Shaping Music in Performance

Workshop II: notes

06/09/2010

Raymond MacDonald: Qualitative methods in music research

Example of graphic score: Barry Guy's *Schweben – Ay but can ye?*, the shapes in which have to be interpreted and sounded.

Interviewees in RMcD's projects experience chords as shape (e.g. C major as a flat line; more complex chord as a U shape). Also has evidence of jazz musicians discussing shape of timbre.

Musical Identities & Musical Health and Wellbeing (MacDonald et al., 2002)

- Music is more ubiquitous than ever. Its ambiguity enhances its applicability to many situations. This may relate to the explosion of interest in music psychology and qualitative research in music.
- Musical identities one of his team's primary interests
- Identity is a key issue for contemporary life, researched across many academic disciplines
- Has been a theme of psychology since William James: Self-esteem = Success/Pretensions

Identities in Music vs. Music in Identities (taste, music as a resource).

- People develop identities through and in relation to music, influenced by musical and non-musical factors including family, school, motivation, musical development, self-efficacy.
- Musical communication influences musical identities, so subjective aspects of music perception are especially relevant. (Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2005)
- Music is used to create, maintain, and negotiate identities, rather than there being any objective truth to observe.
- talking → listening → performing; the use of shape influences all of these processes (Miell, MacDonald & Wilson, 2005)
- Musical Communication (Hargreaves et al., 2005) – the way in which people relate to music and come to hear it through talking about it. Discourse shapes the experience of musical communication.
- Signalling membership of musical communities (Miell & MacDonald, 2006):
- Young people and jazz musicians: they create out-groups (and in-groups) respectively – investigating the attachment to the musical community
- Musical identity closely involved in social interaction

Improvisation

"Improvisation is the highest form of art" Barenboim

"Improvisation is a parlour trick; anyone can do it" Willy Wonka (Charlie and the Chocolate Factory)

- Improvisation is a fundamental aspect of life and of musical practices.

MacDonald and Wilson, 2006:

- Study used Discourse Analysis because it was particularly well suited to it (diverse identities in those improvising together prompted discourse).
- Looking for *repertoires* – consistent patterns of descriptions in talk
- Musical Identity and Improvisation: Mastery & Mystery
- Mystery→ intensity, passion (N.B. Mystery was always ironized by the jazz experts).

Music, health and well-being:

- Researched in Music Education (Wilson et al.), Music Therapy (Mercédès Pavlicevic), Community Music (Davidson), and in studying everyday uses of Music (de Nora)
- Important to many arts and health organisations around the western world. Politically timely and topical. Qualitative research can help here.
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – because music is integral to identity, the investigation of its effects lends itself to IPA.
- Pothoulaki, Flowers & MacDonald, in press
  - A qualitative IPA study of the psychological processes involved in Music therapy sessions with cancer patients
  - Theme: Free expression-communicating through music

Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing & Sheridan, 2008

- Researching the Arts in Scottish Education (RAISE)

- Mixed methods: Focus groups and questionnaires; thematic analysis (slightly simpler method; drawing out themes in the data; grouping them; using them in relation to other results from triangulation; development of a robust thematic framework).
- To observe benefits of the arts

MacDonald, Miell &Wilson, 2002

- Sounds of Progress/Limelight
  Supplementing quantitative analysis with the subjective thoughts and feelings of participants (often these are the most important parts!)
- Theme 1: other people's expectations
- Theme 2: empowerment – music as a way of prompting more interaction.

DeSimone & MacDonald (2010): Polyphony

- Psychiatric hospital – performances and interviews
- Thematic analysis

Music listening / Musical participation

Background music → influence on behaviour/academic work (Hallam)

Schellenberg, in press

Challenges for qualitative research:

- tendency to rely on face value reporting rather than scholarly interpretation
- the language used is often more appropriate for quantitative research (e.g. cause and effect, generalisation)
- - tendency for crossover between research and advocacy – there must be a clear divide
- conceptual frameworks
- elaboration of concepts ...
- outcome measure and developing causal links is complex!

Argument for moving beyond the transmission model of musical communication

Comments after talk:

- individual agency is especially important in studying shape, and analysis of the discourse surrounding the topic is therefore crucial (Henry Stobart)
- internet-based discourse: impossible to know enough about the context in which the data was generated and why it was provided online, i.e. the social and individual contexts lying behind it. It's a dangerous source. (Eric Clarke)

Jonathan Smith: Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

- Not a single qualitative method, but range of qualitative methods, and it's important to choose the right method for one's research question.
- IPA useful for music research (including shape) but needs an imaginative leap

IPA is concerned with:

- personal lived experience
- <u>experience close</u> / experience far
- how participant makes sense of experience (necessarily after the event)
- hot cognition (cognitive and affective aspects should both be addressed)
  - this provides rich data
  - most helpful to use topics that are really engaging for the participant

Theoretical underpinnings:

- phenomenological
- interpretative
- idiographic

IPA began in health psychology; now being used in management, counselling, medicine, humanities ...

