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The Lazy Netflix B

An Ethnographic Study on the Use of Humour and Visual Metaphors in Teaching Graphic Facilitation

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ABSTRACT

Graphic facilitation revolves around using multimodal representations in order to drive idea generation, learning processes and collaboration among groups. The use of graphic facilitation is a growing practice in organisational contexts and is slowly emerging in educational contexts. However, there is a lack of research on the role of the facilitator when teaching graphic facilitation. At the beginning of basic graphic facilitation courses, facilitators are often met by enthusiastic participants who at the same time are hesitant and lack belief in their own drawing skills. Thus, the paper aims to provide insights into didactical considerations of facilitators when organising teaching that empowers participants to gain confidence in their own drawing abilities as an entry point to using graphic facilitation in their daily work. The empirical data used for analysis is based on participatory observations of two professional facilitators teaching two- to three-day basic courses in graphic facilitation. These observations are combined with follow-up interviews with the teachers. The analysis shows how visual metaphors and humoristic utterances are built up throughout the courses as social memories that are carried out and refined by participants. Thus, the study demonstrates how the use of humour and visual metaphors became multimodal 'hooks' of social memories, which support a playful and safe learning environment. The findings show how the teachers had a crucial role in initiating, acknowledging and supporting the use of humour in these settings. Based on the empirical findings, the paper concludes by outlining potentials and challenges specific to using humour and visual metaphors when teaching graphic facilitation.

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INTRODUCTION

'The adult target group can sometimes be afraid to draw. It can be restraining for them to stand up and draw something which others are supposed to see.' (Teacher in graphic facilitation)

This quote captures what many teachers in graphic facilitation have experienced. Professional graphic facilitators note that comments from participants such as 'I can't draw' or 'I haven't drawn since elementary school' are common utterances at the beginning of a basic graphic facilitation course (e.g., Agerbeck, 2012). Despite participants' immediate anxiety about the act of drawing and drawing in front of others, there is a growing international practice of companies offering basic graphic facilitation courses to employees interested in acquiring skills that would make them more capable of using visual icons and processes when facilitating meetings, conferences, teaching, etc. in their daily work.

The term 'graphic facilitation' refers to the practice of framing process and content visually using simple drawing techniques (Frank and Madsen, 2020: 34). This paper aims to provide insights into didactical considerations of facilitators when organising teaching that empowers participants to gain confidence in their own drawing abilities by introducing simple drawing techniques as an entry point for the participants to use graphic facilitation in their daily work. The study is based on observations of two professional facilitators teaching basic two- to three-day courses in graphic facilitation. These observations are combined with follow-up interviews with the professional facilitators discussing different didactical considerations regarding their own role as teachers. From an educational perspective, the way a graphic facilitation course is framed has a crucial impact on how the participants enter graphic facilitation practices. Based on my teaching observations during the two basic graphic facilitation courses, playfulness and humour caught my attention as a central part of disarming a focus on performance and aesthetic drawings in the courses.

Several scholars have written about play as a way of solving problems or tasks, sometimes a way of solving problems related to a task one is asked to do at a later time (Glenn and Knapp, 1987). Groos emphasises that play is a way of 'preparing for life' (Groos, 1901). In this perspective, a course in graphic facilitation can be named as a 'playground' where participants can practice the method and 'prepare for life' as a graphic facilitator. Brown (2009) states that it is a common misconception that play is the opposite of work. He argues against the notion that we need to make a conscious shift in order to experience a playful state. On the contrary, he advocates that a playful state can happen at any time and that it often happens when we navigate tasks that

both excite and frighten us. Participants in basic graphic facilitation courses typically feel excitement about doing graphic facilitation, otherwise they would probably not have signed up for the course. However, as this section's opening quote from the teacher indicates, participants can still be afraid to draw in front of others. From Brown's perspective, this dilemma of excited and frightened feelings among participants can be a breeding ground for playful states to occur.

Other studies have investigated the use of playfulness, humour and extreme sketching in graphic facilitation consultant work (Nørgaard, 2012; Hautopp and Nørgaard, 2017), but this present study is an attempt to go into further depth with concrete empirical examples of teaching situations in graphic facilitation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The objective of this study is to analyse teaching situations of basic courses where participants learn to navigate the method of graphic facilitation supported by instructions from a teacher. The explorative focus is on how the teacher and participants frame the interactions around the visual materials. The primary research question of the study is: How are teaching situations in basic graphic facilitation courses framed and reframed by teachers and participants?

As an underlying part of the research question, this study investigates the teachers' didactical considerations in relation to their own role of framing the teaching situations. I take an inductive point of departure in the empirical findings where spontaneous play, humour and visual metaphors emerged as crucial elements in the dynamic framing of the graphic facilitation courses. Thus, the empirical data analysis provides examples of this, which calls for these concepts to be further elaborated in the theoretical section. Moreover, the concept of 'framing' will be elaborated and related to investigating the teaching situations.

