors) and creating a learning plan is a core part of dyslexia tutor training. Further, at the time of the data collection, DSA-QAG required the tutors to produce learning plans and review documents, and these documents are subject to an audit once a year (now bankrupt). The creation of purpose within the space is, therefore, more than just a negotiation between the student and the tutor, it includes how the student and the tutor interpret the expectations and requirements of a number of institutions.

It is important to note that while the documents were audited, with serious consequences for not being audit compliant, the content of these documents was not audited; it was the existence of the documents that is valued. This may have led to the learning plan being described by the tutor participants as just a starting point, rather than a template for learning. Imogen, in her reflections for example, critically reflects on the process of setting targets and sees the benefits as being the start of developing a student-led teaching approach, rather than in the actual target setting itself.

*The goals often bear no relation to what we actually work on, but it does start the process of the student deciding what is important to them and what they want to prioritise. (Imogen).* This is also considered to be an important outcome by Alice, *'What I am doing is creating a base to negotiate outcomes.'* The tutor is, therefore, using this learning plan as a way of determining how the student and tutor will work together; again, the tutor is emphasising the shift from teacher led learning to student led learning. Equally, again, the student voice does not come through here; it is about how the tutor determines what is best for the students. The purpose of the learning is, therefore, hidden from the student, and is therefore a shadow outcome. Imogen explicitly makes this link stating that, *'It sounds like a paper exercise, and, in a way, it is, but it sets the scene for who is responsible for what everyone's roles are.'*

This indicates that the learning plan is a way to contain and control future interactions in the tutorials. The initial agenda setting, and negotiation of learning outcomes is, therefore, dominated by the tutor in terms of how the sessions will be run and how the interactions between the student and the tutor will be managed. The actual content of the sessions does not appear to be important at this stage and takes a back seat to the negotiation of the structural elements of the sessions. Indeed, the student participants and tutor participants regarded the initial learning plan as being merely a starting point. This is in contrast to 'traditional' types of learning, in which there are existing associations for the tutor- student relationship, and the curriculum is set in stone, with the student having to fit into the curriculum, rather than the learning plan fitting in with the student, as appears to be the case in the dyslexia tutorial.

The next section will discuss this emerging student-tutor relationship, and how both the tutors and the students experience this relationship. In this section, I will bring in the interpersonal process recall, in which a tutorial session was recorded and then observed by the participants, and by me as the researcher.

### 4.4.3 Developing the Student-Tutor Relationship

Throughout the interviews the importance of the student tutor relationship came through strongly. The tutor-student relationship was also highlighted by Malik (2000), who found it to be a contributing factor to students' academic success. Oscar discussed the importance of the tutor student relationship at length.

*You need to build up the relationship and build up the students' confidence. Once, I had a student who came to the session with his mum. I thought, goodness me, how will this student manage at university. In the first few sessions, I worked on the student's confidence. We talked about what was going well and what was going less well. I don't think I was doing much SpLD work, more pastoral work, but this was groundwork and soon the student started to bring assignments for us to work on. (Oscar)*

There is, to some extent, a transference of parental roles from parent to tutor. In Oscar's experience, the temporary presence of the mother acted as a transition towards working with the tutor. This role of the university acting to some extent in loco parentis is described by (Lindsay, 2011) as being a long-standing tradition in UK higher education institutions. By highlighting this story, Oscar is foregrounding the importance of the pastoral elements of the tutorial, recognising that the student-tutor relationship is central to the long-term effectiveness of the tutorials. This is especially the case in the tutorials, which are not a mandatory part of the students' learning. Imogen points out, *'the student decides*



*whether or not to have tutorials, and how often they come.*' This is the first time where the student is acknowledged by the tutor as having the balance of power tipped in their favour. The students can stop attending the sessions at any time or can request a different tutor. This is also recognised by Suzi, *'[access to tutorials] is something I have control over. I can see them or not see them. It's completely up to me [...] I don't know why this is important to me, but it is.'* The impact of students controlling when and if tutorials take place on tutors depends on whether the tutors have a salaried position, or whether they are freelance or agency. This is reflected in the way tutors discuss this issue. For example, Ellen points out that, *'The students will only come to see you if they are getting something out of the sessions, as the sessions are not mandatory and are not assessed in any way.'* Imogen made a similar point, saying,

*We need to build up a good working relationship, and the student needs to feel comfortable working with me, or they will vote with their feet [...] the power lies with them. They can stop attending the sessions or can request another tutor, without giving a reason why, so they do exercise some power. (Imogen)*

Imogen has a permanent contract and recognises the privileged position that this gives her:

*I am lucky working at a university, as if there is a breakdown in the relationship, I or the student can ask for a different tutor. This is a real luxury, though and if you're a freelance tutor this isn't going to be an option. (Imogen)*

In contrast, the stakes are higher with freelance tutors, and this is reflected in their experience of maintaining the student-tutor relationship,

*We need to build the relationship and then maintain it. Students can just vote with their feet if they aren't happy, and if that happens, they don't get tutorials, so it is vital that tutors do everything they can to maintain the relationship. (Oscar)*

Again, the tutor is assuming the responsibility for maintaining a positive working relationship. This assumption of power is implicit rather than explicit, however. There seems a reluctance amongst tutors to openly acknowledge a hierarchical aspect of a tutor student relationship. The student participants, in contrast, appeared to be much more comfortable with a more directive tutor-student relationship. They have recognised the power-dynamic and thus brought to the surface issues of authority. Rowan spoke frequently about deferring to her tutor:

*Before I was diagnosed, people said I was stupid, and I am worried that my tutors might think the same. But my dyslexia tutors, he is trained in this, and he knows that this isn't true. He knows what I can do (Rowan)*

This deferring to the tutor's expertise is also touched upon by Shep, *'I also like to come in when it is written and just go through it with my tutor to see what she thinks about the structure and do a proofread.'*

To consider this difference in experience, it might be useful to now bring the voices of student and tutor voices together. Session observations were discussed by tutors and students (IPR) and provide an insight into how the participants reflect on the sessions. This excerpt is taken from the first video:

*Oscar: I think I take over a bit here and push the session on.*

*Rowan: yeah, you're right. I'd have kept chatting.*

*Oscar: I see myself as not leading the session and the student leading it, but here am I leading?*

*Rowan: first I was saying how it would be and that I wanted a plan, you are just making it happen. I just want it done; I don't care who leads.*

*Oscar: I say let's start doing stuff. I've taken the lead off you. we have started working, but it isn't how I thought it was? I thought it was more clearly marked, eg right let's do this, but it just flows into the next bit.*

This interaction shows Oscar demonstrating discomfort at recognising that he is taking the lead in the session, whilst Rowan is more comfortable with this. This could be because the video is challenging Rowan's identity of being a facilitator rather than a directive tutor, whereas Rowan is comfortable with the power shifting between student and tutor. Indeed, at one point Rowan takes responsibility for reassuring Oscar. Thus, the relationship appears to move beyond a teacher-student relationship and towards a more egalitarian relationship.

This highlights that the emerging tutor-student relationship is more complicated than that of a purely student led session, which was initially described by the tutors. Rather, the power shifts between the tutor and students throughout the sessions and within the sessions themselves. This again demonstrates a point of tension in the emerging student relationship discussed in the previous section, setting the agenda, in that the students and tutors have different expectations and expected outcomes from the sessions. The excerpt above demonstrates how these differing outcomes are negotiated and how the student-tutor dynamic shifts and flows throughout and within sessions. The next section will look at this dynamic more closely, examining the concept of the sessions being a meeting of expert to expert rather than tutor-student.

#### 4.4.4 Exploring the Evolving Student-Tutor Relationship

Section 4.4.2 has explored the initial formation of the tutor-students, highlighting who holds the power in the initial sessions, and how that influences how the space is experienced. This section moves on to explore the tutor-student relationship as they move through the tutorials. One emerging dynamic is that of the students bringing something to the tutorial, as opposed to being purely a recipient of knowledge, thus demonstrating a move away from the banking model (Freire, 1970). When discussing the tutor-student relationship, Rowan pointed out that her tutor was not the authority in her subject, saying, '*my tutor isn't an expert in my area.*' This suggests an interesting dynamic occurring in a dyslexia tutorial, the expert-to-expert dynamic. Whilst the tutor has expertise in their field, the student is the expert in their chosen field. Unless the tutor happens to have a background in the student's field, it is unlikely that the tutor will possess subject knowledge. Imogen discusses how this contributes to a collaborative relationship,

*My role is to help them to not develop their subject knowledge but how to write about their subject in the way they want. They bring their academic knowledge and I bring the academic knowledge, it's a real collaboration. (Imogen)*

It is through this knowledge exchange that a collaborative relationship between the tutor and student is built. In the majority of teaching spaces, the dynamic is tutor to student, as the tutor is positioned as the most knowledgeable person in the room. The tutorials positioning themselves as a collaboration is likely to be aided by the tutorials existing in the third space, the everyday practices (Lefebvre, 1991) of the

collaborative dynamic acts to reinforce this, potentially creating a lived experience (Lefebvre, 1991) of an egalitarian space. In video transcript one, the shifts in the relationship dynamics are evident:

*Rowan, look I'm talking through my ideas and you're organising them on the wall. That's interesting, eerrmm, perhaps I should be doing both things.*

*Oscar, it's working though, because when I put it on the paper you can see how it looks, and, in fact, later on, you do that and start writing it on the paper...you take over the organising. You even choose the colour...*

*Rowan, it's more like group work than teaching*

*Oscar, good point, I don't know all the answers and we are working it out together. Now, we are using external sources- looking up different poster styles, we are co-researchers, like our roles flip throughout the session.*

*Rowan, I've only just noticed, but I have made loads of decisions about my poster, kind of by myself, but I wouldn't have got to that point without the session, and they are my own decisions. I just wanted it [the draft of the poster] done and I've achieved that.*

Even in this brief excerpt the dynamic is shifting around. Initially, Rowan feels like she is not contributing enough and that she should be doing the organising, but by the end, she recognises that she has made the decisions about the poster and thus controlled the outcomes. Interestingly, whilst the tutor does not comment on the ideas, by organising them he is making decisions about the ideas, and, therefore, is still assuming a teacher role. This is not acknowledged by either the tutor or the student in the video, or in the observation of the video. When the student does make the point that she should be doing both tasks, the tutor counters this saying that the approach was effective, thus asserting control over the distribution of tasks. Therefore, whilst there is definitely a case for arguing that both parties bring something to the session, the relationship does not appear to be as straightforward as expert to expert. This can be seen in the assertion made twice by Rowan that she wanted the poster complete. In the first extract stating, *'I don't care who leads.'* And in the second example, *'I just wanted it [the draft of the poster] done and I've achieved that.'* Here, Rowan is strongly advocating for an outcomes-based approach, and this request is not acknowledged by the tutor throughout the observation. Indeed, Rowan makes this assertion for a third time at the end of the session saying, *'I am on it to get the poster done and I am achieving it.'*

It would appear that students and tutors both see the value in an expert-expert dynamic; however, on exploration, as hinted at in the above paragraph, the student participants expressed more divergent views of the most suitable dynamic for the tutorials. This is seen in the following excerpt of student Rowan's interview,

*I do sometimes think that it would be nice to have a tutor with a science background [...] I wouldn't have to explain everything because my tutor would know already, so it would save time [...] although I quite like having something to offer and knowing stuff he doesn't know. Also, by explaining stuff to him, I am improving my own understanding of ideas and concepts and theory.  
(Rowan)*

Rowan, therefore, takes a more ambivalent and nuanced view towards the expert-expert dynamic. She acknowledges that this dynamic creates a more equal and collaborative learning environment and considers the benefits of the dynamic from a pedagogic standpoint, whilst recognising the limitations of a tutor who doesn't know the subject area. Shep, in contrast, reflected positively on the dynamic *'I have developed myself, it hasn't been taught to me, it has been the tutor getting me to question myself and*

*my writing, so it stays my own work.'*

Shep, therefore, values retaining both the power and authority, whilst the tutor acts to facilitate development. The final statement about it remaining their own work, underscores the importance of students retaining the power to make the final decisions about their work and what they do and don't change. This demonstrates that the tutor to student relationship works towards developing a horizontal relationship, with the student retaining authority over their work.

#### 4.4.5 Summary of Theme Three

In summary, therefore, the initial power imbalances that are situated in how the space is accessed by tutors and students are perpetuated in the sessions, especially the initial sessions. During the setting of aims and objectives in the initial session, the tutor asserts the direction of the tutorials and sets parameters around what the tutorials will cover. For example, the tutor will rule out the provision of proofread reading and will make it clear that the students will set the agenda rather than the tutor. Thus, whilst the student leads the session, the tutors are directing them. This was accepted uncritically by the tutors, but was challenged by some of the students, who saw the role of the tutors as to lead the session. This points to a mismatch between the tutors and students in their perceptions of what teaching should be in the dyslexia tutorial.

As the sessions progressed, this power imbalance equalised, with students and tutors adopting a more horizontal relationship. This can be attributed to the expert-to-expert dynamic that emerges in the dyslexia tutorial. The dyslexia tutorial is one of the few teaching spaces in which the tutor doesn't hold expertise in the students' subject and as such the students' subject knowledge holds currency and the student is in a position where they are contributing to the development of knowledge in the session. The next theme moves on from exploring the relationship between tutor and student to an exploration of how the tutors and students perceive the purpose of the tutorials.

### 4.5 Theme Four: Purpose of the Tutorials

#### 4.5.1 Introduction

The section focuses on the purpose of the tutorials in terms of students' and tutors' expectations of the tutorials, both in terms of immediate outcomes of one session and development over time. It will consider what content is covered in the sessions, such as working on assignments and working on exam strategies and will explore the development of 'skills' (skills is in inverted commas as academic development being reducible to acquiring skills is contested) and the development of less tangible outcomes such as authority of writing.

## 4.5.2 Developing Academic Writing Through an Assignment Based Approach and the Role of the Department

When discussing the primary content of the dyslexia tutorials, the majority of students referenced a focus on assignments, for example, Blaine said that *'in tutorials we work on assignments and making sure they have everything.'* When the focus wasn't on assignments, the second most referenced focus was on exam preparation:

*Sometimes we look at things like time management and sometimes it will be revision skills. When I have exams coming up, it's all about getting the revision done and testing myself so that I am ready. (Shep)*

As such, the focus for students was typically to develop the skills they needed to be successful in assignments and exams. This was referenced by Alice, *'some students just come in for revision practice, so I only see them before exams and that is fine. It is about what the students get out of it.'*

It would appear, therefore, that the development of generic study skills is not the primary aim of the tutorials; this is not to say that the students do not develop these skills, but rather that they are part of the process of development. Alice, for example, pointed out,

*it's about developing a writing process, being critical and understanding what the department itself requires of a student. Too much of a focus on the skills isn't helpful. (Alice)*

Oscar further explains how generic study skills are developed alongside the student working on their assignments, as opposed to being taught as skills to be mastered.