<u>Illustration: Pain as an assault on the self: chronic benign lower back pain for 5-15 years</u>

- Semi-structured interviews, pain, self and pain;
- establish experiential themes in first case.
- For IPA, a homogenous group of participants is desirable.
- Begin examining the data case by case; then move slowly towards more general claims across the data.

Pain and self - pain leads to self-derogation (pain taking over, experienced as a malevolent force turning them into someone bad: low self-esteem, a sense of becoming hateful and irrational)/ Public arena makes it worse / Directing it at others / The sting in the tail. The research explores patients' sense of self-identity.

- Conclusion:

Rich idiographic account prioritized

Then pattern explored

<u>Philosophical background</u>

Phenomenology

- Not a singular thing, contested, body of work of number of thinkers
- Husserl: "go back to the things themselves" (things=phenomenological experiences). Experience = paramount
- Leap from philosophy to psychology:
- Empirical, not conceptual or personal project
  - Analysis of others' accounts
- Heidegger argued phenomenology is hermeneutic, hence *Interpretative* PA.
- Experience is revealed through analysis and interpretation, the participant doing the interpreting as well as the researcher.
- The thing is there to shine forth but detective work needed to enable this to happen.

Double hermeneutic

- Researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of the experience (second order)

Hermeneutics of identity/empathy

- Empathic interpretation vs. objective detachment.
- IPA is about understanding what it is like to be that person. But we have to understand from the outside, too ...

Hermeneutics of questioning/being critical

- But not appearing suspicious
- Understanding

Idiography

IPA takes great care with each case and is slow to move from the individual case to generalisation

Idiographic (as opposed to nomothetic (which is argued by some to tell you nothing about nobody)):

- value of the case in its own terms
- illuminate/problematize the group – a small number of cases may enlighten us about large-scale issues
- Warnock on particular and universal
  - The more we learn about the individual, the more we learn about ourselves, and about universality

Doing IPA

Data collection:

- experiential phenomenological research question
- purposive sampling - a small, carefully chosen sample; homogeneity in the sample is good
- interview schedule used flexibility-contrast structured interview
- verbatim transcript

Semi-structured interviews: issues

- Need to develop rapport, and adjust to the participant, modifying the interview map or schedule in order to probe interesting areas that arise
- May lead project to be about something else than was anticipated
- A conversation in which the researcher has to relinquish control
- Can be personally very demanding
- Suitable for research questions without a hypothesis

Analysis

- commenting on transcribed quotes – this stage is very messy
- turning into themes – systematic search for experiential themes
  - themes may be grounded or conceptual, but there should be transparency between the themes and the data they represent
- clustering of themes – forge connections between themes to get subordinate themes
- Micro analysis – 'gems' – validity through fit
- Essential to have few participants and few themes so as to allow enough depth and plausibility in the findings

www.psyc.bbk.ac.uk/ipa

Write-up

– a narrative account supported by verbatim extracts.

- Often, research is presented with too many themes, and only one quote per theme. This is not high quality research.
- Need to indicate the prevalence of the theme and make it representative.

IPA requires the researcher to put in abeyance their own agenda, and to get as close as possible to the participant's experience.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Lynne Cameron: Metaphor analysis

Quote from Burke (1945, p.503): "a device for seeing something in terms of something else"

Shakespeare: "Juliet is the sun" (Juliet: topic, sun: vehicle)

- This is an example of a 'strong' metaphor, which is rare in real talk

The analysis of discourse focusing on metaphorical expressions

Metaphor in discourse (spontaneous/elicited talk)

- metaphor vehicles entering the flow of talk, blurred start and end points, keeps tying itself back into the real world
- topic not explicitly stated
- rare use of novel/deliberate metaphor, frequently conventionalised
- and may be conventionalised within communities (e.g. nations; specific groups such as musicians) = discourse communities
- particularised for the moment
- the vehicle term → often phrases/verbs/affective
- frequent (ca. 10-20% of conversation) but uneven distribution → clusters (and absences)
    - →from repeating (this happens naturally in conversation), priming, critical moments (when someone has something difficult to do)

Types

- poetic ("rage burns in my heart") fairly rare
- commonly conventionalised ("where I am coming from")
- large systematic metaphors (Reconciliation as a journey has subcomponents of a journey of understanding; "I have reached a place of forgiveness")

N.B. Sometimes a word may have metaphorical etymology, but not be used as a metaphor any more (e.g. 'vulnerable' actually derives from physical sources, but is used widely without that connotation).