BACKGROUND

Before presenting the analysis of the specific teaching situations, I will start by introducing graphic facilitation and a distinction between the facilitator role and teacher role. Graphic facilitation is a method that revolves around using visual representations in order to drive idea generation, learning processes, and collaboration among groups. The use of graphic facilitation is a growing practice in organisational contexts (e.g., Sibbet, 2008) and is slowly emerging in educational contexts (e.g., Frank and Madsen, 2020). However, there is a lack of research in this field (Nielsen et al., 2016; Hautopp and Ørngreen, 2018). From an educational perspective, it can be argued that graphic facilitation can challenge the ways we perceive teaching in educational settings, where 'written text has,

for too long, been privileged as a communication form in education, over visual, aural, kinaesthetic, and haptic modalities' (Bowen and Evans, 2015: 53).

Graphic facilitation was initiated by a group of California-based consultants in the 1970s and the method is inspired by the ways in which designers and architects utilise visualisations and sketching methods (Sibbet, 2001). In the field of graphic facilitation, analogue drawing techniques are referred to as the typical way of doing graphic facilitation, whereby the facilitator draws on large wallpaper while involving participants and using their utterances to visualise and organise what is being said (e.g., Tyler et al., 2005; Valenza and Adkins, 2009). Graphic facilitation relies on models and icons, for example, 'Group Graphics® Keyboard' (Sibbet, 2008: 121), which contains familiar representations of icons and templates. These icons and templates are organised from simple to more complex graphic illustrations, which represent generic purposes that the facilitator can actualise (Sibbet, 2008). Other companies have further developed icons and templates within the field of graphic facilitation, for example Bikablo (Germany) and Bigger Picture (Denmark). These icons and templates are typically taught in a basic course in graphic facilitation. A main point about graphic facilitation is that the purpose is not to depict reality; instead, it is about representing ideas and icons in relation to other ideas illustrated in real time on the basis of participants' contributions (Valenza and Adkins, 2009). Thus, the visual vocabulary learned in a basic course is not a strict method, but should be seen as a fundament for participants' further development when deploying the method in their own work contexts after finishing the course.

The use of metaphors is well-known within the field of graphic facilitation (e.g., Agerbeck, 2012; Qvist-Sørensen and Baastrup, 2019; Frank and Madsen, 2020). Metaphors provide opportunities to look at situations in a new light and offer a rich vocabulary of words and images that can be used to talk about situations and contexts in another way (Frank and Madsen, 2020). Furthermore, the use of visual metaphors can make abstract subjects concrete so they are easy to recognise and recall (Qvist-Sørensen and Baastrup, 2019). Graphic facilitators need skills that combine cultural sensitivity with knowledge of group dynamics and the ability to translate stories into visual metaphors to capture nuanced conversations as compelling images (Tyler et al., 2005). Often, we are unaware of the metaphors that shape our perception and understanding of social situations (Schön, 1993: 148), but in graphic facilitation these metaphors might become visible and play a larger role in shaping our understanding of situations.

A graphic facilitator typically supports a group by writing and drawing their conversations live to help and reflect the group processes and progression through visuals (Agerbeck, 2012). The 'teachers' from this study also work as professional graphic facilitators and have their own companies where they among other visual work as graphic facilitators also offer basic courses in graphic facilitation. Taking a didactical perspective, this paper focuses on their teacher role when the graphic facilitator teaches the method to employees from other companies (see Figure 1). Thus, I focus on the facilitator's educational role and not on other parts of their work as graphic facilitators, for example when graphic facilitating or graphic recording meetings.

THEORY

The theoretical section starts by introducing how teaching situations can be viewed as framing and reframing of learning activities (Goffman, 1974; Lantz-Andersson,

Figure 1 Illustration of the teacher role when teaching graphic facilitation (in the middle), as different from doing graphic facilitation (to the left) and graphic recording (to the right) (Made by the author).

2009). As play, playfulness and humour emerged as crucial elements in the dynamic framing of the graphic facilitation courses, these concepts are elaborated (e.g., Bateson, 2014; Banas et al., 2011). Furthermore, a sociocultural approach to multimodality in reasoning is presented (Ivarsson, Säljo and Linderoth, 2009) as a way to theoretically reflect on how spontaneous play and visual metaphors are built up as social memories in the graphic facilitation courses.

THE PLAYFUL FRAMING OF GRAPHIC FACILITATION COURSES

According to Goffman (1974), framing is a dynamic and interactional concept for describing participants' activities of defining what is occurring in a specific situation. Learning activities are in this sense dependent on how the participants in the social practices frame what is said and done in the situation (Lantz-Andersson, 2009). A critical element of how we frame situations is dependent on earlier experiences and how we relate these experiences to the activity at hand (Goffman, 1974). Thus, the teachers' construction of a given course activity fundamentally affects what it is possible to learn. Framing includes the disposal of resources and tools for the students to engage in (Lantz-Andersson, 2009). From an analytical perspective, it is essential to look at how both the teacher and participants frame and reframe the situations, as they collaboratively construct the interactions in the teaching situations.

Glenn and Knapp (1987) have studied the interactive framing of play in adult conversation and suggest that play behaviour is a crucial part of human communication activity (p. 48). As participants in a basic graphic facilitation course are about to learn a new visual communication tool, it is interesting to observe how play and humour are framed and reframed as a part of the learning activities in the courses. Glenn and Knapp build on Goffman's frame analysis (1974) where play is viewed interactively and where negotiations of play frames occurs from the exchanging of messages between the people involved. Based on Goffman, the researchers argue that: 'such a conceptualization of play bypasses the necessity to identify certain activities as play and others as not-play' (Glenn and Knap, 1987: 54). In line with this argument other researchers argue that there is no fixed distinction between play and playfulness (Sutton-Smith, 1997) and the two concepts are often used interchangeably, with play referring to activity and playful referring to an attitude or state of mind (Tanis, 2012).