*Study skills are built alongside the academic skills, with academic skills always being the priority [...] While the focus is on academic writing, we are developing time management skills. I wouldn't just do time management skills on its own, there isn't any meaning to it and it doesn't have any context. (Oscar)*

Here, Oscar is making the point that study skills such as time management are covered, but not as a stand-alone topic, rather they are integrated into the session, making them more context driven. As such it appears that assignments are used as a vehicle through which students develop 'skills' in order to move towards becoming more academic. Study skills have been described by Wingate (2006) as being perceived as being a bolt on set of skills, separate from the academic. This could account for the lack of discussion of more general skills such as revision, or note taking, as the tutors in particular discussed the idea of a process of becoming, as opposed to a skills development model. Through a focus on writing assignments, therefore, the students would engage critically with their course and determine where they sit in relation to their course. This point is made by Imogen,

*Engineering have [sic] a completely different way of writing than philosophy and it is through developing ways of thinking through writing that students become academic writers. By this I mean academic writing being a way to look at how you are thinking about what you are studying, are you an objectivist or subjectivist. What kind of academic are you becoming? (Imogen)*

Imogen views writing as more than simply a tool through which the students convey information, but rather a process through which a student develops their thinking. This is a point that is often not recognised in higher education. The concept of a student engaging in a transformation process, as

opposed to developing a set of skills was also an element of the student interviews. As Rowan puts it,

*Before [the tutorials] I would just start writing, but that's not how you do it! [...] you have to work through the process. It is through the process that you become critical, both a critical writer and critical of your own work and how good it is. (Rowan)*

This is echoed by Blaine,

*Through developing my writing and like the planning and drafting, I have changed the way I think about the writing process, and the writing process helps me to understand my subject more, if that makes sense. (Blaine)*

This would appear to indicate that the participants value the process of developing writing as a way to engage with the subject and with the department, as opposed to developing a skill that enables them to pass their assignment. Indeed, when discussing the writing process the student participants did not directly reference whether this would result in an improvement in grade or getting a 2:1 or 2:2 (something that was frequently referenced when discussing the other areas that were prioritised), rather there was an emphasis on developing writing as a way to engage with the department and subject. For example, Imogen discusses the prioritising of engaging with the students' academic journey,

*It could be grammar, although this is rare, but it could also be academic confidence, or developing reading skills. I think the most usual session is work on structuring essays. (Imogen)*

This is also reflected in the comments of the student participants, for example Rowan said,

*we use the assignments to develop skills [...] through developing my writing and like the planning and drafting, I have changed the way I think about the writing process. (Rowan)*

Here, the student is valuing tutorials that engage with the department requirements over the discrete skills. Working on assignments during tutorials mentioned by a number of participants as being one of the most important components of the dyslexia tutorials. Oscar discussed the centrality of writing in the student's university experience,

*Nearly all assessments are written; even with presentations the slides are assessed, so writing is always a part of it. Vivas are the only ones [assessments] that aren't written, and they are examinations of a thesis, so it really is all about writing, and writing in a certain way.' (Oscar)*

Here, Oscar is aligning the goals of the dyslexia tutorials with university assessment. Thus, Oscar acknowledges that a key aim is to ensure that students do well in the assessments. This link was also made explicit by Imogen and by Rowan:

*Most of our students are assessed on their written work and so they prioritise this. (Imogen)*

*My tutor needs to know what the department wants before he can do anything in the session. We spend a lot of time in the session trying to figure out what the department wants. (Rowan)*

Thus, whilst the tutorials are positioned as separate from the students' departments, the departments play a key role in the sessions, influencing the goals of the sessions and the content covered. The tutor is, therefore, supporting the student in being acculturated into the department (Lea and Street, 2006). Video observation two demonstrates how progress in the session is measured by the department's requirements via the assignment criteria.

*Oscar, so I go straight to looking at your assignment criteria; was that helpful?*

*Rowan, yes, it made me think about what I was supposed to do and why. I think I sometimes go off on one and it doesn't meet the criteria.*

*Oscar, I like that we are ticking off how you have met the criteria, it shows the progress made, and then, kind of, what needs doing.*

Rowan in video two then considers what it means to meet these requirements, alluding to the process of becoming acculturated into academia (Lea and Street (2006):

*Rowan, [academic writing is] like a language all of its own, by speaking their language I get to improve my grades and get a good mark'*

Imogen considers this process of acculturation explaining that academic writing can differ within departments, for example it can differ according to the assignment:

*This isn't generic study skills that you could put on in a lecture theatre for 200 students; it is about student needs, the department demands, and how to get the student to a point where they can meet the demands of the department. It is about the student engaging with their department and learning how to write for different audiences, the student has to respond to different types of writing assignments and respond well.*

This is also touched upon by Alice:

*People think there is only one way to write academically, and this simply isn't true. Academic writing isn't a skill you can layer on, it's a whole way of thinking and relating to your department.*

The inference from the quotes above is that there is more to academic writing than developing writing skills and applying them to the assignments. It is more likely, therefore, that an academic literacies model is being adopted (Lea and Street, 2006). The question is whether the department is an influence on the tutorials, in the same way as the templates of understanding utilised by students and tutors, and the more direct influence by DSA QAG, or whether the department is an actor within the space negotiating the outcomes. Thus, there is an acknowledged engagement with the departments' requirements. Whilst this may seem fanciful, both tutor and student participants discuss how the sessions often revolve around determining what the department wants and then working to meet this need:

*The first thing is to make sure that you are doing work that is relevant to the student. One of the best ways to do this is to work on an assignment together; we will look at the student's module book to check academic requirements of the department, as this will change from department to department and will start thinking around this. (Oscar)*

Here, the tutor participant appears to be equating what is relevant to the student as that which is relevant to the department, thus the needs are viewed as interchangeable. The tutor isn't asking the student what they think is relevant but is outsourcing this to the department. Therefore, the department has the loudest voice in the session, with its requirements becoming the priority of the session. This interaction with the department is discussed in more detail by Imogen,

*We lean heavily on the department module handbook and essay feedback in this process [tutorials], like the department is a third person in the tutorial room. All this will come through in the assignment [...] it is one sided, but they are a part of it, and they don't even know it. They provide a*

*framework and guidance and shape the sessions. (Imogen)*

Thus, the presence of the department is shaping the sessions. Imogen goes on to state that this participation in the sessions is vital in ensuring that the students are participating in becoming acculturated into the department:

*without them [the department] we would be back to a generic form of student skills and writing, so perhaps they are not an active participant, but they are definitely present, and it is a welcome presence. (Imogen)*

It could be argued, therefore, that within the session dynamic, there is a negotiation between what the student thinks is important to achieve in the session, what the tutor feels is important and what the departmental requirements are. Thus, whilst the tutorials are positioned in the third space, the aims and outcomes of the tutorials are drawn directly from the first space of the student's course. Alice for example referenced the sense of students being sent somewhere in order to work on their skills in order to meet the requirements of their department. *'[students often think they are] being sent to remedial class because there is something wrong with them. This isn't a place where I teach you how to be what the university wants you to be.* The fact that Alice made reference to teaching students how to be what the university wants them to be is very illuminating. This links into Gleeson's, (1997) materialism, whereby individuals are recognised according to their ability to produce. According to Alice, therefore, the students view the aim of the sessions as being to bring students up to the standard required to achieve academic success. The next section considers how a focus on criticality can support students to move away from a deficit model and towards developing an academic identity.

### 4.5.3 Developing an Academic Identity Through Engaging with Criticality

When discussing what happens in an dyslexia tutorial, one recurring theme was that of criticality, with both tutors and students considering critical thinking and critical writing as being a key component of the sessions. When discussing criticality, this was often contrasted with descriptive writing, with an emphasis on becoming more critical being equated with greater academic success. Imogen puts this succinctly:

*The number one things are academic writing and critical thinking. I put them together because without critical thinking you can't write academically. Descriptive, non-critical writing is not academic writing, except, perhaps with lab reports, but even then, you have to interpret your results [...] once you start thinking critically you start to create a criticality in your writing, and*

Here, Imogen is situating criticality as being central to developing academically. Indeed, Imogen does not refer just to academic writing but to becoming academic through the process of developing criticality in writing. Thus, the student is not learning the skill of writing academically using a skills deficit model. This is avoidance of teaching generic skills was also mentioned by Oscar in video transcript two, *'it's about developing that student's writing, rather than teaching a generic set of skills'*

The students, therefore, are integrating a new way of thinking to transform their writing. Thus, Imogen is foregrounding the student engaging critically with their course and course materials as an integral part of developing academically. This view was supported by Rowan who recognised the importance of developing criticality, *'I need to make sure that I am critical and not just descriptive and sometimes it is,*



*but sometimes I make the mistake of just letting the references being the critical [part].* Here, Rowan makes two points, she mentions that it is not enough to be descriptive, but to develop a level of criticality, and she highlights ensuring that the criticality comes from the author and not just through a re-hashing of the work of other academics. She is, therefore, identifying criticality, as opposed to being descriptive, as a component in achieving academic success, rather than focusing on the structural components of academic writing, such as writing a good introduction or using nominalisation. Further along in the interview, Rowan makes the link between criticality and becoming academic more explicit.

*I think they [being more critical and being more of an academic writer] are very linked; it's about the way you say things. I think I have really improved my critical thinking and I write better essays. (Rowan)*

In addition to critical writing being a way to develop academic writing and consequently getting better grades, Alice looks beyond this, seeing critical thinking as a way in to engage with the course and thus department more effectively.

*We are working with the student to become part of the university. It is a shift from school when they were taught things and then wrote about them [...] Students are now engaging in a different way and it is this engagement with the material which is what is important, like my example before a student developed confidence in her critical reflection skills and became more engaged with the course]. Her confidence in critical reflection [...] sparked her engagement; so, we are helping the student, facilitating in this engagement. (Alice)*

Alice, therefore, views developing criticality as a way in which to engage with the course and through this develop as an academic, thus criticality is an element in the bigger picture of becoming academic. This aligns with the academic literacies model (Lea and Street, 2006), which is a development of both the skills based model and academic socialisation model and introduces an emphasis on the issues surrounding power, authority, meaning making, and identity that students will encounter within literacy practices in an academic setting (Lea and Street, 2006). The tutor is, therefore, situating criticality as an aspect of becoming academic.

Oscar sees developing critically as being part of the process of becoming academic through developing confidence and developing authority over their writing. Thus, criticality is not just a skill to be learned but an integral part of developing an academic identity. Indeed, Oscar sees a lack of confidence to have a direct impact on the students' ability to be critical. He situates himself in the process of developing as an academic through developing confidence in criticality, saying:

*I am working with the student to become an independent, analytical, critical thinker, and as a consequence, writer [...] it's about them developing into critical writers and [...] have the confidence to write in their own voice. (Oscar)*

*It is a lot about thinking critically and not just being descriptive or quoting different references. We feel they can analyse [...] and be critical. It's about the student becoming an academic and trusting in what they are writing. (Oscar)*

Blaine also identifies confidence as a factor in developing criticality,

*I used to write quite descriptively, I didn't really have confidence or really an understanding of how to be critical and look at analysis. It's really important to develop skills to be critical and to do analysis. (Blaine)*

Whilst criticality is acknowledged as being an important element of writing academically, there was

concern from Blaine about how criticality would be received by his department. Blaine mentioned that he was afraid to be too critical in his work as he was afraid of annoying the marker. *'I would be afraid of contradicting them (by being critical) and annoying them; they are marking my work; I want them to have a good impression.'*

Blaine has, therefore, made a link between being critical and getting a good degree. Indeed, he says that the purpose of coming to university is to get a good degree, making criticality a tool through which to achieve this, but doesn't currently have the confidence to assert his ideas through his authorial authority. In contrast, Shep sees criticality as something that the department values, *my department wants me to be critical in what I write, not just saying what happened.*

This again demonstrates how the student's department influences what happens in the dyslexia tutorials. Blaine also explicitly links criticality to aims and outcomes rather than to the process of becoming more academic.

*[Criticality] is something we have really focused on. I think it is the thing that takes you from a 2:2 to a 2:1. Without critical thinking, you can't get a good grade, and at the end of the day, that is what you have come to university for, to get a good degree. You need a good degree to get a job, and developing your critical thinking is at the heart of that. (Blaine)*

This emphasis on the aim of the tutorial being to support students to get good grades is also acknowledged by Imogen, *'at the end of the day they [the student] want to get the best possible degree and therefore it's about high marks as much, if not more than, learning about the subject.'* Here, Imogen is recognising the structural influences on the tutorial space. Whilst the tutor values the process of developing criticality in order to become an independent learner, the tutor accepts that the ultimate goal is not to become an independent learner, but a learner who is able to meet the criteria of their department in order to achieve their degree. Oscar also links developing critically to conforming to the requirements of the department:

*Being academic starts with being critical. It is also important to think about what the question is, so many students misunderstand this [the question] [...] it is about understanding what the department wants from them, what skills do they want? (Oscar)*

The idea of criticality being central to a student's success is, therefore, unchallenged by both students and tutors, with references to criticality being a way to engage with the department and to develop as an academic. Thus, there was an underlying assumption about the central role that criticality plays and that it is the remit of the tutorial to develop this skill. This was because it was equated with writing more academically, a goal also shared by both students and tutors, and was explicitly linked to the achievement of a higher degree class. The next section will move on from critically to an area that is less defined, but which is linked to the development of an academic identity, that of developing authority over writing.

#### 4.5.4 Developing Authority Over Writing

This section considers power in terms of who has authority over the written work produced and how this power is circulated and recirculated. It considers the ceding of authority by students to outside agents such as tutors and the department and the reactions of tutors to this ceding of authority. Ellen raises this ceding of authority as a key area to be addressed during the tutorial sessions.

*we are getting them to a point like having an essay plan, or where they understand what the*

*question is asking for and are ready to do research. If the student cannot take the assignment forward and work independently, then I see it as a failure; I haven't met the student's needs. (Ellen)*

Here, Imogen appears to be referring to becoming independent learners and, through this, developing authority over their work. This is where the student gains credibility by projecting an identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their idea (Hyland, 2002). This indicates that Imogen sees the role of tutor as going beyond supporting academic skills development and towards a holistic transformation encompassing both the cognitive and affective domain. The tutor is aiming for students to make the decisions about the text rather than ceding authority of whether the work has value to a third party. Indeed, Ellen and Oscar, make this point explicitly,

*I have one student who I have been working with for six years as she was part time, and she was still saying that she couldn't have done it without me. In a way, I saw this as a failure because the student felt that her success was down to someone else. (Ellen)*

*I had a student who would come to me and ask if I thought the work was at a 2:1 level, so she was ceding control of her work to me. (Oscar)*

This demonstrates the value that tutors place on the students being able to both take decisions about their writing and to be able to judge their value, as opposed to ceding that authority to a third person. There is, however, a tension in this aim to develop authority over the text, between the student/ tutorial and the student's department. In most types of writing the writer maintains authority of what they have written, even though the text might be open to criticism. With assignments, however, the writing is being submitted for judgement and grading. The tension between having authority over the writing whilst submitting the writing for departmental judgement is highlighted by Suzi, 'With graphs, I find it hard to describe what is on the graph, I'm like look at the damn thing and work it out for yourself. That's why it's there, why've I got to tell you this.'

Thus, despite being a PhD student, Suzi is being influenced by her department. While she makes a case for not including a description, there is no question of the description being excluded from the assignment as this could impact on the grade that the assignment receives. This attempt to write to the department wants and needs, perceived or otherwise, is also mentioned by Shep:

*you have to be able to adapt your writing to different things and to what the department wants. Even module to module is different. I am still developing [...] it's not that the knowledge changes, more what you do with the knowledge. (Shep)*

Further, Blaine talks about writing to the criteria in order to meet the needs of the department. There is no mention of the student participant taking decisions about the text or having authority over the text.

*My tutor helps me to know how to write for different essays and how to use the department's criteria to help me write [...] in the last assignment, I looked at the criteria and it told me what I had to do to get a good grade. So basically, I did what it said. (Blaine)*

Thus, there are structural influences on the decisions that students make about the text. This outside influence was discussed in theme three and becomes evident when the students and tutors begin working on assignments. The student might be beginning to make decisions over the content and structure of their writing, but, as discussed in a previous subsection, these decisions are governed by the departmental requirements. This tension does not appear to have been acknowledged by the participants; however, tutors do discuss the involvement of the department in the writing process.

*One student really couldn't get to grips with the academic conventions of the department. They would write in a very casual style and didn't have the vocabulary, what do you call it? [cultural capital, VM]. We slowly got there; we looked at the assignment rubrics and what the department wanted, and we worked on critical reflection. This was where she really found her voice. (Alice)*

The tutor, therefore, sees that students are moving from including her authentic self in the writing, using their current writing identity, to becoming acculturated to the department's writing conventions as a form of empowerment. The tutor references acculturation and the development of this as a way to develop a more acceptable writing identity. Thus, the tutor is acknowledging that for the student to be successful, they need to become acculturated to the culture of the department in order to move towards a different, more academic identity (Lea and Street, 2006). This is where students are introduced to, and inducted in, the culture of their department or discipline. This is made more explicit by both Ellen and Alice:

*Academic writing isn't a skill you can layer on; it is a whole way of thinking and relating to your department. (Imogen)*

*Academic writing isn't just about a style of writing or structure, it is engagement with the material, criticality and about the student being part of the academic culture of their discipline. Philosophy writes much differently from engineering, but both are recognisable as academic. (Alice)*

Thus, Ellen and Alice are foregrounding the development of this acculturation in the dyslexia tutorials. Rowan also mentioned this acculturation both in her interview and during the IPR.

