



## Broken: A Personal Exploration of Fluency

Dr John Rimmer

**The short film *Broken* (Rimmer, 2020) is an artistic impression that aims to articulate issues of dysfluency from an autistic viewpoint. The film was a collaboration between Dr John Rimmer at BGU and a young autistic adult in his early twenties - Fauxparl.**

Together they worked to express through the medium of video what it had been like to experience a communication breakdown when Fauxparl had been in the final year of primary school. Fauxparl's preferred method of communication is typing, and he sent John descriptions of the remembered event, together with examples of computer games, soundscapes, repetitive phrases etc. that he remembered from that time.

The film was commissioned for use during our Initial Teacher Education programme on autism. By giving an autistic pupil perspective, it was hoped to convey to the trainees that there can be a great deal going on for an autistic pupil that is hidden. Too often, trainees report that an autistic pupil in their class is 'fine', based on compliant behaviour. The purpose of the film was to challenge that assumption and to encourage the trainees to check in with their autistic pupils more carefully.

Feedback from trainees on the film was that it was effective at raising awareness and that it made an impression on them. Sadly, only a handful made the connection that the sensory distortion was due to the pupil's broken glasses, with most instead assuming that it was an expression of autistic disengagement. They also tended to view the film in terms of 'distress' and 'sensory overload', where Fauxparl is clear that the distractions occurring in his head when he was ignored – the spinning, the washing machine noise, the repetitive and stock phrases – are all pleasurable for him. He reports that the film is both accurate and enjoyable; his work with John on the talking Spiderman was playful and – for Fauxparl – amusing and pleasing. He is self-aware regarding issues of dysfluency, expressing how he uses words and phrases such as 'Equus' and 'check-check' because they interest him, even when he knows they may interfere with communicative clarity.

John has described how rich the collaboration was from his perspective. His art practice is focussed around found elements and collage, and he has always been

'Broken' still, Rimmer, 2020



interested in the visual and multi-media representation of mental states. He describes how Fauxparl had a clear narrative that he wanted to convey, and how they developed their working practice together in order to convey this. Fauxparl's back and forth email dialogues with John regarding various versions of the film at draft stage resulted in many edits as Fauxparl critiqued the work, and in the end Fauxparl's commentary on the piece became part of the piece itself. John has articulated how interesting the collaboration was for him and how rich the experience for him as an artist with no previous personal understanding of autism or of autistic perspective.

We continue to use the film as an intrinsic element in our teacher education programme, supporting it with rich experiences, discussion and feedback from teacher trainees who identify as autistic themselves. All experiences of autism are different, and the film can only ever represent one person's perspective. However, its great strength is when trainees realise that the communication breakdown is as much the fault of the teacher, who ignores or fails to check in with the pupil, as it is that of the child with the communication deficit. As a 'take away' lesson, this has the potential to impact on their future practice and on the school experience of their pupils in a profound way.

We have been approached to create a second film, featuring the experience of an older (Secondary school-aged) female autistic pupil. We will be working with an autistic BGU alumnus who is just completing her PhD in female autistic student experiences at university to create this and will review and develop it through on-line autism forums before sharing both

films as part of the national Autism Schools project. We will create teacher education and teacher CPD materials to accompany the film; review of the efficacy of these materials and of the films as a teacher education resource will be undertaken, and these findings shared.

The film Broken can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPM5jZeOrYY&t=2s>

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**Current published papers discussing this research can be found as follows:**

'Fauxparl'(Pseudonym), Rimmer, J., Lawrence, C. (2020). 'I can't understand a word he says': a personal exploration of autistic dysfluency in film. *Disability & Society*, 36(2), 332-336.

Lawrence, C., & Rimmer, J. (2020). Pilot study: Can the draft film Broken support trainee teachers' understanding of autism communication issues in mainstream classrooms?. *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal*, 12(1), 65-74.

## Cognitive science approaches in the classroom: a review of the evidence

### Horizon Scanning Feature

In each newsletter we will be including a short section 'horizon scanning' written by Jean Wood, that introduces current ideas around education and pedagogy. For further information of any of these, please contact Jean at [jean.wood@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:jean.wood@bishopg.ac.uk)

This review of the evidence into the extent to which Cognitive Science is successful in the classroom was produced by the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) in July 2021. It is a wide-ranging analysis of studies which have taken place in a classroom context to ascertain how effective these Cognitive Science is.