Approaches to metaphor

- literary (Richards, Black)
- conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson; Kovecses)
    - we are bound to use metaphor about everything, e.g. career
    - Led to cognitive linguistics
    - Creation of conceptual (systematic) metaphors
    - 1999 – neural theory of metaphor
- discourse and discourse dynamics (Cameron)

Metaphor as a research tool

- connects language and thinking
- metaphor as cognitive
- metaphor as affective
- helps us think about participants' emotions

Metaphor-led discourse analysis

- find them
- identify patterns of metaphors
- connect to people's discourse purposes

Identifying metaphors – must come back to reality

Warning!

- novel/strong metaphors are easily detectable but very rare
- fuzzy boundaries
- N.B. when identifying metaphor, prepositions may or may not be included – different schools of thought.
- Excel useful for analysis (also Atlas Ti)

When grouping the metaphors, there may be the following patterns:

Meaning

- Systematic (can be grouped at different levels according to the purpose of the research
- Stories (narrative)
- Scenarios (less well developed, but fit together)
- Cluster of metaphors – might not necessarily fit together, but might help to identify a difficult moment for the speaker
- Discourse patterns:
    - Agree, negotiate, disagree
    - Extend, exemplify

Distributional patterns

- Clusters and absences – useful to graph metaphors

Compile interpretive systems

Reliability

- Make explicit decisions about, e.g. preposition inclusion before analysis begins fully

- Consistency across text and researchers!
- Training
- Inter-rater discussion – compare 10% of material for identification
- Corpus-based dictionary for basic meanings (e.g. MacMillan advanced learner's dictionary)

<u>Contrast & Transfer of Meaning</u>

Identifying

- For it to be a metaphor, there should be a more basic meaning to the word than there is in context
- The meaning should be different, because of the context
- There should be a transfer of meaning.

Analysing:

- Keep to the text when looking for vehicle groups
- Labels – should be grounded in the text.
- Bottom-up labelling – use the words of participants for as long as possible
- Need a big descriptor that fits the data, and should be tested with multiple researchers

Need about 20,000 words of text to build a coherent framework

Music is movement:

- with direction
- up and down
- towards and away from

(May be particularly interesting patterns in music students, because of learning processes?)

Playing music is creating structure / Structure has shape – structure as a key metaphor in musical shape – shape emerges from changing structure?

"Sounding forms in motions" Langer (1950)

Metaphor as research tool:

- access to affect: emotions, attitudes and values
- access to alternatives
- how ideas are framed

Is complemented by other tools – positioning, categorizing, narrative analysis ...

Terry Clark: Exploring musicians' performance experiences using IPA

- Interested in subjective experience of musicians.
- Little studied aside from anecdotes and personal evidence.

- Project studied musicians' thoughts and perceptions in preparing and performing both in successful and unsuccessful performances.
- Sample: 29 musicians (pianists/strings/vocalists)
- Semi-structured interviews, topic guide, pilot interviews.
- Procedure: recruitment, 45–90-minute interviews, digital recording, verbatim transcription checked with participants for accuracy.
- Purposive sampling

N.B. included a question at the interviews about whether the participant thought the researcher had led them in any of their answers

Analysis:

- identify points of interest → labelling → grouping → general dimensions
- summary tables for individuals and groups
- May use frequency counts to identify most important themes

Results:

Preparing for performance:

- types of activities
- reasons for engaging in these activities (thoughts and perceptions)
- where these were learned and developed from

Experiencing performance:

- Perceptions arising from or associated with events
- Responses (and reasons) to events and impact on subsequent activities
- highlighted central role of 'perceptions' in the performance experience

Pros:

- comprehensive
- rich in breadth and depth
- participant-led

Cons:

- subjectivity of responses: cannot generalize
- no causal links

David Collins: Protocol Analysis in Music Research

Ericsson & Simon (1993), Ericsson (2006)

Concurrent or retrospective reporting – 'thinking aloud'

In writing – Flower and Hayes

- Verbalizing without influence
- The most reliable verbal reports of what happens when undertaking a task will be concurrent (and immediate retrospection)