*I provide the subject knowledge and you [the tutor] help me put it in an academic form that my department will accept. (Rowan)*

*Even if the knowledge is right, if it isn't written the way they want it, I won't get a good mark. It's a language all of its own and by speaking their languages, I get to improve my grades and get a good mark. I'm getting to be an academic writer in a management school way. (Rowan)*

Here, Rowan is creating not just a distinction between knowledge and how that knowledge is presented, but that the writing is specifically tailored to the dominant discourse of the department, and that the dyslexia tutor is key to supporting them in reproducing this dominant discourse. Shep goes further saying that the tutorials have not helped in developing academically in terms of improving subject knowledge, but in being able to access the discourse of the department. '*[it has helped me] not in being better at my course, but in being able to write in the way my department want.*' (Shep)

Thus, the student participants are making a distinction between the subject knowledge and becoming acculturated into the department's academic writing culture. When considering an assignment-based approach as a way to access the discourse of the department, the students also discussed diversity of assignment and how this changed the writing demands on them.

*With writing, it changes all the time. It depends on what you are writing. A 500-word assignment is so different from a 2000 word one. If you write 500 words it is all about being concise, picking one or two things to focus on and making every word count. With a longer assignment, you are exploring topics and looking at how things go together. (Shep)*

In addition to word length influencing the writing of the assignment, Blaine also identifies the impact of different types of assignments. '*It depends on what the assignment is, I would need to write differently when doing a report than I would when doing a reflection or an essay.*' This would indicate that the

students are recognising a genre-based approach to academic writing. The academic literacy model (Lea and Street, 2006) recognises the impact of different assignments noting that student writing is not restricted to one single reproducible academic style; rather, it can be framed as socially situated discourse practice, in which the writing will change according to the genre of the assignment. For example, a presentation will require a different approach from a laboratory report.

Developing authority over writing is, therefore, problematic, as the student is required to write to a rubric within the culture of the department, whilst demonstrating authorial authority of their writing. Here, it would appear that the role of the tutor is to support the student to navigate developing authority over their writing within this framework and to avoid overstepping the boundaries of the tutorial. The development of authority over writing is therefore an element of responding flexibility to the department's requirements, along with developing critical thinking and academic writing 'skills'. Development of authority, is, however, an outcome of the students' development of an academic identity, as opposed to being a 'skill' that students can work on in the tutorials. As such, whilst it is discussed and recognised as important, it does not appear on learning plans and is not highlighted as an outcome to work on by either students or tutors.

#### 4.5.5 Summary of Theme Four

The lived space (Lefebvre, 1991) of the dyslexia tutorial is broadly experienced by the student and tutor as a collaborative space in which the tutor and student both bring knowledge and expertise to the space. This space is produced between the student, tutor, and the department. As a third space, therefore, the tutorials are positioned as being independent of the department in that the tutors do not have any influence over the students grades or progress, whilst at the same time being a space which reinforces the demands and requirements of the university. This is seen in the tutorials using assessments as a focus for aims and outcomes. In doing so, the tutorials are giving these areas priority, with developing criticality and independence as a route to achieve high grades, rather than a goal in themselves. Equally, According to Thonus (1999:226) "*institutional discourse permits agents of social control to preserve the status quo*". Having said this, there does appear to be a consensus between students and tutors regarding assignment-based tutorials, rather than them being imposed on the students by tutors. The space, therefore, could be experienced by the student as a space to teach them to conform to, what Foucault (2019) would identify as, the dominant academic hegemony. The tutor is the expert who ensures that the student is inducted into academic culture in order for them to meet the needs of the course.

#### 4.6 Summary of the Analysis

There are a number of similarities in the way tutors and students experience the space. Both tutors and students recognise how the separation of the space and the impacts of this on both their experience and how tutorials are perceived more widely. The analysis has highlighted that access to the tutorials and the positioning of tutorials can be barriers to access for dyslexic students. The experience of the tutorial space as segregated or separated appeared to be linked to the students' lived experience of dyslexia. The students who had experienced exclusionary education practices, such as separated teaching,

experienced the separation as a further underlining of othering. In contrast, the students who viewed the separation positively, viewed the space as a safe place to explore and take risks, safe in the knowledge that it was a low stakes space. The main difference appears to be in the impact of the space on identity. For students, identity is situated in the department, with tutorials part of a wider university experience. Thus, for students, the tutorials are often viewed as separate for their department and thus not experienced as an integrated part of their course. The tutorials are, in effect, experienced by students as a place to go to develop their skills and then return to the department. In contrast, the tutors see the space as integral to their sense of belonging to the university. The impact of this is that tutors who do not have access to a designated space often mentioned feeling excluded and marginalised; as Oscar put it, *'hard to find and easy to forget.'* Providing reasonable adjustments for dyslexia students is protected under the Equality Act (2010), and it is vital that universities are able to provide tutorials. Equally, it is important for universities to recognise that dyslexia tutorials are only one aspect of creating an inclusive learning environment, university structures such as policies and assessment procedures can act to marginalise students, and by critically examining these structures, the university can develop more inclusive practices.

The third theme explored the initial tutorial sessions and negotiation of aims and outcomes that the tutor and student would work towards. I had expected the student and the tutor to create and co-create the space, due to their being no curriculum and little in the way of formal aims and summative assessment. There were, however, a number of associations influencing the tutorials, such as the use of the students' assessment reports and the creation of a learning plan. Thus, when we are looking for what governs tutorials, it is important to look beyond the obvious controls such as curriculum and aims and outcomes and consider structural influences such as the students' departments and associations around the tutorial. These structural influences and their intersection with engagement with the course content is brought into sharp relief by Blaine,

*I just don't write in the way they want me to. They don't look beyond the way it is written and for a mature learner like me, this means that I am having to learn the subject, but also learn a whole new way of writing [...] I feel disadvantaged compared to the other students who've just done their A-levels; they already have done loads of this sort of writing. (Blaine)*

Thus, whilst the tutorials can be framed in the third space, the aims and outcomes of the sessions are drawn from the first space. While this is an inevitable aspect of the tutorials, they exist to support the students to achieve their potential at university and level the playing field, this can result in dyslexia tutorials being viewed by students as a place to get their work 'fixed' in order to pass their course.

At least initially, both the student and tutor assume traditional teacher/student identities, and that this influences the initial relationship between the student and tutor. This, however, shifts as the tutor and student develop their relationship, to develop into a more horizontal relationship. This is likely to be one of the few experiences for students and tutors to develop a collegial relationship; one of the few spaces where students act as the experts. This provides students with a unique relationship with a member of the university community who isn't in a position of power. The tutor does not have a dual role of supporting the development of the student and assessing the student. As such, the focus of the tutor is solely on supporting the students' journey. Through this relationship, there is a process of acculturation, by which the student becomes more 'academic' developing criticality, academic writing, and authorial authority. The dyslexia tutorials, therefore, provide a space for students to move outside the course and become academic through developing both 'skills' and through 'attitudinal change. The next chapter will discuss these findings in conjunction with literature in order to critically reflect on the findings identified.

# Chapter Five, Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

Whilst there has been research on dyslexic students in terms of the education experience and research into generic academic study skills support, there is little research into the dyslexia tutorial. This exploration into how students and tutors experience the dyslexia tutorial aims to provide an insight into dyslexia tutorial provision in higher education. This chapter integrates the analysis and theoretical framework to reflect on how the tutorials are experienced by tutors and students. The theoretical framework is critical pedagogy of space, informed by disability studies (as outlined in the literature review), utilising the work of theorists such as McLaren (1999; 2007), Morgan (2000), Lefebvre (1991), Freire (1970), and Kitchin (1998). This discussion will begin by providing a brief summary of the findings and how these address the initial questions; it will then move on to interpreting these findings and considering the significance of the findings. It will consider how these findings relate to existing literature and add to the body of knowledge

## 5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

The first research question addressed is: **how do students and tutors experience and understand the tutorial space?** This considers how the role of the tutorial space in the university is perceived by both tutors and students. In the case of tutors, the dyslexia tutorial space impacts the tutor's sense of professional identity and belonging to the university. For tutors, especially tutors employed via agencies, the tutorial is the main point of contact between the tutor and the university. Consequently, the dyslexia tutorial room is a representation of the relationship between the tutor and the university, with the designation of the room perceived by tutors as a reflection on the value placed on the activities within the room. As such, the tutors gained identity through ownership of the space and felt that their professional identity was undermined when the space was not solely designated for teaching. Tutors with a permanently designated room felt that, through the provision of a permanent tutorial room, the tutorials had a tangible presence; they used the expression, taking up space, to express the value of the room. For example, Ellen, who said, *'The physical room shows the value that is placed on us by the university.'* This indicates that the room had significance beyond the practicalities of sourcing a venue for tutorials. A requirement of the tutorials is that the confidentiality of the students accessing the sessions is maintained and, thus, the tutorials are not highly visible. The provision of a permanent designated space could provide that visibility for tutors. Equally, tutor participants who did not have access to a permanent room, and were required to use a bookable space, felt less visible. They attributed the lack of the provision of a permanent room to the university not recognising both the importance of the dyslexia tutorial and to a reduction of their role to that of a support role, rather than a teaching role. The dyslexia tutorial space is viewed, therefore, as an embodiment of the value that the university holds for the tutorials. Without a designated space for the tutorials, the tutors experience was closer to that of the student, who are required to utilise bookable spaces such as study rooms, and do not have their own private space at university. Thus, the tutor participants situated both the tutorials

and their relationship with the universities in the provision of a dyslexia space. This is likely to be because the relationship with the university is conducted primarily via the dyslexia tutorials. Salaried dyslexia tutors often have additional engagement with the university, for example they often provide staff training, attend university events, and may play a part in open days. Freelance tutors and tutors who are on hourly contracts, in contrast, will access university spaces less often and mainly visit the university campus only when conducting tutorials, if at all. We can see this if we juxtapose Ellen and Alice's discussions about their place in the university. Ellen, who is a salaried tutor, said, *'I am given CPD and get to go to conferences and university events, things like that. It's like the role is valued and seen as needed'*. In contrast, Alice, who is an agency tutor, states, *'We aren't seen as academics and our qualifications and experience just aren't valued.'* The engagement of agency tutor appears, therefore, to be boundaried to the room and to the time allocated to their sessions, as opposed to salaried tutors, who typically remain on campus when not engaged in tutorials and engage in university events.

Tutor participants who did not have a designated dyslexia tutorial space and were required to book a room often found themselves sharing a room with support services, rather than other teachers. They felt this eroded their identity as teachers as they would be viewed as being part of support services rather than teaching services. Oscar, who had recently moved from a private space to a shared space, discussed this in detail,

*we now have been relocated to the library and are now part of student support. We are like support workers [...] we had a place in the university, now we have been subsumed into student support along with lots of other services. (Oscar)*

There was, therefore, a strong link between the provision of a physical dyslexia tutorial space and the tutor participants' sense of identity as a teacher and their perception of how their role was viewed. In contrast, students' identity as a student and sense of belonging to the university is drawn from their construction of higher education, which is situated in their department. The dyslexia tutorial, therefore, is a peripheral part of this construction and is often viewed as an addition to their university experience, as opposed to an integrated element. Rowan describes this, *'I guess I split them into academic stuff and non-academic and the academic is just my department.'*

For the student participants, therefore, the dyslexia tutorial room did not have the same significance as for the tutors. None of the students highlighted the provision of the room as important, in terms of whether a permanent room was offered. It must be noted that most students will only have experienced tutorials at one institution and so are unlikely to be aware of other forms of provision. Rather than situating the dyslexia tutorial in the room where the dyslexia tutorials took place, the student participants appeared to situate the tutorials in their tutors. When discussing their tutorials, their tutor was a point of reference, rather than the session itself. Rather than using phrasing such as, *'in the sessions we'* for example, they would say, *'with my tutor I...'* For example, when asked about the tutorials, Blaine used the phrase, *'I saw my tutor.'* and, similarly, Rowan said, *'I love coming to my tutor and seeing him.'* The students only mentioned the room itself when asked directly and even then, the discourse was often limited to superficial aspects of the room, for example Suzi said that the room was, *'really colourful and erm bright, pretty and lots of plants.'*

The students did, however, discuss the positioning of the tutorial in terms of its separation. Some students questioned why tutorials were separate from their department and advocated for closer links with their department, such as Shep, who stated, *'I sometimes feel like I am going to a remedial unit for special learners.'* Conversely, the tutorials were experienced by other students as being emancipatory, giving them the opportunity to step outside their department and engage with someone who was not linked to their department and was there to support them. This separateness of the tutorials from the departments, therefore, provided a safe space for students to take risks. Suzi referenced the room as a



safe space, saying, *'I thought that this was a safe space.'* Whether this separateness was experienced as empowering or exclusionary was often rooted in the students' experiences of previous exclusionary educational experiences. The requirement for students to prove their disability through assessments and disclosure of information resulted in the space being experienced as segregated rather than separate. Blaine reported that he found this to be a difficult experience, *'I found my first session a bit uncomfortable to be honest, I had to talk about my time at school and my family members to someone I had just met.'* Students are required to prove that they are disabled enough to be eligible to enter the space; thus, this is a shared experience amongst dyslexic students that firmly situates disability in the individual student and, as such, situates the responsibility for seeking adjustments in the individual.

The second question, **how are the tutorials navigated by students and tutors, in terms of power dynamics, negotiation and resistance?** And the third question, **what is the influence of the space on the tutors' and students' journey?** were more closely connected than I anticipated. This is because there is a shift in the power dynamics as the students move through the space. As such, I will consider both of these questions together.

Research question two moves on from a consideration of how the positioning of the dyslexia tutorial space influences how the students and tutors experience the tutorials to an exploration of the initial interactions of the tutor and students as they navigate tutorials. The findings show that the requirements that both students and tutors need to meet in order to access tutorials has an impact on these initial interactions and experiences. Both tutors and students need to meet strict criteria in order to access the tutorials. For tutors, the requirements relate to their professional identity; the tutors are required to be qualified dyslexia tutors and to have a current professional registration. In contrast, the requirement for students is to prove that they are disabled enough to qualify for the tutorials, via having a dyslexia assessment. Thus, initially, tutors are framed as experts, whereas students are framed as being in need of additional support, creating an initial power dynamic in favour of the tutor prior to the sessions taking place. Whilst there is a power dynamic in all teacher learning relationships, this one is predicated on students' perceived additional support needs.

This power dynamic is further reinforced when we consider the template for the first session. During this first session, the student is required to disclose information about their history, for example previous educational experiences and family history, in a similar way to a doctor taking a case history. Thus, the initial power dynamic is reinforced where the tutor assumes the identity of expert and the student is put in the position of being required to exchange information for access to the space. This need to exchange personal information for access to the tutorials was recognised by some of the participants; however, despite this, the tutors did not challenge this approach. Even though, as Blaine stated, *'the information wasn't even used in my teaching.'* This indicates that there is a structural influence on the people in the tutorial space as the tutors accept the practice of seeking personal information from the students, despite having some reservation, for example, Ellen remarks, *'I think we have to ask the question of whether we really need this information in order to teach effectively.'* As Blaine put it, the tutors could say, look, *'you don't have to answer all my questions, it won't affect your support.'* suggesting that the tutors could challenge the requirement to share information through assuring the students that they did not have to provide personal information in order to access tutorials. This is not currently happening amongst the participants in my research and, consequently, the power imbalance is perpetuated. From this initial power imbalance, the students are arguably at a disadvantage when it comes to goal setting and deciding on aims and objectives for the sessions. Initially, therefore, both the student and tutor assume traditional teacher/student identities, and this influences the early stages of the relationship between the student and tutor. This, however, shifts as the tutor and student develop their relationship into a more horizontal relationship.

This move towards a horizontal relationship addresses question three, **what is the influence of the space on the tutors' and students' journey?** It is concerned with both how the relationship between the tutor and students develops and the outcomes of the sessions themselves; therefore, it considers the shifting relationship between the student and tutor in terms of power dynamics within the session and also the impact of the session in terms of skills developed and any shifts in identity. Whilst the initial sessions, explored in research question two, appear to reinforce the traditional tutor-student dynamic, as the tutor and student works through the session, this dynamic shifts with the development of, what Freire (1970) describes as, a horizontal relationship. Rowan highlighted this relationship, saying,

*We are both bringing something to the tutorial, it's not just me sitting there being taught at, like in lectures. In my seminars and lectures, I don't know much, but in the dyslexia sessions, I have something to offer. (Rowan)*

Here, Rowan is making a distinction between a more didactic model of education, '*being taught at,*' and a more egalitarian approach. One potential reason for this different dynamic is the dyslexia tutorials being positioned in the third space.