Without aiming for a clear distinction between the concepts, this study will focus on investigating the 'playful attitude' towards the teaching activities in graphic facilitation. In line with Glenn and Knapp's argumentation, the aim is not to identify whether a teaching activity can be characterized as play or not-play. Instead, play behaviour is seen as a crucial part of human communication (Glenn and Knapp, 1987: 48), where the analysis will focus on the spontaneous play behaviour and playful attitudes expressed by the teachers and participants, and how these affect the learning environment.

THE USE OF HUMOUR IN TEACHING SITUATIONS

When researching play and playfulness among adults, humour is mentioned as a significant element (Tanis, 2012: 9). Likewise, Bateson (2014) explains that humour and play have common features: 'They both involve social signals, are associated with a positive mood and are sensitive to prevailing conditions. They both tend to occur in protected environments, they are intrinsically motivated and they do not require additional external reward' (Bateson, 2014: 109). He further elaborates on how playfulness encourages humour and humour encourages playfulness and that the result is greater creativity.

In 2011, researchers reviewed four decades of research on instructional humour, focusing on how the use of humour influences educational processes (Banas et al., 2011). The researchers concluded that the use of humour should be related to lecture content in order to be relevant in teaching situations and that this kind of humour use is associated with a more interesting and relaxed learning environment, higher teacher evaluations, greater perceived motivation to learn and enjoyment of the course. Thus, the review showed a connection between the use of humour and the creation of a positive learning environment (Banas et al., 2011: 137). Later research suggests that relevant humour is not only that which is related to the lecture content, but also that which is related to students' daily life experiences (Baker, 2018). Other studies show that humour serves a variety of positive functions in teaching such as increasing group cohesion and helping students cope with stress, but it can also serve negative social functions, such as promoting derision and social isolation (e.g., Booth-Butterfield, Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer, 2007). When considering how humour is used by teachers, researchers have found that some people have a predisposition to be funny, known as humour orientation (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991). Humour orientation is about the ability to produce humorous messages, not the ability to appreciate humour. Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin (2010) found that teachers with high humour orientation used significantly more humour than teachers with low humour orientation. In summary, the research shows that the use of playfulness and humour is highly dependent on the teachers' humour orientation, interaction and awareness in the teaching situations relating to both course content and the participants' daily lives.

A SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO MULTIMODALITY IN REASONING

To theoretically reflect on how the dynamic framing of teaching situations is actualised by the teacher and

participants throughout the basic graphic facilitation courses, the concept of 'social memories' is applied in the analysis. Here, I take a point of departure in Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth's (2009) 'Representations in practices: A sociocultural approach to multimodality in reasoning'. From this perspective, it can be argued that visual tools form part of the human repertoire for sense-making, and that these tools are embedded in discursive practices both when produced and when read.

The researchers emphasise that: 'Drawings, pictures and other symbolic tools are not second-order representations to language, but rather important elements of the human repertoire for meaning-making and for the building up of a '*social memory relevant for specific practices*' (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009: 203, my emphasis). This analytical approach is especially relevant when drawings and visual representations are central elements of the practice and where graphic facilitation is the specific practice. In the analysis, it became interesting to see how and which 'social memories' were built up during the basic graphic facilitation courses.

Words, narratives, images and other representations may be distinct as cultural entities, but in meaning-making in practice they are always contingent on each other (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009: 211). Thus, the researchers argue for the interconnectedness between different representational tools. However, the authors also argue that verbal language holds a special position in the sociocultural interpretation of mediation when participants discuss their experiences. In its multimodal essence, graphic facilitation is a combination of visual and verbal language – drawings and written bullet points (e.g., Nielsen et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is emphasised that the dialogue around the visual and verbal production is a crucial part of graphic facilitation processes (e.g., Qvist-Sørensen and Baastrup, 2019). Thus, it is interesting to see how verbal language fulfils a bridging function (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009: 205) when the participants in the graphic facilitation courses engaged in multimodal communication.

The researchers' empirical data show how concepts emerge in practice as situated responses to what is happening in a world of non-linguistic representations (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009). Inspired by this approach to analysing multimodal settings, I will address which concepts emerge in the empirical data as situated responses to the graphic facilitation activities. Furthermore, the analysis will address the interconnectedness between the drawings and dialogue around them and focus on how humour and visual metaphors are built up as shared social memories throughout the graphic facilitation courses. This research approach will also contribute to the field of instructional humour where researchers have called for more empirical research in natural settings (Banas et al., 2011).

METHOD AND EMPIRICAL DATA

The empirical data are based on an ethnographic study where I followed two different graphic facilitators teaching two occurrences of two- to three-day basic courses in graphic facilitation. The duration of one of the courses was 2 × 7 hours and the other course was 3 × 4 hours, so approximately the same time interval for each course. Both courses were offered by Danish labour unions who had hired a professional graphic facilitator with extensive expertise with the method to give an open course for their union members. In each course there were 10–12 participants who came from different companies looking for new visual methods and tools to use in their daily work. The participants were not specifically trained in using drawings or visual methods as a part of their job prior to the course. However, they all had job tasks and experiences revolving around communication, facilitation of meetings, etc. The purpose of the basic courses was to teach graphic facilitation as a method for participants to apply in their own work contexts. As the observed teaching was multimodal, the research approach takes as a point of departure in visual ethnography and photo elicitation, which will be described below.