Verbal protocol analysis in music studies

- Reitmann (1960) – music composition
- Performance (Valentine, et al)
- Jazz (Menonca and Wallace, 2004)

Issues

- Objections (Glass & Holyoak, 1986; Smagorinsky, 1994; Sloboda, 1995) – cognitive load may be too great; processing may be too fast to verbalise
- Protocols are incomplete (but are they any less complete than interviews? Surely we can use them, but not assume that they tell us more than they really do).
- Validity of verbal protocol methodology (Green, 1995)

Process:

- task specification (N.B. a 10-minute task produces approx. 10,000 words for analysis)
- data collection (no sense-making needed on the part of the participant; prompts are allowed if necessary)
- data transcription
- initial coding categories – inter-coder reliability
- theoretical framework
- chunking of protocols
- encoding of protocols
- analysis? (might incorporate other methods, e.g. IPA? Metaphor analysis?)

Quality of output might vary according to the participant

Prompted vs. unaided verbalisations

David Giles: Grounded Theory

In the past, two approaches:

- without hypotheses
- systematic procedural approach

Often used in ethnographic studies, but can be used with any data

Involves coding and re-coding the data, from the bottom-up

Chunking into meaningful parts

Lower-order categories vs. higher-order categories

- Higher order
    - May lead to a theoretical model
    - Core category or a sequential formation of categories
    - May be used to construct and test a theory (has been argued to be against the spirit of grounded theory. Glaser – Constructivist)

Particularly well-suited to areas with a shortage of existing theory and research (therefore music and shape might be well-suited)

Example:

Road rage: What does it mean to people, rather than what causes it

- Can incorporate other methods …

Final discussion

- Interview draft: first ask them about their definition of shape
- "Art of listening" (in interviews)
- Keep questions as open as possible and be prepared to follow where the participants lead
- don't mention shape at the beginning (NB: they all have filled in the questionnaire so they most likely know what it is about): start with 'How did they prepare their last piece'
- don't "feed" them
- "interview is only a short cut to field work", field work and observation are better routes to understanding
- start the interview "practical" (listening to recording or musicians playing themselves)
- communicative approach to shape (ensemble rehearsal) → OBSERVATION
    o Could also observe musicians learning a new instrument (Stobart)
- take into consideration the large interpersonal differences of musicians (some discuss a lot on a high level, others work non-verbally most of the time)
- issues with level/age of musicians (students less able to express what they're doing; well-known professionals more likely to think of image while choosing how to answer)
- interview setting should be very comfortable/familiar
- Where is the focus of the interview? Are we interested in musicians' reflective view or their spontaneous reaction? And therefore should we allow them to think about questions in advance of the interview?
- Music lessons are a good site for study where orthodoxies are transmitted
- Influence of recordings on shaping beliefs
- Be aware of performers' conviction [still widely believed] that their job is to realise the composers' intentions
- Group interviews, e.g. a string quartet or duo
- Video rehearsals, lessons, then interview later
- Be aware that the word may not come up yet the concept may be present
- Differences in using 'shape' between group and solo rehearsals
- Reflexivity. *Writing Culture.* The researcher shapes the questions and the research
- Portuguese translation of "shape" would be "sculpture"
- (Stobart:) the word doesn't exist in Quechua yet they're talking about shape all the time
- How do musicians judge? → It's about how it feels (to them) → And how do they evaluate that? → And how do we evaluate them?

- Comment: "Take it (shape) away from static visual or physical, it's shaping in/over time!!"
- Jonathan Smith: Use more generic term than 'Shape'
  - What else in music is most important or special, apart from 'shape'?
- Do theatre people use shape? Is there an analogy?
- Longitudinal approach – are there different approaches to musical shape at different times in life? (probably a later question, once we have some idea of what we're dealing with!)
- We're dealing with discourses and ideologies so it's dangerous to assume a fundamental perceptual process or that it really can be grounded
- We must accept that the concept is messy so the research must not be
- Musicians' feelings are important! How do they evaluate shape (by listening and experiencing) and how do we evaluate their evaluations
- We need to take this away from the visual domain and find it in the temporal
- Do an observational study followed by interviews with the participants
- It's no less real for being so difficult
- It's trying to get to the heart of what musicians are doing
- We don't always need the shape word present: it's a starting point
- Small –Musicking
- Getting at what musicians think is crucial: more important than definitions. Use their ideas to analyse other musicians' work
- Ground shape in a real, gritty experience to learn more (but this will ignore the fact that it is, by nature, messy!)