There was evidence of the situating of the tutorials in the third space, as opposed to being a formalised teaching environment, playing a role in this shift in power dynamic. As the space is not a formal learning space, the usual associations around teaching, such as the teacher setting the aims and outcomes, do not apply in the same way. Ellen expresses this as the tutorial being a liminal space, '*It is a strange halfway house in a way, we are teaching, but not classed as such and yet have to have teaching qualifications and other qualifications to do our job.*' Whereas Alice grounded this in the practices of the tutorial, '*there's a template for degree courses, lectures and seminars, and for science degrees, lectures, seminars and lab work, but for SpLD support the template isn't there in the same way.*' The lack of associations around the space allows the tutor and student to re-imagine the purpose of the space, developing a more flexible and horizontal teaching environment. This results in more fluidity between the tutor and student, with both student and tutor bringing their expertise to the session and, thus, developing a collaborative relationship. Equally, the everyday practices of the sessions being student-led also encouraged the development of a more egalitarian relationship where the tutor brings their knowledge of academia and study skills and the student brings their subject specific knowledge and new perspectives, resulting in a dynamic environment where change can flourish. Everyday practices are described by Lefebvre (1991) as the perceived space and refer to the specific practices that happen in the space and how these practices act on the construction of the space. An example of everyday practices in the tutorials are outlined by Ellen, (these practices are likely to vary by tutor):

*There is some structure in the sessions; they always start with me offering the students a drink. This is a nice way to establish a relationship, as people often establish and maintain relationships over drinks or food, and then we will have a chat about how things are going, perhaps the student has had an assignment back, or done some group work. The students can also let off steam, say complain about a lecturer, and they know it won't leave the room, so a safe space. We then will work on whatever the student wants to work on for about 40 minutes. After this time, I will bring the session to a close so that we can review what we have done and do the admin stuff like signing the invoice sheet, writing up the notes and thinking about independent learning.*

There was, however, an unresolved tension between the tutor and student, with the tutors continuing to prioritise a process led approach of developing as an academic, whilst meeting the needs of the department, whereas the students remained focused on an outcome led approach of getting good

grades and exam results in order to achieve a good degree. Despite the tutors valuing skills development, they did recognise that the overall aim of students was to meet the requirements of their departments in order to achieve a good degree, and accepted the importance of this, framing it as the students meeting their academic potential. Alice, discussed this tension, *'it is about developing a writing process, being critical and understanding what the department itself wants.'*

Thus, there was a divergence in how the students and tutors perceived the purpose of the tutorials. Academic areas such as academic writing and note taking are referenced in the aims and outcomes and, indeed, the tutors and students reported that the majority of sessions were based around working on students' assignments, with very little generic skills development mentioned by students and tutors. Rowan for example said, *'sometimes [we work on] revision and managing time, but most of the time I want help with assignments.'* When skills are mentioned, they directly relate to the students' course, such as developing exam strategies for specific exams, or were developed alongside other skills. Oscar outlined this:

*What do is we look at the stages of writing an essay, going through the process of writing [...] as we are going through this, we look at how much time it will take for each stage and how many other things the student will need to do in addition to this one, so while the focus is on academic writing, we are developing time management skills. I wouldn't just do time management skills on its own without any sense, there isn't any meaning to it, and it doesn't have any context. (Oscar)*

Within this though, there are layers of expectations from both the students and the tutors, in terms of both skills development and in acculturating students into the culture of their department. Whilst the development of skills is explicitly referenced in the students' individual learning plan, and to an extent developing independence is referenced, the process of acculturation is not referenced or acknowledged explicitly. Equally, developing authority of writing emerged as an aim and is not explicitly referenced as a learning goal. Thus, this is another point of divergence in students and tutors' perceptions of the overall purpose. In terms of the overall purpose of the tutorials, students view the overall purpose of the sessions as to develop skills in order to get a good degree, whereas tutors see the purpose as including developing an academic identity and becoming independent learners as well as skills development, and through this, achieve their academic potential.

In summary, my findings have shown that the tutors and students' experience of the dyslexia tutorial space is constructed via a number of factors, including the tutor-student relationship, the structural influences, such as access to the space, and the positioning of the dyslexia tutorials. The next section will provide my interpretations of these findings, in relation to the literature. In particular, it will consider what I expected to find, findings that were unexpected, and the significance of these findings.

## 5.3 Interpretations of the Findings

The analysis has drawn out a number of similarities and differences in the experience of the tutors and the students of the dyslexia tutorial space. This section will move to interpreting my findings in relation to the existing literature and discussing the significance of these findings. The interpretations will be separated into two sections. Section one, 5.3.1 will consider the students' and tutors' perceptions of the space in terms of its position in the university and how they relate to the dyslexia tutorial space, for example, whether the space is viewed as separate from the department, and whether the tutorials contribute to the students' and tutors' identity. The second section, 5.3.2 will focus on how the tutors and students experience the sessions themselves, for example the tutor-student interaction, and the aims and outcomes of the tutorials.

### 5.3.1 Perceptions of the Dyslexia Tutorial and its Positioning in the University

A key finding that provides an insight into how tutorials are experienced is that of how there are structures that influence how participants construct their perceptions of the space. I expected the conversation around the tutorial spaces to centre around the suitability of the room for teaching, for example resources available, confidentiality and availability, drawing on Lyons' (2001) research, which foregrounds the importance of the physical environment in terms of conditions within the classroom, such as resources available, and Young *et al* (2003) who highlight the importance of the physical environment in developing a space conducive to learning. For the tutors, however, both the space itself and practices within the space are ways in which the tutors situate their identity as professionals. Further, the tutors view the tutorial space as reinforcing the purpose of the tutorial as being a teaching activity. This links to Lefebvre's triad of spatiality (1991), in which how the space is conceived is determined by the designation of the space; the designers of space deliver what is expected whilst those using the space experience whatever is imposed (Lefebvre 1991). Equally, the tutors view the provision of the tutorial rooms as affirming the value placed on them by their institution/s. The provision of space for the tutorials is, therefore, conceptualised by tutors as a reflection of how the university values the tutorials. Taylor (1989) describes this as territoriality. Territoriality is described as the feeling the people have that they can control what happens in a place, they can interact with the place and can change it physically to reflect their preferences and, by extension, their identities. As Alice puts it, '*To not even have a defined space sends a pretty clear message.*' O'Dwyer's (2022) research supports this; she found that dyslexia tutors felt isolated within academia. This is especially the case for tutors who are not employed by the university, as the tutorials are their only point of contact with the university, and in some cases, such as tutors who work in non-designated places, there is no point of contact. Wenzel (2003) provides an insight into the significance that tutors place on the tutorial room, describing space as a way to conceptualise being in and of the world. This concept of space being a way in which people make sense of the world is evident in the tutor interviews, for example, Ellen stated, '*Having my own defined space to work is a way to show the importance of the tutorials to me, the student, and to the university.*' and Oscar elaborated, stating,

*I am starting to reflect on what the space means. It kind of gave the service a legitimacy [...] so we had our own place in the university. What we now have is a space that doesn't really belong to anyone. We have all been shoved into a shared office together and the individual identity of all the services has gone and been replaced by the umbrella term, student services. We don't have a place in the university anymore [...]* (Oscar)

This focus on the room could be linked to the role of dyslexia tutor not being in alignment with the tutors' construction of teaching. Their role exists in a liminal space where they are not undertaking all of the elements associated with teaching such as creating schemes of work and lesson plans, and grading work, whilst at the same time holding the title of tutor and adopting a tutor-student relationship with their students. Imogen felt that the lack of some of these elements contributed to the lack of visibility of dyslexia tutors in the university, '*we are outside the university process, we aren't teaching a module, our work isn't graded, isn't part of grading or moderation and is out of the loop.*' Holland *et al*'s (2001) framework, the construction of identity, and Jordell's (1987) exploration of structural influences on teachers being determined by structures at institutional and societal levels provide an insight into how the space intersects with tutors' identity. The construction of a teacher identity is drawn from a number of sources, including from their experiences of schooling, their teaching training programmes, society's

shared understanding of what constitutes teaching, and current processes and policies associated with teaching. As dyslexia tutors may not match all of these sources, having a designated teaching room takes on more significance. Oscar, for example, acknowledged the difference between dyslexia tutoring and more formal teaching, whilst defending the role of dyslexia tutoring as being a teaching role.

*we tackle the issues as they come up naturally, we don't have a set curriculum, we do them when they need doing [...] and me and the student decide what needs doing together, in fact I sometimes don't even realise that we are doing study skills on the side, it is just so natural, we collaborate together at a time that works, we don't slavishly follow a scheme of work, and that is what makes SpLD tutorials different from any other teaching. (Oscar)*

As such, markers of the profession, such as having a designated place for tutorials and reading and assessing students' assessments take on greater significance. This could explain why tutors read the students' reports and take case histories, as it is a reinforcement of a professional identity.

Tutors, therefore, construct their experience of the dyslexia tutorial through their relationship with the university and through their professional identity. In contrast to tutors, the students did not situate their identity in the tutorials. Rather, for students, their identity is derived from their department; the dyslexia tutorial is one point of engagement with the university among many, and a secondary one at that. Thus, rather than the dyslexia tutorial being a source of identity, how the tutorials are experienced is considered in terms of how they relate to the department, in relation to previous experiences of dyslexia support, and experiences around disclosing and 'proving' disability in order to gain access to services. This is reflected in Lightman *et al's* (2009) research around people with, what they describe as, episodic disabilities being required to prove that they were disabled enough to receive assistance. Lightman *et al's* research considered the legislative construction of disability and how this corresponded to people's embodiment of disability. In higher education, reasonable adjustments are situated in the individual student rather than being implemented at an institutional level; thus, reinforcing a medical model of disability. This is reinforced by the nature of the requirements for access to the space, namely exchanging information to gain access to the space. Blaine described the effect this process had, saying, 'I had to meet a stranger and talk all about my past and my family and do lots of tests. It was horrible, having to talk about all of these [...], personal things to a stranger.' This builds on Mingus' (2017) theory of forced intimacy, in which Mingus argues that disabled people are forced to exchange personal information for access to services. My research found that the student is required to divulge very personal information to a number of professionals before they are granted access to the dyslexia tutorials and to reasonable adjustments. This was recognised by the tutor participants, for example Ellen stated, 'I know lots about them [...] their ed psych report and their assessment of need, so it is quite an unbalanced start to a tutor student relationship.' As such, despite the rhetoric around tutorials and reasonable adjustments being centred around the social model of disability, the requirements for accessing such adjustments are very much rooted in the medical model, as highlighted by Shakespeare (2004), who points out that whilst people profess that they are using the social model, often the medical model is still being utilised. This is underscored by Ellen, who drew comparisons with the medical model, 'it [the initial session] is almost a preliminary, or a triage,' triage being a medical term for the initial assessment of patients to determine need. This system perpetuates structural ableism as it is predicated on there being a burden of proof on the students; with both the students and tutors having little influence over its resistance in terms of changing how the tutorials are accessed; further, once the disclosure is made, what was previously private becomes public knowledge (Kerschbaum, 2014) with students unable to control who has access to the information. The impact of this burden of proof is discussed by Pearson and Boskowitz (2019)

who argue that students with invisible disabilities such as dyslexia may choose to disclose their disability to both ensure legitimacy for their accommodations and avoid, what they describe as, potential misunderstandings or anticipated questions or negative judgments. Wood (2017) argues that the idea of students manipulating the system to seek an advantage has deep rhetorical roots. She provides the example of a discussion with a disability service in which the proposal to provide disabled students more time to complete assignments was considered to be unfair to other students. Thus, the onus is on the student to both make visible a hidden disability and to justify their reasonable adjustments. This supports Valeras' (2010) work on hidden disabilities in which students are required to make daily decisions around whether to disclose disability, and Wendell's (2001) research in which she found that to disclose disability can bring risks around the disability being questioned as it does not fit into people's existing paradigms around disability. As highlighted in the literature review, the current trend towards moving from a construction of dyslexia as a disability to a difference could also be a factor in this. The term difference does not acknowledge the structural ableism faced by students and could be construed by students as dyslexia not being considered as a disability. For some students the label of dyslexia was a positive experience, helping them to overcome anxieties about their abilities. For example, Rowan said, 'When I was at school, before I was diagnosed, people said I was stupid, and I am worried that my tutors might think the same. But my dyslexia tutor, he is trained in this, and he knows that this isn't true.' There is also some literature to support this concern; Blankfield (2001), for example, found that many dyslexic people did not perceive themselves as being disabled. The participants in my study did not share this view, but rather focused on how dyslexia was perceived by others. An example of this was being concerned about being seen to be getting special treatment and an unfair advantage; there are echoes of Elliott and Grigorenko's (2014) assertion that dyslexia is appropriated by the middle classes, for example, Shep says that,

*I think that they think that SpLDs aren't a thing and that we are cheating the system. It's just middle-class parents pushing it and that we are getting an advantage by getting tuition and getting extra time. That we are getting an easy ride at university. And it's not just students. I have heard staff say there's no such thing as dyslexia. (Shep)*

There is some literature that supports Shep's concerns, for example, Duncan (2017) undertook research to determine if reasonable adjustments conferred an advantage rather than equity to dyslexic students. Whilst her findings were that the adjustments did not result in dyslexic students getting an advantage, the fact that this research exists speaks volumes. Equally, Ryder and Norwich (2018), found that there was evidence of lecturers having a negative perception of dyslexia. They found that many lecturers questioned whether dyslexic students should be at university and were critical of reasonable adjustments, viewing them as dumbing down the curriculum. Equally, Evans (2014:44) found that many nursing lecturers felt that the difficulties that dyslexic students faced should disqualify them from certain occupations.

*Eight Lecturing staff proposed that students with 'severe' dyslexia should engage in some form of screening, either before or during their studies to establish, as Lecturer F put it "If they're going to be able to proceed through the course.*

Thus, whilst students must be disabled enough to be eligible for support, it appears that there is a concern about students being too disabled, thus demonstrating the structural ableism that students experience. In addition to the experience of disclosing disability and proving that they are 'disabled enough' to receive adjustments, a contributing factor in how students experience the positioning of the tutorial in relation to their department was linked to the students' prior experience of disability

support/educational experience. The students who referenced a previous exclusionary educational experience were more likely to experience separate tutorials as segregatory. Thus, the positioning of the space as segregated was often related to how the student experienced disability. This demonstrates an interaction between students' lived experience of dyslexia (Cameron, 2016) and their experience of the tutorials, which I had not expected. For example, Shep described the tutorials as hidden from the rest of the university, referencing shame, *'We keep being told that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of, yet we are hidden away.'*

Therefore, the students' experience of the tutorials was constructed in terms of their interactions with structural conceptualisations of disability and structural ableism with the tutorials being another way in which the students were othered. As such, many students perceived the tutorials as segregated; this speaks to ableism in that the tutorials are not considered as integrated with the department, but as a place for disabled students to go to develop skills, and then return to the department, better equipped to meet the course requirements. This is described by Grimm (1999) as regulating academic identity and shaping the discourse of the students. Shep referenced this stating, *'here I am again, like at school, having to leave my department and go to the special help building.'* This supports Armstrong (2006) who makes the point that, historically, the existence of the separation of disabled students, for example through the use of self-contained classrooms and segregated schools, acted to reinforce the belief that disabled people do not belong with non-disabled peers. Thus, my research has underscored Kitchin (1998), demonstrating how separate spaces can act to keep disabled people in their place. Indeed, Peña (2014) points out that such accommodations grant access to ableist institutions and therefore perpetuate rather than challenge ableism. Oscar underlines this saying, *'with many departments, there's no contact at all. It's just like a huge gap between them and us and we are in completely different spheres.'* Equally, Shep made a similar point, saying, *'the problem with having specialists. It means no-one else has to bother, just leave it to the special teachers for special students.'* Thus, both tutor and student participants recognised that the dyslexia tutorial could act to contain difference through perpetuating the situating of dyslexia in the individual and expressed concerns regarding the separation of department and dyslexia support because it creates a disconnect between the department and dyslexia tutoring. There was a perception that by removing the students from their department to receive support, the message to the department is that the responsibility for supporting the students lies not with the department, but with an SpLD/disability service, creating a situation where the dyslexic student can be othered by the department and their support outsourced. This concern was discussed by Shep, who said, *'[with dyslexia tutorials] being separate; it is like nothing to do with them [the academic department], they don't have to think about dyslexia, some other department deals with it and that's that.'*

Consequently, the separation of department and dyslexia tutorial can be experienced as othering and a way to contain dyslexia support. Even when students reported preferring the tutorials to be separate from their department, this underlined this containment, again pointing to Kitchin's research. Suzi, who preferred separated sessions, stated.