As part of my research approach, I engaged in participatory observation, completing the same drawing exercises that the teacher presented to the participants. I used annotated drawings when something 'caught my eye' (Causey, 2017) (see Figure 2).

Afterwards, I selected different situations from the teaching that I discussed with the teacher in a follow-up interview inspired by elicitation methods. Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview (Harper, 2002). Harper further elaborates that even though most elicitation studies have been conducted with photographs, other visuals can be used such as, for example, paintings, cartoons and public displays such as graffiti or advertising billboards. In this study, I brought my drawings into the interview as an elicitation method to trigger memories of the teaching situations. Thus, the aim was to make the teachers illuminate their didactical considerations in relation to some concrete examples from the teaching situations.

The visual materials can allow the researcher and participants to discuss tangible concepts in ways that 'create a bridge between their different experiences of reality' (Pink, 2007: 87). Thus, I invited the teachers to elaborate on my preliminary analysis of the teaching sessions combined with their experiences of the situations. In this way, I took an iterative analytical approach (Creswell, 2012: 238) where I cycled back and forth between data collection and analysis. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed and I conducted a more thorough and theoretical analysis that will be presented in the next section.
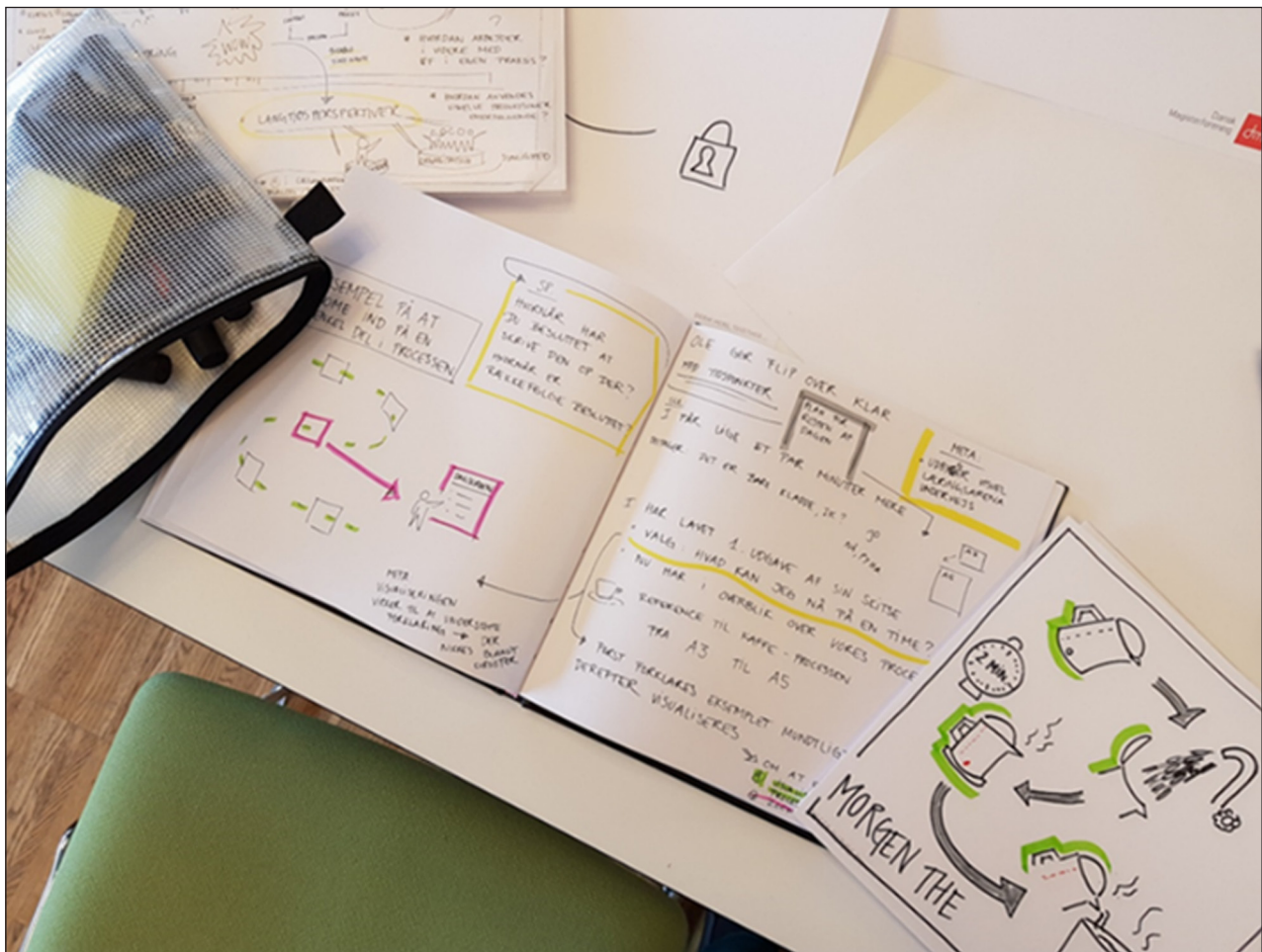
Figure 2 Annotated drawing from participatory observations (Made by the author).