The study looked for examples of classroom-based research where these strategies were being used. Its conclusions are that some strategies are positive, whereas others have insufficient evidence of success.

Despite a trawl of thousands of pieces of research, only about 700 studies met the criteria for this review as EEF wanted to find applied research rather than studies carried out under laboratory conditions. Their findings were that some aspects of cognitive science have had positive outcomes and seem to improve learning.

One area where the reviewers found evidence of positive outcomes was retrieval practice, especially where this involved low stakes retrieval or quizzing. This was found to be more successful than simply

recapping previously learned material or testing in a 'high stakes' way. The act of retrieving the information once more enables pupils to have another chance of committing it to long term memory.

Other successful strategies appear to be in the way cognitive load is managed. For instance, when the teacher scaffolded the learning or offered worked examples the outcomes were more positive and using diagrams and pictures (dual coding) to aid learning also proved positive.

The conclusion, according to the CEO of EEF is that "Principles from cognitive science are neither myths to be discounted, nor silver bullets that directly translate into accelerated progress" and there further research in this area is still required.

You can find a summary of the report here:  
[https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidance/Cognitive\\_science\\_approaches\\_in\\_the\\_classroom\\_-\\_A\\_review\\_of\\_the\\_evidence.pdf](https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidance/Cognitive_science_approaches_in_the_classroom_-_A_review_of_the_evidence.pdf)



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The Secondary PGCE newsletter is designed to enable our partnership school professional colleagues to remain up to date with the team's current research interests.

**Would you like to hear more about a project? Would you like to get involved in our research? Do you have any research you would like to share? Please do let us know.** You can email [beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk) if you are interested or give us a call on **01522 527347**.

## Farmington funded Community of Enquiry

Mark Plater, BGU PGCE Subject leader for secondary Religious Education. [Mark.Plater@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:Mark.Plater@bishopg.ac.uk)

Farmington Educational Trust (based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford) is funding a one year experiment in Religious Education teacher development in the Lincoln area. Ten secondary RE teachers will meet half termly for a restaurant meal and an opportunity to discuss issues related to their subject. Participants take it in turn to present their own research or innovations, or something being done by others that they consider to be of interest. The group is run by Mark Plater (BGU), and includes a mix of invited secondary RE teachers from seven schools in and around Lincoln city.

The group met at The Old Bakery for its first meal on 17th September and agreed a programme for the forthcoming year. Over the next five meetings each of the group will discuss the input of their colleagues and make their own presentation on a selected topic. Thus, throughout the year, each will be enriched and stimulated by the ideas, information and enthusiasm of colleagues. By meeting on a regular basis, and sharing together both socially and professionally, it is hoped that friendships will be forged and schools encouraged to work together in collaborative ways.

Farmington Educational Trust covers the full costs of each session, as well as providing participants with individual book tokens to the value of £50, thus encouraging further professional development. The whole programme will be monitored to determine whether this might be a beneficial model for future teacher development.



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## Investigating Early Career Teachers' experiences of observation and feedback

Dr Sam Love

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**I had always been interested in the effect of classroom observation on teachers. What was it about the experience that made some cry and others rejoice? Wanting to investigate this further, my EdD study focussed on those within the first five years of teaching known as Early Career Teachers (ECTs).**

Analysis of interview data identified aspects of observation that participants regarded as problematic, such as an ever-changing observation criterion. However, it did not reveal the impact of observation and feedback on an emotional level, which was the original intention of the study. Following further analysis of the data, three observation typologies were highlighted: The 'Absent', the 'Brutal' (as named by a participant), and the 'Collegial'.

Describing examples of the 'Absent' typology, participants spoke about how they felt a lack of, or absence of feedback, hampered their development as a teacher. Participants explained how examples

of 'judgementoring' (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p. 90) were often 'Brutal', demotivating, and un-developmental, impacting negatively upon their levels of resilience. Participants felt the benefits of being able to talk about observation in an open and non-judgemental environment enabled them to develop their teaching practice and levels of resilience in a positive 'collegial' way. In addition, taking part in the study and talking about observation with others offered reassurances to participants that they were not alone in their experiences whether positive or negative, showing that it really is good to talk!

### References:

Hobson, A.J., and Malderez, A. (2013) 'Judgementoring and other threats to realizing the potential of school-based mentoring in teacher education', *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp.89- 108 [Online].

Love, S. M., (2020), 'Early career teachers' experiences of classroom observation: A case study, EdD thesis, Milton Keynes, The Open University.