*I like it, because I can just sneak off and it's not like anyone knows I am going off for a tutorial, you wouldn't, you wouldn't usually bump into someone you know here, and I always think if you see someone, like at the doctors it is a bit awkward, like they know why you are here. If it was in the department, that would happen a lot. So, it is good that there is the confidentiality. I don't want people making opinions on me and why I am here, and I wouldn't want that so I quite like the fact that I can just disappear and not be in my department. (Suzi)*

Students who prefer the separateness of the tutorial, therefore, reported viewing the tutorials as

providing a safe space. This was often contrasted with their department which students frequently viewed as unsafe in terms of being worried about feeling judged or looking stupid. This again highlights students feeling out of place on their course and supports Campbell's (2017) research of segregated spaces as a safe haven. Safe spaces are described by Stengal and Weems (2010) as experiential spaces where the inhabitants of the space feel secure to explore and take risks. In the case of a dyslexia tutorial, the safe space is created between the student and the tutor, as well as through the separateness from the student's department. This concurs with Irvine and Lee (2018) who argue that a safe space is co-created by the inhabitants of the space. Kirwan and Leather (2011) found that this feeling of being unsafe was often carried into the tutorial. They found that whilst many students opted to use the in-house dyslexia service other students opted to receive outsourced skills development tuition which was separate from their institution. This was because they wanted, what they described as, a confidential and fully private service that is not part of the university structure. This complexity around spaces being both segregatory and separate is considered by Holt (2007) who points out that whilst such separation does little to challenge ableism, it does provide temporary respite from ableist assumptions for students. There is an argument, therefore, that what is being reconstructed and legitimised in this case is the segregated tutoring of dyslexic students.

Finally, unlike tutors, the students did not express a sense of ownership over the space in the same way as the tutors did. This is what I expected to see, as students do not have control over the space in the same way as teachers do. Gordon (1996) found that students experience educational places such as classrooms as public spaces; whereas teachers have ownership of a classroom and invite students into their space. The dyslexia tutorial space is no different. The students book their appointment with the tutor, and the space is very much controlled by the tutor. Suzi mentioned this in her discussion of the tutorial place saying, *'it's like your office'*, referring to the fact that the space was 'owned' by the tutor, with the student a visitor who is invited into the space. In contrast, tutors who used bookable rooms, or non-designated spaces such as cafes, experienced the space as more akin to a public space. The impact of this for tutors was that they experienced this as undermining their identity as tutors. This built on current work around how space is experienced by tutors, as most research makes the assumption that a teacher has ownership over their space. For example, Shilling (1991) argued that the control of access to classrooms is an example of how space is constructed by teachers in a way that demonstrates authority and dominance, thus making an assumption that the teacher has a private space. An example of educators experiencing being spaced was from Baustien Siuty (2019:1041) who stated, *"even though special educators experienced being spaced, their positions afforded access to institutional power."* It is important to note, however, that this refers to educators working in a space that is othered from the mainstream, rather than not having access to a private space; nevertheless, it is important to recognise the power that tutors have through their role and identity as a tutor.

This section has considered the position of the tutorial space, the importance placed on the dyslexia tutorial space, and access to the tutorial space, the next section will move onto an exploration of the tutors' and students' experiences within the dyslexia tutorial.

### 5.3.2 Students and Tutors Perceptions of Interacting in the Dyslexia Tutorial

The findings above consider how students and tutors perceive the tutorials in terms of how they are positioned in the university. The following findings now explore the students' and tutors' interactions in the tutorials. One of the findings I expected to see was the tutor-student relationship taking a prominent



place in how the dyslexia tutorials were experienced. There was a lot of emphasis placed on the tutor-student relationship and how there was a developing horizontal relationship. I did not expect, however, for this relationship to initially replicate traditional tutor-student dynamics. As the tutorials do not have curricular or schemes of work, I had expected that this would result in a more egalitarian relationship. Using critical realism's domains of reality, this dynamic is generated by a number of mechanisms. Firstly, as discussed in the first section above, the structure to access tutorials diminishes the students' agency through being required to both prove their disability and to share personal information; whereas, in contrast, the structures around the tutors reinforce their power and status through being constructed around professional expertise, as discussed above in the previous section. The second structural influence is situated in the structures around expectations of the sessions. An example of this is that, through the tutors professional training, they are taught that taking case histories is an integral part of planning support and that the purpose of the sessions is to develop independent learners. Ellen explained this, *'the idea is that you can make the support more individualised to the student by learning all about them. We are taught this on the SpLD course that we do, and it is part of the process of learning about the student.'* Equally, the aim of developing independent learners was a common theme amongst tutors. For example, Alice stated, *'what I want is for students to think for themselves and to become more independent.'* and Oscar reinforced this, *'I am working with the student to become an independent, analytical, critical thinker and as a consequence, writer.'* The tutors uncritically viewed developing independent learners as emancipatory, and, equally, did not consider the taking of a case history as a way of imposing power on the student; thus, these mechanisms were invisible. As such, whilst there is no curricular, these other mechanisms underpinning the tutorial serve to maintain the traditional tutor-student relationship, at least in the initial sessions. In contrast, the students' expectations are constructed based on their experiences of education, viewing the role of the tutors as to teach them the skills so they can meet the needs of their department and get a good degree. For example, Suzi said, *'it comes back to doing what the department wants to pass your degree.'* and Blaine, an undergraduate student stated, *'at the end of the day, that is what you have come to university for, to get a good degree. You need a good degree to get a job.'* This demonstrates that the construction of the dyslexia tutorial as a place to meet the department's requirements in order to gain a degree is to some extent a shared experience by the student participants. The result of these differing perceptions between tutors and students resulted in an initial divergence of what the students and tutors wanted to achieve in the session, with the tutor's power resulting in the tutors' view of the sessions, to some extent, prevailing. Dobrin (1999) argues that to be truly liberating the tutors should be promoting the students to resist what he describes as "power moves" that occur in individual moments of communication, and Bonnett and Cuypers (2003:326) point out that, *"the learner's own thinking has to be respected, that students must always see the point of what they are learning and be free to pursue their own conceptions."* Whereas, what appears to be happening here is that the tutor has a learning agenda that is communicated to the student as a requirement, rather than a point for negotiation. This appears to be because the tutors have a predetermined position on learner autonomy that they enact uncritically. A potential explanation for this is that teachers and students differ in their view of learner autonomy, with teachers situating this in what they believe the students should learn (Benson, 2007). McInerney (2009) takes the view that students resist taking an active role in their learning, arguing that as they have no conception of what it means to be an active participant, they fear such freedom and Deslauriers *et al* (2019:1925) found that whilst *"students in active classrooms learned more, their perception of learning, while positive, was lower than that of their peers in passive environments."* It seems unlikely, however, that university students have had no experience of being active participants, rather it seems possible that students are looking for something specific from the tutor. Rowan, for example, describes the tutorials as a place to get extra help to develop her study skills, *'He is just there to help me do my best; to develop my skills,'* while Blaine refers to the tutor in a pastoral role, *'there is an hour set aside for me to talk about what I want with a sympathetic person, who is interested in my problems and my week and who wants me to do well.'* What both the tutors and students share is a

belief that the tutors hold the responsibility for learning in the sessions. The tutors see this as a responsibility to develop a more active learning environment where students work to become independent learners. Ellen describes her responsibilities thusly, *'we really want the student to be independent learners and that is how we judge our success.'* In contrast, the students are looking for a tutor to help them improve their work in order that they pass their degree. For example, when asked about what they found most useful about the tutorial, Suzi responded that, *'the SpLD tutor is great, they help me turn a blank sheet into a finished piece of writing that makes sense.'* and Rowan replied, *'I really want a 2:1 and my tutor is helping me to develop the skills so that I can get there.'* As the sessions progressed, the power dynamic began to shift, with the relationship moving from a traditional tutor-student relationship to the more horizontal relationship that I was anticipating. Nichols (1998) describes this as offering an alternative to the belief that knowledge is handed down. Bhabha's (1994) work on the third space has been an integral part of how the dyslexia tutorial is conceptualised. Bhabha defined the third space as a transitional space, where power relations and norms can be challenged and subverted by political or everyday practices. Cook-Sather and Alter (2010) assert that through liminal teaching spaces, the traditional positions of teacher and students are diminished, allowing both to challenge and subvert existing frames of reference. Thus, through the development of a reflective space, new types of knowledge can be discovered for both students and tutors (Hulme, Cracknell and Owens 2009). My research to some extent supported this view of the third space challenging existing frames of reference. The tutors have no influence over the students' progression through their course, giving students the freedom to try out ideas, challenge the tutor and be vulnerable in the space; equally, it allows the tutor freedom to explore ideas with the student and to work towards a less hierarchical relationship. This was something that came through in the tutor data, for example, Alice, *'I am not assessing it, or grading it. I am just there to help them reach their potential. That is my remit.'* and, Oscar, *'it helps that we don't have a say in the marks students get, so the relationship is different, it is more collaborative.'*

The expert-to-expert dynamic that develops between the tutor and student was highlighted as central to the experience of the tutorial; it appeared to disrupt the traditional dynamic of tutor as expert and student as novice. Cook-Sather and Alter (2011) assert that through liminal teaching spaces, the traditional positions of teacher and students are dissolved, allowing both to challenge and subvert existing frames of reference. Shep, for example, saw the role of tutor and student as switching throughout the session, *'I bring my subject knowledge and the tutor helps me to know what to do with it to write a good quality essay. Sometimes my tutor takes over and helps me progress.'*

Bhabha (2004:2) describes this as developing, *"in-between spaces that initiate new signs of identity."*

In the dyslexia tutorial, therefore, the perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991) is that of one where both tutor and student are bringing expertise and experience to the space, disrupting the traditional tutor-student identity. It is likely to be the only space in the university in which the student is considered to be a subject expert and thus promotes a more dialogic approach, as such it is likely to be one of the few teaching scenarios in which teachers and students engage on this basis. Rowan, in video observation two, made the point that, *'I provide the subject knowledge and you [the SpLD tutor] help me to put it in an academic form that my department will accept.'* Within this more egalitarian relationship, there are structural influences, which are, to some extent, acknowledged by both tutors and students. As Leverenz (2001) maintains, the bringing of expertise to the sessions acts to equalise, but not eliminate power dynamics in the session. Carino (2003) explores this further, arguing that a non-hierarchical environment is not dependent on a total commitment to non-directive tutoring. Rather he makes the case that tutors should recognise where the power and authority lie in the tutorial, when and to what

degree the student has the power and authority, and when and to what degree they are absent in the tutorial. Ellen recognises these tensions when she discusses how sometimes students ask for something that is not within her remit, and how she responds to this:

*I try to get students to make their own decisions about whether their work is good quality or not. In other ways I hand the control back. It isn't easy because often students come to me for answers, and I think, reassurance. (Ellen)*

Here, Ellen uses the phrase, handing control back, but it might be more accurate to describe this as Ellen exercising control in the session by making the decision to place the responsibility for assessing the work back on the student, and as such, reinforcing structural power dynamics. This demonstrates that the third space does not in itself equalise power dynamics.

Another finding that came through strongly, was that whilst the tutorials could be described as a third space, the first space frequently entered the tutorials. An example of first space teaching practices being employed in the tutorials is the setting of aims and outcomes. Malcolm *et al* (2003) describes such target setting as a way in which third space formalises what was once informal through adopting externally prescribed objectives. It is important to consider structural influences on the tutors when setting aims and outcomes. One of the key principles of ADSHE is to develop autonomous learning; equally, Dyslexia Action's (2022) qualification for dyslexia tutors includes the learning outcome of promoting students' autonomous learning. Fullan (2000) uses the term "outside forces" to describe external factors and how they may influence teaching and education. Therefore, when Imogen says that, 'We want to create independent learners,' she is, to some extent, referencing the guidelines from her professional body. There is inevitably, therefore, an element of the tutors reproducing the structural influences of both their professional body and their teaching training. Jordell (1987) suggests that structural influences on teachers are determined by structures at both institutional and societal levels and are of major importance. Sachs (2005) explores this further, considering the development of identity in becoming a teacher. She argues that the process is mediated by teacher's experiences both in schools and outside of schools, as well as their beliefs. This demonstrates that whilst it appears that the aims and outcomes are the culmination of both a dialogue between the tutor and students and the application of the tutor's expertise, there are outside influences on this negotiation, which may not be fully acknowledged.

The first space is also evident in the dyslexia tutorial in terms of how the department influenced both the aims and outcomes of the sessions and the work undertaken in the sessions. In the analysis, Imogen described how she experienced the influence of the department as, 'the department is a third person in the tutorial room.' Further, both tutors and students, when discussing how they progressed through the sessions, frequently referred to utilising course documents such as handbooks and assignment criteria. For example, in the analysis, Blaine identified this as integral to the sessions: 'My tutor helps me to know how to write for different essays and how to use the department's criteria to help me write.' This aligns with Leverenz (2001) who considers the students' department as part of this discourse. Whilst the lecturer is not physically present in the room, the student and tutor are drawing on their expertise, for example through handbooks, reading lists and assignment criteria. Oscar put it thusly,

*One of the best things is to work on an assignment together; we will look at the student's module book to check academic requirements of the department, as this will change from department to department, and will start thinking around this. (Oscar)*

The main focus of the sessions was students' assignments and working toward ensuring that these assignments meet the requirements of the department, thus seeing the sessions in terms of the production of assignments and exam papers that enable the students to gain their degree. The students' assignment, therefore, creates and reinforces the standard to be upheld and the tutor works with the student to achieve the standard, without the tutor or student questioning or challenging this standard. Indeed, one of the benchmarks for a student becoming more independent was their ability to use the marking criteria to judge the quality of their work. Ellen referenced this specifically,

*I would read out the criteria [for an assignment] for say a 2.1 and the student would use their judgement to place it. If the student thought, it didn't meet the criteria we would come up with ways to improve it to meet the criteria. (Ellen)*

Thus, whilst the tutorials do offer an opportunity for exploration and for students to work on a more level footing with tutors, the students and tutors are nevertheless working towards meeting the requirements of the department in the first space. While ostensibly voiceless within the session, it is the department's voice that influences both the agenda and the outcomes of the tutorials. The students' assignment, therefore, creates and reinforces the standard to be upheld and the tutor works with the student to achieve the standard, without questioning or challenging this standard (Thomas, 2010). Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) describe this as the tutors upholding the dominant interpretive framework through their enactment of knowledge and how this knowledge is transmitted, with development in students interpreted as being able to interpret and respond to assignments as opposed to challenging these discourses. Both students and tutors, therefore, recognised that whilst the students and tutors do not have a specific curriculum within the dyslexia tutorial space, this does not translate into a neutral space in which tutors and students can create unrestricted aims and objectives, rather these aims, and outcomes are derived from assessing what skills the students need in order to meet the requirements of the course. Thonus (1999) points out that tutors are employed by institutions (directly or indirectly) to improve students' writing for assessment purposes and, therefore, the focus on an assignment-based approach demonstrates the dominance of the third space in the dyslexia tutorial. Therefore, whilst the traditional tutor-student relationship is challenged and subverted, the content and purpose of the work undertaken in the session supports rather than challenges the current structures in terms of meeting academic requirements.