Different ethical considerations were made when collecting empirical data and presenting the findings in this paper. I gained permission from the participants to observe the teaching (Creswell, 2012) with a primary focus on the teachers' actions during the course. Likewise, in the follow-up interviews with the two teachers, I gained their consent to record the interviews and use quotations in the analysis. As the focus of this paper is not on the participants' concrete drawings, I redid all of the drawings presented in the paper. Thus, I aim to use drawings as a representational tool in research presentation (Leavy, 2020), while not displaying the participants' personal drawings.

ANALYSIS

The analysis consists of two main empirical examples that represent teaching situations that were framed and reframed by teachers and participants (Goffman, 1974). To structure the analysis, I start by giving a description of the teaching situations revolving around humour, playfulness and visual metaphors, followed by a short theoretical reflection on the situations. Then, I continue the analysis by involving examples from the interviews seeking the teachers' reflections on the situations. These

reflections are seen as drivers for further theoretical analysis of the teachers' didactical considerations of their own role in framing a positive and safe learning environment. After each empirical example, I summarize the analysis of the teacher's didactical considerations based on the specific teaching situation and the empirical findings. These summaries lay the ground for further discussion and conclusion.

Recapitulated, the analysis addresses:

1. Two empirical examples and how these were *built up* throughout the courses as *social memories* carried out and refined by participants.
2. In the two empirical examples, the emergence of play and humour as *social signals* among participants will be elaborated.
3. Afterwards, the teachers' reflections on the use of humour and visual metaphors in the graphic facilitation courses are analysed.

THE LAZY NETFLIX B: HUMOUR INITIATED BY THE TEACHER

This analytical section revolves around an empirical example where the teacher introduced a humorous phrase that became a joint reference point throughout the graphic facilitation course for the participants and the teacher.

Teaching situation: *In the check-in part of the course, the teacher asked the participants to form teams of two and talk about themselves, their occupation and, in closing, a 'fun fact' about themselves. Afterwards, the participants would draw each other's stories. The teacher provided an example of a 'fun fact' where she 'ate pencils when she was younger', which led to laughter among the participants.*

On the second day of the course, the participants were given an introduction on how to write large capital letters as part of the graphic facilitation method. While drawing examples on the paper posted on the wall in the classroom, the teacher explained different ways to write each letter starting from the beginning of the alphabet. For B she explained how the participants could 'imagine a lazy Netflix B sitting on the couch with a ball of cheese doodles standing on its belly', which triggered laughter among the participants.

Later, the teacher started a description: 'There are more ways to write a K...' when a participant interrupted: 'Yes, I suppose there is the Netflix K?' which led to laughter among the teacher and participants. Different ways to write a 'Netflix K' were further explored by the teacher and participants.

When the letter O was presented, the teacher announced that there are several ways to write an O. In a playful tone she gave a warning about writing O's as 'half lemon moon cakes', as these look like O's that 'have been squeezed together in a plastic bag', an image that triggered laughter among the participants.

The observations showed that the teacher introduced different visual metaphors such as 'The Lazy Netflix B' (see Figure 3) and 'half lemon moon cakes' to aid participants' understanding of giving the letters volume while writing them, consequently relating the humorous metaphors to the course content (Banas et al., 2011). At the same time, the teacher mentioned that 'there are many ways', indicating that her descriptions were only meant as examples of how to do it. It can be argued that the 'The Netflix B' became a playful signal that the teacher sent out to participants. This was further reframed with the

Figure 3 Visualisation of 'The Lazy Netflix B' (Made by the author).

suggested 'Netflix K' as a playful signal from one of the participants. Thus, the Netflix B was built up and further developed as part of the social memories of the course (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009) where teacher and participants used verbal and visual language to send playful signals to each other (Bateson, 2014).

In the interview, the teacher reflected upon the specific situation of introducing the Netflix B: 'I think the body remembers things and therefore I also think that it is cosy that we personify letters. This way, the next time they sit and write, it will not be only about perfectionism and things looking proper. Then we can laugh and think about the one about the Netflix belly'. It can be argued that the teacher used humorous representations and personified letters as a way to create a joint space and lower expectations about perfectionism, because graphic facilitation is about getting ideas down on paper and not about producing aesthetic drawings (e.g., Valenza and Adkins, 2009). Likewise, the visual metaphor created a new perspective (Frank and Madsen, 2020) on how to understand the act of writing capital letters in graphic facilitation.

The teacher further explained:

> I continuously try to implement something crazy which we can laugh about [...] then there will be enjoyment and remembering of a good time. And I believe, I hope it does, it gives them something to bring forward. And then there is this about making people play along. As soon as we have a word for it, then we are allowed to play.

In these reflections, it can be argued that the verbal language had a bridging function (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009) as the teacher used verbal language to give participants 'permission' to engage in a playful exploration of their drawing skills.

In the interview, the teacher further elaborated how she consciously chooses to integrate humour as part of her teaching:

> I think it is important that we create a space that is our course and our space. And I think it is important to understand symbols as something we 'stick an understanding to' and some 'reminders' so we can find symbols which become ours. And then we need something to laugh about and something we find crazy.

It can be argued that the teacher explicitly aims at framing the teaching in a playful way and she considers her own teacher role as exemplary in order to show a 'crazy' approach, as the quotation shows. In this way, the teacher consciously uses humour (Banas et al., 2011) and visual metaphors to create a positive learning environment in the course.
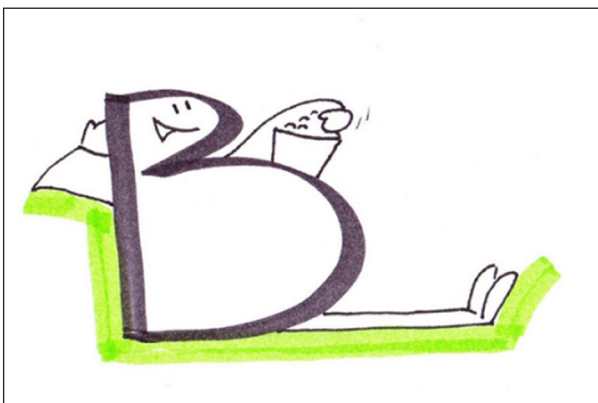
When summarising the teacher's didactical considerations in this empirical example, it can be argued that this teacher explicitly used humour and playfulness as an important part of her teaching. She *initiated* the use of humorous representations and personified letters as a way to send playful signals, to create a joint space, lower expectations about perfectionism and create laughter among the participants.

WHEN THE SHIT HITS THE FAN: HUMOUR INITIATED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

This analytical section revolves around an empirical example where a participant introduced a humorous phrase that became a joint reference point throughout the graphic facilitation course for the participants and the teacher.

Teaching situation: *In the check-in part of the course, the participants had to say what they expected to get out of the two-day graphic facilitation course.*

One participant expressed that he would like to learn how to adopt an oblique approach to different things when facilitating meetings in his company. In relation to this expectation, he mentioned the image of 'When the shit hits the fan', representing, for example, an urgent crisis at work. The image of 'When the shit hits the fan' was a quote that triggered laughter among the group.

On the second day during the check-in part, the teacher asked if the participants had thought about new icons since the first day. As an example, the teacher mentioned that he had considered how he could draw 'when the shit hits the fan', which was followed up by a participant saying: 'Yes, that was also a good one!'

A central part of drawing exercises on the second day was that the participants were invited to draw and prepare a specific case example from their work context where they would use graphic facilitation in the near future after completing the course. For these case examples, the participants were asked to prepare a visual template. At the end of the day, they would present their visual

Figure 4 Visualisation of 'When the shit hits the fan' (Made by the author).

template to the other participants and the teacher, who would function as a feedback group.

In the feedback session, one participant used toilet paper as a visual metaphor for risk assessment, where each paper leaf drawn would symbolise that 'at any time the process can be stopped like when you tear a paper sheet'. In a playful tone, the teacher gave feedback to the participant: 'You could consider a paper towel instead of toilet paper, just based on my own unfortunate experiences when using toilet paper as a metaphor'. Laughter was triggered among participants and the participant reflected with a smile: 'Yes, that is probably a good idea'.

Another participant depicted an agenda for a meeting as a piece of paper wrapped around a watch (see Figure 5).

When talking about the visual template, the participant reflected: 'It could look like a toilet paper roll, but actually it is the agenda for the meeting'. Laughter spread among the participants and the teacher commented with a smile: 'It has never happened before in a course that toilet paper has been referred to this often'.

A third participant followed up with a comment while laughing: 'It all started yesterday with "When the shit hits the fan"'.

The observation showed how the visual metaphor 'When the shit hits the fan' (see Figure 4) became a central part of building up social memories (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009) in the course as both the teacher and the participants explicitly referred to this image throughout the course. From a participant perspective, the use of the metaphor can be seen as making an abstract subject of coping with urgent crises at work into a more recognisable and concrete image (Qvist-Sørensen and Baastrup, 2019). From a teacher perspective, it can be argued that the teacher's grasping of the humorous image is relevant, as it is related to the participants' daily work experiences (Baker, 2018). Furthermore, throughout the course, there seemed to be a development of both the visual expression and the meaning of the metaphor as another participant used toilet paper as a visual metaphor for risk assessment. It can be argued that toilet paper became a joint reference point in the feedback session where both teacher and participants sent playful signals (Bateson, 2014) to each other, commenting on the use of this *exact* image in participants' different visual templates.

In the interview situation, the teacher reflected upon the specific situation of the participant's introduction of 'When the shit hits the fan' and the subsequent reframing of the metaphor:

Well, I remember it [the image 'When the shit hits the fan'] and I also commented on it because it was given a space and this also shows something about strong pictures which are humorous also becoming good 'hooks'. So, laughter occurs which
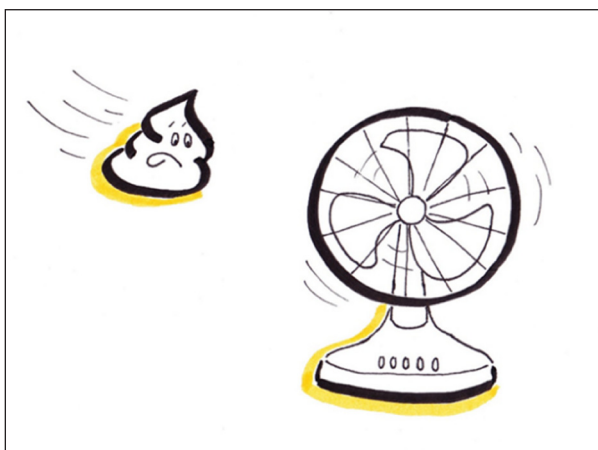
Figure 5 An annotated drawing from the participatory observations (left) and a presentation drawing (right) of the agenda for a meeting (Made by the author).

everyone remembers and everyone is laughing – that is something both participants and teacher can return to and make a link. Because there is a joint enjoyment unless it is at the expense of someone.