The final finding is in relation to the perceived purpose of the sessions and how this impacts how tutors and students experience the tutorials. As the students journeyed through the tutorials their identity appeared to evolve, moving towards what students and tutors referred to as becoming more academic. Becoming academic was seen as a process in which students move beyond the acquisition of skills, to become acculturated into higher education and, specifically, the student's department and through this move towards developing an identity as a developing student academic. This is described by Lea and Street (2006:1) as, "the requirement to switch their writing styles and genres between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of literacy practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes." The role of the tutor is to support the student in this acculturation and, therefore, the tutor student interaction contributes to this reconstruction of identity. This is described by Ellen:

*Engineering, will have a completely different way of writing than philosophy and it is through developing ways of thinking through the writing that students become academic writers. By this I mean academic writing being by looking at how you are thinking about what you are studying, are you objectivist or subjectivist? What kind of academic are you becoming? (Ellen)*

This is achieved through the development of meta cognition such as developing critical thinking, working on authorial authority and being able to work effectively across different literacy practices. Fernsten and Reda (2011) view this as critical to students' development, arguing that students internalise the belief that they are bad writers and they become stuck in these identities, making them fearful of failing in academic writing assignments and thus retaining the identity of a novice learner. My research found some evidence that as the students gained more confidence, they began to embody this identity of a developing student academic. This is underlined in Rowan's quote, *'it's okay to be me. I don't need to write like a professor and sound a certain way [...], there isn't just one way to be academic.'* Indeed, as French (2010:1) points out, *"what appears obvious and uncontested about 'good writing', may actually disguise complicated and unequal manifestations of cultural power operating within and through higher education."* This unequal distribution of power was explicitly referenced by Blaine who discussed the inequalities faced by non-traditional students, *'they don't look beyond the way it is written and for a mature learner like me, this means that I am having to learn the subject, but also learn a whole new way of writing.'* The tutorials, therefore, provide a space for students to move outside the course and towards developing an academic identity via acculturation and authority over writing. Nicholls (1998:85) supports this idea of a student-led approach being an everyday practice stating that, *the student sets the initial focus for the session and should do most of the talking.* Thu Nicholls makes the point that, *'the idea of the Writing Centre has to be its practice, has to be this maintained shift of authority to the client, or it becomes a continuation of passive reception to lecture (1998:85).'*

Casanave (2002) argues that recognising and responding to multiple literacy practices is an integral part of students developing academic identities. Further, she considers that the diverse practices embody the interaction between the demands of the programme of study and wider goals. Davies and Harre (1990) support this view, considering this academic identity to be developed via participation in specific discourses. This was a recurring theme in the data and was discussed by both students and tutors, for example Blaine, stated, *'I have changed the way I think about the writing process, and the writing process helps me to understand my subject more, if that makes sense?'* This view is shared by Imogen,

*It is about the student engaging with their department and learning how to write for different audiences, so for example they may write an essay as a history student and then have to write a gobbet, which is a completely different way of writing, even though it is for the same subject, so you can't just learn one way of writing and that will do for the next three years, the student has to respond to different types of writing assignment and respond well. (Imogen)*

This process of acculturation into academic is discussed by Burke (2008), who argues that:

*Individuals do not simply learn the 'right' skills and then use them to produce writing that clearly, logically and coherently reflects their thinking. Writing is deeply enmeshed in wider power relations that construct the 'author'[...] Writers are socially situated subjects and the meanings they produce through their writing are constituted through the contested and multiple discourses at play in different social fields.*

This raises a number of questions about the processes of writing. Burke (2008) suggests that the questions, what counts as 'knowledge' in different higher education contexts, and who can be recognised as a legitimate 'knower'? are critically considered. This aligns with the academic literacies model in which, Lea (2004:1) argues, *"students are active participants in the process of meaning-making*

*in the academy, and central to this process are issues concerned with language, identity and the contested nature of knowledge.”* The student, therefore, gains credibility by, ‘*projecting an identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their idea*’ (Hyland, 2002: 1091).

Lea and Street’s academic literacy model is, therefore, a useful model for dyslexia tutorials as it recognises that student writing is not restricted to one single reproducible academic style; rather academic writing can be framed as socially situated discourse practice, in which the writing will change according to the genre of the assignment. It is important to note that this is potentially challenging for students. As French (2018:409) points out,

*developing into confident academic writers is not a straightforward, linear or automatic process; rather it inevitably involves struggle, conflict and feelings of uncertainty, inauthenticity, marginalisation, exclusion and occasionally, failure.*

Lea and Street, and French, therefore, problematise previously uncontested views of academic writing services to dismantle othering and begin to develop an academic student identity. French (2010) considers that academic writing practice in higher education is a social and communal practice rather than the acquisition of a set of individual attributes or skill. My research has found that the dyslexia tutorial has a role in supporting the student in this acculturation. A divergence between my research and Lea and Street’s model is the emphasis on developing authority over writing. Whilst Lea and Street’s academic literacies model includes the role of acculturation it does not specifically reference authority over writing as an element of developing an academic identity. My research has highlighted that this development of authority, in conjunction with the development of critical thinking, is a key element of becoming academic and moving from what Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) describe as the professional in training role, where students are able to utilise the knowledge and methods from their course as well as knowledge from outside the course to address assigned issues and problems. Ellen’s interview provides an insight into how this relates to the dyslexia tutorial,

*if we help students to develop agency over their work and their successes, this will help them in the future. I have a student who shows me his essay and asks me if it is okay. It isn’t my subject, so I have no idea, but even if I did, he is handing his work over for me to judge and I am trying to do the opposite, where students make their own decisions about their work and come to me so we can collaboratively improve it. (Ellen)*

There is a body of literature around developing authority over writing. For example, Tang (2009) argues that authority is a crucial element of developing an academic voice and Starfield (2002: 121) states that it is vital for students to develop a ‘*powerful, authoritative, textual and discursive identity*’, in order to be successful writers. This is described by North (1982) as creating better writers as opposed to better writing. He argues that tutors must shape the tutorials from where the student is in the process and from there encourage the student to engage in and reflect upon writing. Thus, the tutors are maintaining a non-directive approach to support the student to develop an authorial self. Clark and Ivancic (1997:152) describe the authorial self as encompassing the textual “*evidence of writers’ feeling of authoritativeness and sense of themselves as authors*” Van Rensburg (2006) takes a stronger stance, arguing that writers establish authority in, through and over their own writing rather than passively reproducing the discourse of their department. Thus, the goal for tutors is to support students to develop a sense of authorial self to take a professional in-training role, rather than focus on a correction of surface errors which is counterproductive to developing academic writing (Fernsten and Reda, 2011). My research found evidence supporting students moving towards authority over writing; for example, Suzi who said, ‘*I can judge the quality of my writing and decide for myself what is good and what I need*

*to work on*'. I would contend, however, that my research found this authority over writing as tied to the discourse of the department and was developed alongside acculturation into the department. Whereas academic writing is commonly used for scholarly publications such as journal articles, with the target audience being the author's peers; in contrast, students are writing in response to a task set for them by experts, who will assess this work. The tutor is, therefore, working to support the students to develop more authority over their work, whilst at the same time recognising that it must meet these external criteria and be assessed. As such, the tutors and students are working together to navigate developing an academic identity, through academic literacies, critical thinking, authorial authority, and acculturation, whilst working toward the primary aim of meeting the departments' requirements in order to maximise the students' chance of getting a high degree class.

## 5.4 Summary

In summary, how students and tutors navigated concepts such as identity, positioning of the dyslexia tutorials and separateness versus segregation influenced the tutors and students' perceptions of the tutorials before any tutor-student interaction had taken place. These perceptions were taken into the first session in which power dynamics were reinforced via the tutor (at least initially) adopting a medical model stance of taking a case history and using this to determine the best course of action for the student. As such, the tutors' sense of professional identity is upheld at the expense of the students' autonomy. Freire (1985:80) points out, "*educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working.*" This demonstrates that whilst it appears that the aims and outcomes are the culmination of both a dialogue between the tutor and students and the application of the tutor's expertise, there are outside influences on this negotiation, which may not be fully acknowledged.

Further, the findings have demonstrated that whilst the structural influences on the tutorials remain, the tutors and students are able to resist the banking model of teaching and move towards a more horizontal relationship. The tutors and students are, to some extent, recognising, what critical realism describes as, causal powers, and disrupting these, whilst still being influenced by these powers. For example, they recognise the traditional banking model of education and try to resist this, whilst at the same time the tutors assert their status as a tutor through practices such as reading students reports and setting aims and outcomes, and the students often seeks to cede authority of their writing to tutors, through requesting that tutors judge the quality of their writing.

The main factors in the reconstruction of the tutor-student relationship are the expert-to-expert approach, in which the student's subject knowledge is foregrounded as a valuable resource in the session, thus challenging the view of the tutor holding the knowledge and thus the power. The second factor is the positioning of the dyslexia tutorial in the third space. The third space provides a liminal space where tutors and students have the freedom to move beyond formal teaching structures to re-frame the sessions into a space where students can explore ideas and take risks, in a safe space. Having said this, it is important to recognise that the third space is not removed from the university, as such the third space was evident in the tutorials, in terms of both teaching practices (for example creation of learning plans), and in terms of the influence of the departments' requirements.

In terms of outcomes and purpose of the sessions, the findings show a complex relationship between the goal of gaining a good degree (identified by the participants as a 2:1 or first-class degree) and the

less tangible outcome of developing academic identity through academic literacy and critical thinking and through authority of writing and acculturation. Both tutors and students recognise that the primary goal of the tutorials is to support the student to reach their potential; however, tutors see this as students developing as independent learners, whereas students are more focused on an assignment-based approach. This is highlighted in this short section of video observation two between Oscar and Rowan, in which Rowan cites the session being good as she has a good first draft, whereas, in contrast, Oscar sees it as successful because Rowan has developed her academic writing,

*Rowan, I think that was a good session, I have a good draft by the end of it.*

*Oscar, that's great and I think you are really improving your writing.*

This tension was recognised by tutors and students in the research, if not wholly resolved. The next chapter will consider what these findings add to what we know about the experience of the dyslexia tutorial, will discuss limitations of the research, will provide recommendations, and will provide suggestions for further research.



# Chapter Six, Conclusion

## 6.1 How does this Research add to What we Know About the Dyslexia Tutorial?

In summary, this research has highlighted the structural influences that underpin how students and tutors experience the tutorial space. The discussion has drawn out a number of similarities and differences in the tutors' and the students' experiences of the dyslexia tutorial space. A key finding from the discussion pertinent to both tutors and students is that of identity.

For the tutors, both the space itself and practices within the space influence the tutors' identity and perceived relationship with the university. The lack of a provision of a defined space, can result in tutors perceiving dyslexia tutorials as not being valued, prioritised, or recognised as a teaching space by the university. As Ellen puts it,

*It [a defined tutorial room] also helps to reinforce my identity as an SpLD tutor, with all of my books and resources around me. Having my own defined space to work is a way to show the importance of the tutorials to me, the student, and to the university. (Ellen)*

This is likely to be the case for tutors as their role exists in a liminal space where they are not undertaking all of the elements associated with teaching such as creating schemes of work and lesson plans, and grading work, whilst at the same time holding the title of tutor and adopting a tutor student relationship with their students. Consequently, markers of the profession, such as having a designated place for tutorials and reading and assessing students' assessments take on greater significance. This builds on literature around space (Lefebvre, 1991) and territoriality (Taylor, 1988), demonstrating that the space acts as a representation of the tutor's relationship with the university. In contrast, students' constructions of identity in higher education were grounded in their department. As such the dyslexia tutorial is seen as one aspect of the university experience among others. For example, when Rowan and Blaine discussed the dyslexia tutorial room, they referenced it in relation to their department, for example Rowan 'I do like my department, but I like having this place I can go every week and get help and support.' and Blaine, 'I think it [the tutorials] works really well together with the department.' As such, my research shows that the student participants' sense of belonging, and student identity is situated in the department. In terms of a disabled identity, there was evidence that this was constructed in relation to their lived experience of dyslexia, including previous educational experiences, and this influenced their experience of the dyslexia tutorial. For example, Blaine reported that being assessed as dyslexic had been a positive experience and the department and tutorials had provided support on his course:

*I was struggling at university, and it was erm, actually my tutor who suggested [sic] that I look at dyslexia. I really appreciate my tutor doing that and taking the time, so, yes, for erm signposting and that, it does work really well, and my department uses yellow stickers, which is great. They are for dyslexic students to put on assignments and the marker knows you have a erm dyslexia or ADHD, something like that. So, the department does stuff and the tutor does stuff, it all comes together. (Blaine)*

In contrast, Shep had a less positive experience:

*When I was in school, I found out that I had dyslexia, I think I was 13 or 14, so quite old, really, and around the time when you are starting to feel a bit self-conscious. Anyway, I got a diagnosis*

*and that was pretty horrible, I felt like I was being labelled as not as good, and I didn't want it. My school gave me extra help, it was mainly to help me with spelling and grammar [...] So I had to leave all my friends and my class and go for these special lessons for people who couldn't keep up. I am really clever, and I do well, and I felt like I was being punished for having dyslexia, oh and I had to go into a special room for students with extra time and this made me look different again, so that wasn't good. (Shep)*

This lived experience of dyslexia was, therefore, a factor in whether the separateness of the dyslexia tutorial was experienced as a positive or as being segregated from the rest of the university. Secondly, my research has revealed a number of structural influences that underpin the dyslexia tutorials and were potentially previously unacknowledged. These influences centre around how both teaching is constructed and how disability is constructed. Students and tutors bring these constructions into the dyslexia tutorial room, for example, despite the sessions being ostensibly student led, in the initial sessions, the tutors would take the lead in the session determining both aims and outcomes and parameters, for example, no proofreading. Whilst this dynamic equalises as the sessions progress, this initial session sets the tone for the rest of the sessions. For example, in the interpersonal process recall, Oscar stated, *'I am leading this a bit though, hopefully, that'll change as we go on'*, and *'ouch, here I feel I am telling what to do, saying to do it thematically; I'm not pleased with that'* expressing surprise at how much he was taking charge of the sessions. Thus, whilst students lead the sessions, tutors direct them in terms of creating the framework within which the sessions operate. This is something that tutors accepted uncritically, despite it diverging from their aims to democratise the sessions. Equally, the students often brought their conceptualisations around teaching to the session, for example, wanting tutors to assess their work, or to teach them the skills to pass their course. The tutors are, however, to some extent recognising, what critical realism describes as, causal powers, and disrupting these, whilst still being influenced by these powers. For example, they recognise the traditional banking model of education and try to resist this, whilst at the same time, asserting their status as a tutor through practices such as reading students reports and setting aims and outcomes.

These different constructions are reflected in the divergence of how tutors and students perceive the outcomes and the overall purpose of the session. On the surface, there appears to be an alignment of purpose, both tutors and students reported an assignment-based approach and recognise academic success as a goal. Students, however, focussed on the outcomes of the sessions, namely, achieving academic success, in contrast, the tutors are process focused, viewing the purpose of the sessions as for the students to develop academically and through which achieve their academic potential. I have determined a number of potential explanations for this difference. Firstly, as tutors are not assessing the students' progress, or teaching a set syllabus, it is possible that they are utilising a different measure of success, that of developing independent learners. This is likely to be influenced by their construction of teaching and a teacher identity, and by their professional body. Thus, whilst tutors are to some extent disrupting existing teaching paradigms, there is evidence of the internalisation of what it means to teach. In contrast, students often viewed the sessions, at least initially, as a way to develop skills in order to meet the requirements of the departments. Thus, the students recognised that academic success requires students to become acculturated into the department, as opposed to just the acquisition of subject knowledge.

The third finding was centred around how the relationship between the tutor and the student disrupted traditional student-tutor relationships. The positioning of the tutorials in third space was identified as key to this disruption. The tutors have no influence over the students' progression through their course, giving students the freedom to try out ideas, challenge the tutor and be vulnerable in the space; Alice described this as, *'a lot of what I do is to help them [the students] find their voice.'* Equally, it allows the tutor freedom to explore ideas with the student and to work towards a less hierarchical relationship.

One issue that came through strongly, however, was that whilst the tutorials could be described as a third space, the first space, the requirements of the students' module, frequently entered the space. Both tutors and students, when discussing how they progressed through the sessions, frequently referred to an assignment-based approach and utilising course documents such as handbooks and assignment criteria. Further, students' ability to use the marking criteria to judge the quality of their work was viewed as an indicator of the students becoming more independent. Thus, whilst the dyslexia tutorials do offer an opportunity for exploration and for students to work on a more level footing with tutors, the students and tutors are nevertheless working towards meeting the requirements of the department in the first space.