It can be argued that the teacher is aware of both the role of strong humorous images and his own teacher role to acknowledge and support such images to become joint 'hooks' and links for group members to return to. Thus, these social 'hooks' became central when building up social memories (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009). At the same time, the teacher points to a crucial factor: the joint enjoyment in the course 'should not be at the expense of someone'. This point is further elaborated in the discussion section.

After reflecting on the specific teaching situation, the teacher reflected upon how he does not explicitly think about using humorous images and quotes while conducting his teaching but perceives humour as a natural part of how their company organises graphic facilitation courses: 'It becomes a natural part of the teaching because it is important to create positive energy in the room. To create a feeling that we are all together in this'. Thus, the teacher argued how he experiences an interconnectedness between creating joint positive energy and the occurrence of a playful atmosphere in the courses.

When summarising the teacher's didactical considerations in this empirical example, it can be argued that this teacher perceived humour as a natural part of his teaching when creating positive energy in the course. He *acknowledged* and *supported* the use of humorous representations as a way to spread laughter among the group and create joint 'hooks' to build up social memories specific to the course.

DISCUSSION: POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES WHEN USING HUMOUR AND VISUAL METAPHORS

In this section, based on the teachers' didactical considerations, potentials, and challenges that arised when using humour and visual metaphors in a graphic facilitation course are outlined. The section builds on the analytical findings from the previous section.

POTENTIALS
Across the two graphic facilitation courses, the analysis showed how the two teachers explicitly described an aim of creating a joint collaborative learning space that is 'ours' and 'the feeling that we are all in this together'. Additionally, based on the elicitation of teaching situations in the interviews, the teachers recognised the potentials and reflected upon how they, in different ways, perceive humour and playfulness as natural elements of their teaching. Based on the teaching observations, it can be argued that both teachers have a certain level of humour orientation (Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield, 1991) as they deliver and support humorous messages as part of their teaching. However, if a playful and humorous approach to one's own teaching does not come naturally for some teachers, one of the teachers further emphasised in the interview:

If you are not a person cracking jokes, then the visuals themselves often give something to laugh about, because of the childish drawings. You can almost not avoid joy and laughter […] so if you as a teacher do not use humour to begin with, it will eventually start, because it evolves continuously together with the visuals and with what people bring to the table.

Here, it can be argued that the drawings themselves play a role in creating humorous and playful teaching situations that might lower participants' expectations about producing perfectionistic drawings. From this perspective, the drawings can become social 'hooks' for the teacher to explicitly grasp in the situation. Furthermore, it can be argued that participants' humoristic approach to their own visual productions can be a way for them to navigate the task of drawing in front of others—a task that might both excite and frighten them (c.f. Introduction). One previously described example from the analysis was the participant's reflection that 'It could look like a toilet paper roll, but actually it is the agenda for the meeting'. Another example was a participant who shared an experience of practicing drawing a flower, stating, 'It was supposed to look like a dandelion, but it looks like a toilet brush...' (see Figure 6) which also triggered laughter among the group.

The analysis and abovementioned examples show how the drawings have the potential to encourage the use of humour and visual metaphors when teaching and learning graphic facilitation. Thus, they become examples of the interconnectedness between different representational tools (Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth, 2009) where teachers regardless of their own general level of humour orientation (Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin, 2010) have the possibility to grasp the emergence of humorous utterances and visual metaphors expressed by participants. In relation to teachers' humour orientation, research also distinguishes between the 'source' and 'receiver' of humour (Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer, 2010). In instructional humour, the teachers are mainly seen as the source of humour, whereas the students are seen as receivers of the instructional humour. In this study, there is a focus on the teachers' reflections on their use of humour and visual metaphors based on teaching observations made by me as a third party. Thus, the study

Figure 6 Visualisation of a dandelion that (might) look like a toilet brush (Made by the author).

is limited regarding the participants' own reflections on the teaching situations, as these are not represented in the follow-up interviews. However, as the findings show, it can be argued that both the teachers, participants and drawings can be viewed as sources of the emergence of spontaneous play and humour during the courses. At the same time, both the teachers and participants can be viewed as receivers of the humorous utterances as the roles regarding who sends playful signals and who initiates the playful conversations switch during the teaching situations (Bateson, 2014). Thus, the findings indicate that a sharp distinction between source and receiver of the use of humour when teaching graphic facilitation might not be adequate. On the contrary, the interconnectedness between representational tools proposed by Ivarsson, Säljö and Linderoth (2009) is highly relevant and should include both the teacher and participants when teachers actualise their teaching in graphic facilitation. Thus, the teachers have the opportunity to continuously grasp humoristic utterances and visual metaphors proposed by participants and make these joint 'hooks', building up social memories throughout the course and encouraging a positive and safe learning environment.

CHALLENGES

There are also challenges when using humour and visual metaphors in graphic facilitation. One teacher emphasised that the use of humour is 'personal and situational'. This perspective can be extended to what is appropriate to laugh about in different contexts and cultures. Based on the examples with the point of departure of the metaphor 'When the shit hits the fan', the humoristic utterances and drawings can from a critical perspective be characterised as 'toilet humour', which might not be appropriate to laugh about in every context or culture. As the participating teacher mentioned, it is essential to be aware that joint enjoyment and laughter in a course should not be 'at the expense of someone', which is considered an important notion when teaching graphic facilitation. Based on my teaching observations and analysis, the teachers in this ethnographic study used cultural and situational sensitivity and knowledge about group dynamics (Tyler et al., 2005) to create a joint learning space that did not exclude anyone. Still, the excluding mechanism that humour might have (Booth-Butterfield et al., 2007) is something to be aware of when using and grasping humour and visual metaphors in graphic facilitation courses.

As mentioned by one of the teachers, another challenge when working with graphic facilitation is that *one* visual image can take up too much space in a teaching session. The teacher further elaborated that 'this is both the strength and weaknesses of visuals [...] that it can take up too much space in relation to other learning content'. It can be argued that this example demonstrates how visuals are an important part of the meaning-making of a situation (Ivarsson, Säljö and

Linderoth, 2009), but at the same time call for the use of verbal language to explicitly address whether there needs to be a shift in focus, for example away from a specific metaphor. Thus, the teacher also needs to be aware of relating the humour and playful approaches to the learning content of the course (Banas et al., 2011).

The last challenge mentioned by the teachers is that they often experience participants being placed in a dilemma when starting to implement graphic facilitation in their daily work. As employees in various organisations and companies, they typically want to be acknowledged as serious and professional in their daily work, and so 'a recurring challenge for participants when doing graphic facilitation is asking themselves: how can I stand up and be serious and professional during my presentations when I have made these funny drawings?', as one of the teachers mentioned in the interview. Both teachers expressed the challenge of creating a safe learning environment for the participants to explore and develop confidence in their own drawing skills. Thus, as part of their didactical considerations they try to tackle the abovementioned dilemma of the participants. The teachers expressed that being a teacher in graphic facilitation is not a place to show 'how good you can draw', which might be an aim when doing, for example, professional graphic recording work (see Figure 1, drawing to the right). On the contrary, in the teaching situations, the teachers draw quickly and 'ugly' in order to invite participants to engage in the drawing activities with appropriate expectations. As one of the teachers further elaborated: 'when participants immediately see that what I am drawing is not neat, but see that the visual "can do something and there is not a long way till I can do that and I can do it better than he does", that is a good thing for a teacher to pass on'. Thus, the teachers expressed a need to be role models and not take their own drawing style too seriously. The teachers' framing of their own drawing skills (Goffman, 1974) can be argued to support the creation of a safe joint learning environment for the participants, which was a priority for both the teachers.

CONCLUSION

As a point of departure, this ethnographic study aimed at capturing teaching situations of basic courses where participants learn to navigate the method of graphic facilitation supported by instructions from a teacher. Thus, the study contributes to the empirical research on graphic facilitation. The study explored how the teacher and participants framed and reframed the interactions around the visual materials in basic graphic facilitation courses. Spontaneous play, humour and visual metaphors emerged as crucial elements in the dynamic framing of the graphic facilitation courses, which were analysed and discussed. The findings show how humorous visual metaphors and drawings are *built up* throughout the courses as *social memories* carried out and refined by participants. Thus, the study showed how the use of humour and visual metaphors became multimodal 'hooks' of social memories that supported a positive, playful and safe learning environment. The multimodal encounters in the graphic facilitation courses made the non-observable play behaviour observable, which is described and analysed through the two teaching situations: 'The Lazy Netflix B' and 'When the shit hits the fan'. Different teacher roles are identified as *initiator* and *supporter* of the use of humour, play and visual metaphors when teaching graphic facilitation and the findings showed that the teachers had a crucial role in initiating, acknowledging and supporting the use of humour in these settings. The findings further indicate that play and humour are important didactical considerations when adults are supposed to acquire new multimodal skills, helping to create a joint learning environment, positive energy, social 'hooks' and lower participants' expectations of perfectionism in their own drawing skills.

As Bateson (2014) describes, play and humour can encourage each other. As this study indicates, the drawings themselves can also encourage the use of humour and metaphors, blurring the distinction between the source and receiver (Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer, 2010). As humour and visual metaphors are often identified as personal and situational, the teacher's role also requires a cultural and situational sensitivity when using these approaches to teaching. Thus, the findings of this study should not be interpreted as teaching situations to be literally replicated using the same verbal and visual metaphors. Instead, teachers of graphic facilitation are encouraged to grasp the multimodal 'hooks' and playful opportunities that emerge in their specific teaching situations and contexts. Furthermore, the conscious act of 'drawing quickly and ugly' is seen as a relevant didactical consideration by the teachers when inviting participants to explore their own drawing skills in a positive, playful and safe learning environment. Future studies on participants' experiences of the use of humour and visual metaphors during graphic facilitation courses are recommended.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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