## 6.2 Recommendations

### 6.2.1 Recommendations for the Users of the Space

My research has found that the teaching practices were frequently emancipatory, for example the development of the expert-to-expert dynamic between the tutor and student, and the development of authority over writing. To further resist existing power dynamics, I would recommend that tutors critically reflect on how current practices can reinforce structural inequalities and how these practices can be resisted. An example of this is the control of information. Tutors could critically review how and why they take case histories in the initial session. By doing so, they could consider how, and indeed whether they will use this information and, more importantly, whether students perceive the sharing of this information as a prerequisite for accessing the sessions. As such, the tutor and student would be beginning to form a working relationship on a more egalitarian basis.

Secondly, and relatedly, tutors could reflect on how reading students' reports prior to meeting the students could result in a power imbalance in terms of knowledge about the students. This could be addressed by giving control of the information to students by asking them what they would like the tutor to know. This would help to equalise the initial power dynamics. The tutors could also make it clear that access to the sessions is not contingent on the students providing information to the tutor. Through these recommendations, the tutors could, as Hubbuch (1990) describes it, problematise the power they wield whilst ostensibly empowering students and, through this, confront their power and how they use it.

Finally, tutors and students can work together, critically reflecting on, and entering meaningful dialogue, both initially in terms of negotiating the aims and outcomes of the sessions, and throughout the sessions. Differing expectations around the sessions was identified in the research as a point of tension between students and tutors. Whilst this tension isn't wholly resolvable, a discussion around what the tutor and student see as the priorities of the sessions would act to make these differences visible and thus allow further discussion and negotiation.

In short, to work to construct a liberating space, tutors and students can work together to both critically reflect on and resist the power dynamics in the tutorials. As Ringer (2005:779) puts it:

*I argue for a version of liberty that necessitates Freirean praxis, the coupling of action and reflection that occur repeatedly and continuously. That is, once a common good has been established and set into motion, the community, as individuals and as a collective, needs to inspect and reinspect it. Is it working? Whom is it privileging? Whom is it leaving out? How can we change it for the better? Such a process of critical reflection, like the process of naming a common good, needs to occur dialogically and democratically*

### 6.2.3 Recommendations for Institutions

My first recommendation to institutions is to consider providing in-house tutorials, rather than outsourcing tutorials to agencies. Kirwan and Leather (2011) found that many SpLD students are not accommodated at university, either because there is no in-house provision, or because the provision is limited and does not fit in with their learning commitment, such as lectures. In-house provision, therefore, would increase accessibility. Further, Jacobs, *et al* (2022) found that students felt that universities need to improve their in-house provision of services. An in-house provision would also help to integrate the tutorials into the university. This would be a tangible representation of the value that the university places on the service and would serve to support the relationship between the tutors and the university and thus work to reinforce the identity of dyslexia tutors. The provision of a designated space for dyslexia tutorials would increase the visibility of the dyslexia tutorials, and would underscore the dyslexia as a teaching space, as opposed to a support service. Oscar, discussed in detail the importance of a defined teaching space,

*We don't have a place in the university anymore, well we do, but not our own space that is ours. Just having our posters on the wall and resources around made the place ours for the tutors and also the students. Now, the minute our session finishes, the rooms stop being an SpLD tutorial room and just go back to being a bookable space, as though we were never there. For students who have dyslexia they can sometimes feel invisible, and I think that this is what we are doing, what we are, kind of colluding in, by making us invisible as well, like it is something to be ashamed of. (Oscar)*

Further, an in-house service would be able to provide dyslexia and inclusion training to university staff. This would help address the concern of the participants that departments are somewhat disengaged from inclusion; for example, Shep, *'the problem with having specialists. It means no-one else has to bother, just leave it to the special teachers for special students.'* It is important, therefore, for universities to recognise that inclusion doesn't start and finish with dyslexia tutorials. Rather, university structures such as policies and assessment procedures can act to marginalise students, and by critically examining these structures, the university can develop more inclusive practices. Macdonald (2009a) suggests a model that works to create a system of inclusion that shift the focus from individual limitations to the removal of the barriers that exist in institutions. An example of this would be to provide a 12-hour window for students to complete an exam, as opposed to the traditional time bound exams, typically three hours. This would obviate the need for students to be provided with additional time. This system was used effectively during the covid-19 pandemic; however, there has been a move back towards traditional exams. Measures such as these would move some of the adjustments away from the individual and towards the design of the courses. Nightingale *et al* (2019), for example, found that recording lectures and providing these recordings to students was effective in supporting dyslexic students in their independent study. Further, Dobson (2019) recommends that university institutions make lectures and seminars more accessible, as traditional lecture methods are less accessible for dyslexia students. An example of a framework that has been designed to create a more inclusive and accessible learning environment (Behling and Tobin, 2018) is Universal Design for Learning. UDL is a framework that looks at how course design can improve inclusion; its key principles are to provide

multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression (Rose, 2000). It is important to recognise, however, that it is not possible to simply design out exclusion and ableism. Equally, there would still be a need for individual adjustments, for example, dyslexia tutorials, however, more inclusive practices would normalise these adjustments, potentially reducing stigma and students' anxiety about receiving what Shep described as '*special treatment.*' And Suzi's concerns about how lecturers view her work. '*The supervisors were getting really frustrated because what I was saying made perfect sense to me, but no sense.*'

Secondly, I would recommend critical reflection around how dyslexia is framed, in terms of language and positioning in the university. McKay (Cited in Kormos and Smith, 2012) recommends the term difference, arguing that dyslexia is just a different way of perceiving the world. I would argue, however, that the use of terms such as difference can diminish the lived experience of students, fail to recognise the oppression experienced by dyslexic students, and other students from other disability groups. The use of the term disability recognises the lived experience of students and the interaction between dyslexia and society. Further, as Redford (2017) argues, the hard-won policies and legislation to confer protection on dyslexia students, such as the Equality Act (2010), hinge on dyslexia being recognised as a disability.

## 6.2.4 Recommendations for Policy

The majority of issues that students face when accessing and experiencing the dyslexia tutorial stem from the funding of the tutorials being located in the individual. In order to access tutorials, students are required to prove their disability and thus receive funding. The result of this is that they are required to repeat their story to a number of professionals and submit to assessment and scrutiny. They are also required to leave their department to access tutorials, situated in a separate/segregated space, which is potentially stigmatising and could result in departments viewing dyslexia adjustments as something that is dealt with externally. As Shep put it, '*they [the department] don't have to think about dyslexia, some other department deals with it and that's that.*' This view was echoed by Oscar who felt that '*[some departments think that] students coming to us is the end of the story; that they have no further obligations and it is nothing to do with them.*'

One solution to this would be to uncouple dyslexia tutorial funding from the student, and, instead, to provide direct funding to the university institutions for dyslexia tutorials. Vincent and Chiwandire's (2019) research found that the bureaucracy of applying for funding and the means testing of funding put disabled students at a disadvantage. Uncoupling funding, therefore, would have the immediate effect of reducing the burden of applying for funding and would challenge the view of dyslexia being situated in the individual and thus, an individual 'problem'. It would also have the impact of professionalising the dyslexia tutorial role as universities would be incentivised to integrate dyslexia into the university, as opposed to being employed on unstable agency contracts. This would work to address tutors' experiences of not feeling like they are not valued by the university.

Through this de-coupling of funding, the institutions would have more flexibility and would not be required to wait for funding agreements to be in place before providing access to tutorials. For example, students who think they might have dyslexia could be offered an initial session to explore what support is available, what it would look like, and whether it would be beneficial. The student could then make an informed decision about whether to pursue a full assessment. This would begin to create a relationship between tutor and student on a more equal footing and therefore may reduce the initial power dynamics of the initial sessions.

Decoupling the funding would also provide the opportunity for more flexibility in delivery, for example group tutorials, this is not currently possible with the current funding model. Wray *et al* (2013), go further; they suggest that dyslexia tutorials are embedded into modules, and as such are accessed by all students. They embedded nine study sessions into a nursing course, via a study skills module. They found that this improved outcomes for dyslexia students and ensured that students who had not been assessed with dyslexia were able to access some study skills support. Further, as they put it (Wray *et al*, 2013:606), “ensuring that all students have access to the necessary support and study skills; this is not a ‘SpLD’ issue but a ‘student’ success and retention issue.” Whilst this may feel like a radical proposal, it is important that we consider this not from a scarcity paradigm and instead consider how we can integrate inclusion into both teaching and additional services such as dyslexia tutorials. Finally, tutors could provide training in inclusion and dyslexia awareness to academic and professional staff, which would support the university in becoming more inclusive.

## 6.3 Limitations

In terms of limitations, there are a number of limitations to the project. Firstly, the focus of the project is narrow, only dyslexic students and dyslexia tutors in higher education are included. Equally, only students who engage with dyslexia tutorials are included in the study. As the tutorials are attended on a voluntary basis, it is likely that students using them will have had a positive experience, and this may not reflect the experiences of all students. Further education settings were not included in the research and, as such, the experience of students and tutors in these settings have not been considered. Equally, other professionals’ perspectives of the dyslexia tutorials have not been included, for example lecturers, assessors, disability advisors and senior management. Their insights into the dyslexia tutorial would have provided a wider perspective on how the space is conceptualised and perceived. The scope of the thesis precluded the opportunity to include these perspectives, as the focus was restricted to the people who inhabited the space, as opposed to including other influences on the space.

Secondly, the methodology is grounded in the lived experience of the participants and their narrative accounts of the dyslexia tutorial. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, there was a small number of participants, who participated in in-depth interviews and interpersonal process recall. As such, the experiences may not be representative of dyslexia students and tutors. Further, the researcher will make decisions around what will be foregrounded and what will be excluded from the analysis and discussions. The research, therefore, is partial and incomplete, especially as the accounts are constructed between the researcher and the participants. Equally, the theoretical framework and methodological perspectives will impact the analysis. This PhD is interested in exploring the experiences of tutors and student participants using a critical realism lens and is not attempting to represent an objective truth. Having said this, there is some research on objective outcomes of the dyslexia tutorial, for example Graham (2020), who used a quantitative approach utilising attainment data; therefore, my research provides a different perspective as it explores the experience of the sessions, as opposed to seeking to quantify objective outcomes.

Thirdly, I am relatively new to research having only completed small scale research projects prior to this study. As such, I have had to develop skills in interviewing students; coding and analysing, and interpreting findings, among others. My research limitations influenced many of my decisions, for

tutors' experience of the space. Equally, my research was based around students who had experienced a number of dyslexia tutorials; therefore, students were reflecting on their experiences, particularly in the case of accessing the space. A case study approach could be employed, which follows a small number of dyslexia students (three or four) through initially accessing the tutorials, to initial sessions, and journeying through the dyslexia tutorials. This would provide rich data about the students' experience through the tutorial space.

Finally, my research has explored the experience of tutors and students through a critical realism lens; this has enabled me to consider the structural influences on the participants; however, it moves the research away from the participants and their perspectives. Research that uses a different lens, for example a phenomenological approach and grounded theory, would provide the opportunity to focus on the participants' perspective and, therefore, see the dyslexia tutorials through their experience, rather than through a critical realism analysis. example, I chose a form of thematic analysis, framework analysis, as it provides a structure to work through, that enabled me to methodically follow the steps in order to organise and manage my data. Thus, some of the research decisions were influenced by the need for methods that were relatively straightforward to undertake. Within this, I worked hard to choose methods that would provide an opportunity for the participants' voices to be heard, and a thematic analysis approach was broadly effective in achieving this. Further, the use of interpersonal process recall provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on the sessions through both observation and dialogue, as they watched the video and discussed aspects of them. This made visible the gaps between the participants perceptions and the lived experiences of the sessions.

## 6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This research is centred around how the dyslexia tutorial is experienced by students and tutors, the research has however identified a number of influences on the space, including the students' department and professional bodies. Further research could explore the perspectives of people who do not directly experience the Dyslexia tutorial, including lecturers, disability advisors and policy makers. This would enable a more complete exploration of the Dyslexia tutorial and enable more voices to be heard. I would be particularly interested in capturing the voices of students who did not take up Dyslexia tutorials and students who only had one or two tutorial sessions and then stopped using them. The student voices in my research are all students who utilise the tutorial sessions regularly, and as such, are likely to have had a positive experience of the tutorials and find them useful.

Secondly, there were themes in the data that I did not have the space to include. One such theme is marketisation and the Dyslexia tutorial. This theme considered how due to marketisation and the repositioning of students as consumers, the purpose of the Dyslexia tutorial was evolving from aiming to support students to reach their full potential to ensuring students achieve their preferred degree class. Whilst the theme was of interest as it highlighted structural influences beyond the institutions. Therefore, utilising Krueger's (1994) framework, I discounted the theme as it did not come through strongly in the data. Only one tutor discussed it and not in great detail. Further research into marketisation would provide a perspective of the Dyslexia that included the influence of structures at a policy level. Another theme that I did not explore was that of cultural capital. This emerged in the data of one of the student participants who discussed the experience of being a mature student and not having been immersed in education in the same way as students who had recently completed A-levels.

Again, this theme did not emerge strongly and so I did not pursue it. Future research could look to recruit mature students and students who have not come through to university via A-levels and explore their experiences.

Thirdly, one of the SpLD tutors interviewed disclosed that they were assessed as having an SpLD. This was not explored in the interviews. Further research could explore how/if an SpLD intersects with tutors' experience of the space. Equally, my research was based around students who had experienced a number of SpLD tutorials; therefore, students were reflecting on their experiences, particularly in the case of accessing the space. A case study approach could be employed, which follows a small number of SpLD students (three or four) through initially accessing the tutorials, to initial sessions, and journeying through the SpLD tutorials. This would provide rich data about the students' experience through the tutorial space.

Finally, my research has explored the experience of tutors and students through a critical realism lens; this has enabled me to consider the structural influences on the participants; however, it moves the research away from the participants and their perspectives. Research that uses a different lens, for example a phenomenological approach and grounded theory, would provide the opportunity to focus on the participants' perspective and, therefore, see the SpLD tutorials through their experience, rather than through a critical realism analysis.

## 6.5 Final Thoughts

For the final thoughts on the dyslexia tutorial, I would like to return to the participants.

Imogen

*It isn't just the tutor as the holder of the knowledge to be given to the tutor, this is a collaboration. We look at the resources together and come to an understanding together.*

Rowan

*We are both bringing something, and we learn from each other. He says that I have developed his knowledge and he now knows more about science which helps other students, it's not just him helping me, I have something to offer too and that is important to me.*



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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Participant Information Sheet

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

The SpLD tutorial; recognising and challenging spaces and systems through negotiated third spaces (original PhD title)

Victoria Mann, *The University of Sheffield*

#### **1. Invitation**

I am investigating the SpLD tutorial space and how the space is experienced by both tutors and students. and I would like to invite you to consider participating in this research. This will comprise in depth interview and observations of an SpLD sessions.

Please read the following information before deciding to take part and do contact me if you require any clarification or further information. Thank you for reading!

The Ethics Committee have reviewed and approved this study.

#### **2. Introduction**

The aim of this project is to examine what happens in SpLD tutorials and what tutors and students think and feel about the tutorials. The tutorial space is likely to be experienced differently by tutors and students and this research will look at how students and SpLD tutors perceive and subsequently experience the tutorial and the way that students negotiate and create learning. An example of this could be that one student focuses on a spelling programme, so the creation is a new understanding of spelling conventions, whereas a different student might want to develop their own writing style within the context of academic writing.

We are interested in doing this research because, so far, there is little research into what tutors and students think about SpLD tutorials, such as what they are used for and how they fit into the university.

#### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been approached to participate as you are an SpLD tutor as a tutor who works in the SpLD tutorial space, you will have an insight into how the space is experienced and how this experience changes as you and your students work together. As this is an in-depth study, it is expected that around 7-15 participants will be recruited.

#### **5. Do I have to take part?**

Participation is entirely voluntary: if you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point. You are not required to give a reason for withdrawal and it will not affect the services you receive from the SpLD tutorial service.

However, please note that removal of your results will only be possible whilst your identifier is attached. The data will be anonymised for the analysis. If you withdraw after we have anonymised the data (i.e., removed your identifier), we can no longer identify you, so we won't be able to identify your responses. This means they will be included in our study, but no-one will be able to identify you.

#### **6. What do I have to do /What will happen to me if I take part?**

The research will have two elements: interviews and observations of sessions. You can participate in both elements, or just one. The interviews will in-depth and will explore how you experience the tutorial space. In the observation, you, your student and the researcher will watch a recorded SpLD session and will discuss what is happening. The recording can be paused at any time to discuss the video and participants can end the session at any time.

#### **7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There is no risk of physical harm or distress as a result of participation in this study apart from the time it will take to complete the questionnaires.

#### **8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The study provides a space to think about the sessions and how you experience them and will provide an opportunity to consider your teaching practice. In terms of wider benefits, the research will contribute to the discussion about inclusion in higher education and how SpLD tutorials contribute to this.

#### **9. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If the study needs to finish earlier, I will let the participants know as soon as possible, and I will delete all of the data collected.

#### **10. What if something goes wrong?**

If you have a complaint concerning your participation, please email me in the first instance. If however you would prefer to raise a complaint with someone else, please contact Tim Herrick, my supervisor, at [t.herrick@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:t.herrick@sheffield.ac.uk), or Katherine Runswick-Cole, my second supervisor, [k.runswick-cole@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.runswick-cole@sheffield.ac.uk)

#### **11. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Your user ID and personal information e.g., Name, will be removed from the data once the data collection is completed. You will not be identifiable in any presentation or publications resulting from this study.

#### **14. What will happen to the results of the research project?**



The results of the study will form part of my PhD dissertation. Equally, the findings will be disseminated through presentations and publications. The findings will also be used to refine tutorials for students with SpLDs. Participants will be provided with a copy of my analysis of their contribution and, will receive a copy of the PhD on request.

**15. Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised by the School of Education, and forms part of a PhD

**16. Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

The School of Education Ethics Committee have reviewed and approved the study, see <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/research/ethics> for the process involved.

For further details please contact The Principal Ethics Contact for the School of Education at: [edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk)

**17. Contact for further information**

**Lead Researcher**

Victoria Mann  
SpLD Tutorial Service  
301 Glossop Road  
Sheffield, S10 2HL  
[v.e.mann@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:v.e.mann@sheffield.ac.uk)  
01142221792

# Appendix B

## Participant Consent Form

**Title of Project: The SpLD tutorial; recognising and challenging spaces and systems through negotiated third spaces (original title)**

**Name of Researcher: Victoria Mann**

**Participant Identification Number for this project:**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 11 March 2018 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised for analysis and write-up. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
4. I understand that this research may be written up and published in article/ book chapter form or presented at conference or similar events.
5. I agree to take part in the described research project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher taking consent    Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

Copies:

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy for the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*

# Appendix C

## Ethics Approval Letter



Downloaded: 17/08/2022  
Approved: 21/06/2018

Victoria Mann  
Registration number: 130113805  
School of Education  
Programme: PhD education

Dear Victoria

**PROJECT TITLE:** The SpLD tutorial; recognising and challenging spaces and systems through negotiated third spaces  
**APPLICATION:** Reference Number 018630

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 21/06/2018 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 018630 (form submission date: 04/06/2018); (expected project end date: 20/10/2022).
- Participant information sheet 1041862 version 4 (04/06/2018).
- Participant information sheet 1041860 version 3 (23/05/2018).
- Participant consent form 1041861 version 1 (21/03/2018).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

*Firstly just think through the use of the tutorial space as a site to conduct the research - are there ethical implications related to the use of this space for the research Secondly, just make sure that the student understands that their learning support won't be effected in any way by their participation in the research.*

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ED6ETH Edu  
Ethics Administrator  
School of Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy:  
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure>
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy:  
[https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.6710661/file/GRIPPpolicy.pdf](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.6710661/file/GRIPPpolicy.pdf)
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

# Appendix D

## Research Questions

Question one, how do you experience the SpLD tutorial?

Question two, how does the tutorial fit in with the university?

Question three, what happens in the sessions?

Question four, can you talk me through deciding on aims and outcomes?

Question five, could you tell me about the student tutor relationship?

Question six, what is covered in the sessions?

## Appendix E

### Example of a Tutor's Transcript- Ellen

*Reflection one: experience of the tutorial room VM*

I think the tutorial is a space that is comfortable and secure for students. It has to be, as without that, the students wouldn't come to the sessions. The students will only come to see you if they are getting something out of the sessions, as the sessions are not mandatory and are not assessed in any way. Thinking about it, though, sometimes the students only come for one or two sessions. I have always put this down to them not needing support, but it could be because they find the space to be uncomfortable or even challenging. We don't chase up the students who only come once or twice to get their opinions. We do conduct two feedback surveys every year, which collects data on how many sessions a student had and what they thought of the sessions. I think we should look at that data and see if there is a link. So, on reflection, I think that we try and make the space safe and welcoming but judge our success on the students who keep coming back and forget those students who drop out of the service.

As for the room itself, I have worked really hard to make the space feel welcoming to the students. For example, I have nice pictures on the wall and plants. I try to make the office feel like it is not too office-like. Some tutors though prefer to make their offices more business-like and more academic. I think that approach can create a barrier between the tutor and the students, especially in the early days of the sessions. It may work for the middle class students who are used to this approach, but for students from different backgrounds, this can be a challenging environment. On the other hand, some students, such as those with autism and perhaps OCD like a very clean uncluttered room, and they may find that my more relaxed approach is a barrier to them. I went on a course recently which modelled a good layout, but I found the space to be a bit stark. It really depends on the student and you can't meet everyone's needs. I think one possibility is to borrow a colleagues' room, as everyone on my team has a slightly different approach; my colleague in the next room, for example, only has a few pictures on the wall and keeps the space really uncluttered. If need be, I could use her room, although until this reflection, this hadn't really occurred to me. I have never had a student say that they didn't like the room, in fact, all the comments have been positive. This could be because the ones who don't like it, don't say, of course!

## Appendix F

### Example of a Student's Transcript- Suzi

SP1, but I think the office is lovely, really, really colourful and erm bright pretty and lots of plants, that's what I like, I don't know I would say, I thought that this was a safe space, for example that it has only obviously got the one access and it's like your office; it's not like a great big room,, so once that door was closed I've always felt relaxed. I've come in, I always felt safe once I had closed the door. I could come in and talk about anything, not just dyslexia and get help with what I needed, not what someone thought I should work on. I liked your other office, but I prefer this one

R- why do you prefer this one?

The other was more in the attic, and it felt like it wasn't part of anything, like it was separate. It had the sloping roof and everything, whereas here, it is part of a learning centre and feels like it is part of the university. Like it was hidden away.

R- a safe space

R- how do you feel about leaving your department to come here?

Oh, well I like it, because I can just sneak off and it's not like anyone knows I am going off for a tutorials; you wouldn't, you wouldn't usually bump into someone you know here, and I always think if you see someone, like at the doctors it is a bit awkward, like they know why you are here. If it was in the department, that would happen a lot. So, it is good that there is the confidentiality. I don't want people making opinions on me and why I am here, and I wouldn't want that so I quite like the fact and that I can just disappear and not be in my department. I also like the process of walking over the campus to the tutorial. it is always is a good thing to get out and walk. Otherwise, you just sit at your desk and don't erm, don't get like get involved. you forget that there's other stuff going on, like you're in your bubble and walking to the tutorials reminds me that, yeah, there is a bigger thing out there, not just me and my studying.

## Appendix G

### Data Analysis

Familiarization	<p>In my research, this process had already begun in that some themes have been identified from both the literature review and were emerging through the transcribing process. These themes were the SpLD tutorial as a third space; negotiation within the space and developing authorial authority. This first sweep of the data, however, found that while these themes formed a part of the data, the emerging themes were drastically different. The three themes that emerged initially were: becoming within the space; the SpLD as a third space; and tensions within the space. As part of this stage, it may be necessary to select specific data for analysis. This could be because of the volume of data available, or because of relevancy. In the case of this research, data around the themes of confidentiality and stigma emerged. These were put to one side as they do not address the question of how the space is experienced. Equally, as mentioned in ethics, some of the data was redacted, as it included personal data which made the participant identifiable.</p>
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<p>identifying a thematic framework</p>	<p>During this stage, the initial themes were developed and re-organised. A review of the data in its entirety resulted in the third space theme being broadened to space. This is because there were a number of sub-themes that were broader than the third space. These were: taking up space; being put in the space- excluded from other spaces; third space- how does space fit into the university; symbolism of space- temporality of space, what else does it become; fluidity of space; how does space impact the student and tutor. Equally, the theme of becoming within the space encompassed the a priori themes: What does it mean to become; how do you become? Who decides this? Whose agenda; critical thinking; authorial authority- ownership; independent thinking; scaffolding. Thus, the initial themes became sub-themes within the theme of becoming. The third of tensions within the space was completely re-worked as tensions emerged throughout the themes and thus were not a separate theme. The third theme; therefore, became: tutor student relationship; with the sub-themes of: Tension; Parental substitute- facilitator; Who sets the agenda; Whose goals; What are the structural constraints; Power dynamics; Forced intimacy- slater; Whose story? Expert- expert dynamic- where does this come from? Finally, a fourth theme emerged, that of, what is an SpLD tutorial? This theme addressed the positionality of the SpLD tutorials in terms of their purpose and aims. The sub-themes were: negotiated outcomes- whose needs are served?; Structural influences; Reaching academic potential; Department as an actor within the space</p>
<p>Indexing</p>	<p>Here, I used a manual coding system. This because the physical act of manipulating the data and highlighting enabled me to immerse myself in the data. During the indexing, I realised that the first theme was too broad and was not sufficiently focussed. I, therefore, had to reorganise the themes. As discussed before, this meant that some themes and sub-themes, which initially seemed promising, might take less prominence, or be removed completely. I decided that space was key to understanding and interpreting the data, and reorganised my themes as follows: Taking up space- physicality of space; third space; Becoming within the space. Thus, space and how that space is conceptualised and used provides insights into how the tutorial space is experienced.</p>

charting	<p>Here, I identified a problem with my themes. The issue was that the first two themes, physicality of the space and third space, merged into each other, and I had created a false binary, whereas the two themes were actually part of the same theme. This highlights the importance of being clear about theme boundaries. I therefore, re-considered my data. I went back to my original theme of third space and the physicality of the space became a sub-theme, taking up space. The other sub themes were: Liberating space- Belonging within the space; Oppressive space; How does it fit within the university?; Positionality; Liminal space. This reorganisation allowed for a deeper exploration of how the space is negotiated and this turned into the theme: how is the space negotiated? The sub-themes for this were: student tutor relationship; Expert-expert dynamic? Parent child?; Actors within the space; How are aims and outcomes decided; Who controls the space?. This theme, therefore, considers who sets the agenda and how this is negotiated and re-negotiated. Finally, the third theme is becoming within the space and this is the theme that has emerged in some form through all of the framework analysis. Within this, the sub-themes were: Authorial authority; Critical thinking; Becoming for tutors-students; becoming academic; diversity of experience vs shared experience</p>
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mapping and interpretation	<p>The data was interpreted according to Krueger’s (1994) seven criteria, which are: words; context; internal consistency; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; and big ideas. I have chosen this approach, as it helps me to uncover latent meaning and consider the structural influences on the participants’ experiences. Firstly, in terms of words, it ensures meaning is consistent, especially when using synonyms, some people may ascribe different meanings to similar words. In this study, for example dyslexia is likely to be experienced differently by different students; as a consequence, their interpretation of mild, and severe dyslexia is likely to be different. Secondly, the context of where and under what circumstances the data was collected is important. A student who is currently struggling to get to grips with an unfamiliar assignment, for example, may be less positive about the tutorial space than a student who has just received positive feedback, and or high grade, for an unfamiliar assignment. Thirdly, it is important to consider frequency, ie whether similar comments and views appear rarely or frequently. Fourthly, intensity refers to how strongly a view is held, for example a student felt very strongly that the tutorial space was exclusionary, as it was separate from her department. Fifthly, internal consistency involves looking for changes of opinion or position by the participants. This could be during the same interview, or a series of interviews. An example of this is when some tutors described the session as student-led and then later stated that they would refuse to do proofreading. Sixthly is looking at whether the comments specifically relate to the participant, or whether they are more general, for example a shared experience was much more evident amongst the tutor participants than the student participants. Finally, it is important to consider the larger trends or themes that emerge through the accumulation of data, for example the importance of a permanent tutorial space. My final themes went from three themes to four themes, as this allowed an exploration of how the space was produced. My final themes are: how the tutors and students the positioning of the space; accessing the space; the tutor student relationship; purpose of the tutorials.</p>
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## Appendix H

### Example of Identifying and Emerging themes

#### **First sweep of the data (as data was collected)**

Theme one

Becoming within the space

- Negotiated outcome
- Independence, criticality
- Authorial authority

Theme 2

Third space

- Taking up space
- Temporality
- Liminal space
- Actors within the space- student- tutor- department

Theme 3 tensions

Shared experience?

Teacher tutor relationship

Oppressive or liberating space

Circulating re-circulating ideas

#### **Second sweep of the data (once all data had been collected)**

Theme one

Space

- Taking up space- physically, symbolically, socially real
- Being put in the space- excluded from other spaces- Kitchen
- Third space- how does space fit into the university
- Symbolism of space- temporality of space, what else does it become
- Fluidity of space
- How does space impact student and tutor?

## Theme 2

### Tutor student relationship

- Tension
- Parental substitute- facilitator
- Who sets the agenda
- Whose goals
- What are the structural constraints?
- Power dynamics
- Forced intimacy- slater
- Whose story?
- Expert- expert dynamic- where does this come from?
- 

## Theme 3

### Process of becoming

- What does it mean to become?
- How do you become? Who decides this? Whose agenda- socially real
- Critical thinking
- Authorial authority- ownership
- Independent thinking
- Scaffolding

## Theme 4

### What is an SpLD tutorial

- Negotiated outcomes- whose needs are served?
- Structural influences
- Reaching academic potential
- Department as an actor within the space

## Reorganisation of themes

### Theme one

### Taking up space- physicality of space

- Lack of space- fluidity of space- temporality
- Structural influences
- Belonging within the space- kitchen spatiality
- Getting and keeping a place in the space- Mingus forced intimacy

### Theme two

#### Third space

- How does it fit within the university?
- Student tutor relationship
- Expert-expert dynamic? Parent child?
- Liminal space
- How is space negotiated?
- Actors within the space

### Theme three

#### Becoming within the space

- Authorial authority
- Critical thinking
- Becoming for tutors-students
- Becoming academic
- Diversity of experience vs shared experience

# Appendix I

## Example of my Coding

Question one: how do you experience the tutorial space?  
Erm, what do you mean by that?

R- I am interested in what the tutorials are like for you, what do you feel, think and do in tutorials and what are your impressions, that sort of thing.

Oh, right yes. Well the first I would like to say is that I love coming to my tutor and seeing him. It is going to sound a bit strange, but the best way that I can like sort of describe it is that I kind of have a parent at university, my university parent. I know that is a bit funny, but when I tell my friends about it, that is what I tell them.

R- that's interesting can you tell me more about this?

Sure, yes I tell my friend that it is like a uni parent because, especially like, in the first year, you don't really fit in and you don't know anyone and it is all new and you have this person that you can see once a week and it is a nice warm cosy room. You get a cup of tea and you have an hour with someone who has time for you and who answers your email on time and doesn't just have two hours a week office hours.

- office hours?

Well, on our course, we get a personal tutor and you have lecturers and stuff, but if you want to see them they only have office hours, and office hours are very limited, they are like two hours a week and you go and queue outside the office with everyone else and get like ten minutes with the tutor, before the next person wants to be seen, so not good at all. But my tutor, my dyslexia tutor, that is completely different. I get to see him every week, if I want. I don't always but I can if I want.

Is this access important?

Yes, it really is. It's something I have control over. I can see him, or not see him, it's completely up to me. He says to me 'this service is for you to use as you see fit, it's about your learning needs and you want to get out of it.' I don't know why that is important to me, but it is really. I am having to work hard, but I am not under pressure, but can use the service when I need to. It's an hour where I can focus on my work. I and what is great is that it is completely separate from my department. I know that if we chat, do won't be reported back to any of my tutors, so I don't worry about what I say. My department has writing advisers, but I am scared to used them in case they think, oh she's not a good writer, and it gets back to my tutors. I want to be in control of when they see my work and not see it when it is full of mistakes and badly written.

Are you worried about how they will think about you?

Yes, I am worried that they will think I am not bright enough, not good enough to be a student. I am worried that my work isn't good enough. When I was at school, before I was diagnosed, people thought I was stupid and I am worried that my tutors might think the same. But my dyslexia tutor

## Appendix J

### Examples of a Permanently Designated Dyslexia Room and a Bookable Room



Permanently Designated Room





Bookable Room