

Watching and Listening to Dance

Study aim:

To investigate the current practice of dance AD systematically, and explore similarities and differences between the experience of watching a dance piece and the experience of listening to its AD.

Research Questions & Methodology



RQ1: How is dance currently audio described?
What are the main strategies used to verbalise this highly visual art form?

Linguistic analysis of a purpose-built dance AD corpus



RQ2: To what extent can the effectiveness of these strategies be empirically demonstrated? How are meaning, enjoyment and appreciation derived from watching dance VS listening to its AD?

Reception study with sighted and blind/partially sighted participants



RQ3: What recommendations around audio describing dance can be derived from RQ1 and RQ2 findings?

Combination of RQ1 and RQ2 findings

Linguistic Analysis: Materials and Design



SUB-CORPORA	UNITS	WORD S
1. Dance scenes from films and series	259	23,589
2. Online clips	24	45,862
3. Scripts from past performances	22	77,627
TOTAL No OF WORDS		147,078

Description strategies

Conceptualised recurring patterns and features into seven description strategies such as technical terms, figurative language and repetition

Lexico-grammatical analysis

- Frequency lists of verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs
- Key words in relation to three other corpora
- Concordances of some of the top key words



Linguistic Analysis: Findings

Strategies, Key words, Most frequent words

He lifts her close, she nestled on his shoulder. He swirls her `<fig>as light as a cloud.</fig>` Hug. `<dir>Do not let go.</dir>`

Dropping them to pick up a brief toe tapping folk dance. `<rep>Cross, side, step, tap, cross, side, step, tap.</rep>` Dragging them again by the wrist.

On one pointed toe she turns in `<tech>arabesque</tech>` and sinks into a playing pose. [...] The cello flies the young Jackie high, as her older self `<tech>pirouettes</tech>` across the space.

Top 5 key words*

1. Pirouette
2. Pointe
3. Twirl
4. Arabesque
5. Outstretch

*Ref corpus:
English Web 2021

Frequent verbs

1. Be
2. Turn
3. Spin
4. Lift
5. Hold

Frequent nouns

1. Arm
2. Hand
3. Leg
4. Side
5. Dancer



Linguistic Analysis: Findings

Concordances

Left position	Key word	Right position
someone	leaps	into a front flip.
as someone runs and	leaps	forward into the arms of
that culminate with her	leaping	through the air.
Someone	leaps	forward and someone ducks
someone	leaps	off the dancers knee before
immediately	leap	into aerial spins that
Someone	leaps	out to one side and someone
They all	leap	forward and someone performs
on the spot and	leap	through the air. They turn to the
into the air and	leap	again while spinning. They then
Someone runs and	leaps	through the air. Someone performs
and then runs and	leaps	while in the splits position.
cocks her hips before	leaping	through the air. She leans back again.
and she	leaps	up onto his shoulders again,
as she	leaps	into his arms and someone
She	leaps	through the air and immediately

Leap + 'through/into the air'
Leap + direction/spatial indication
Leap + "and/whilst turning" or synonyms of
Leap + "and" other verb
Leap + "into" another move
Leap + "together/in unison"
Leap + adverb

Reception Study: Materials and Design



Participants

- 14 sighted
- 14 BPS (eight blind, six partially sighted)

Materials

- Same four clips, without (sighted) and with AD (BPS participants)
- Alternating dance styles, presence of narrative elements, number of dancers on the scene

Data collection

- Same three initial questions
- Think-aloud sessions
- Clip- and group- specific questions

Data analysis

- Identified recurring elements
- Created codes and coded dataset (MAXQDA)
- Grouped codes into themes
- Thematic analysis

Reception Study: Findings



"What three words come to mind if you think back to the clip?"



Word cloud_Sighted participants



Word cloud_Partially sighted participants



Word cloud_Blind participants

Reception Study: Findings

Comments from the think-aloud protocols



00:02

The men suddenly pop up into a brief toe tapping folk dance.

S P11: So I think this moment at the very start made me go “celebration”, because the movement is quite... There’s a lot of energy there, so I was not really understanding... There clearly is a huge gap between the two groups of people.

PS P7: Also I didn’t get what this toe tapping was about, they sort of kept alternating between dragging bodies around and doing a folk dance. What’s that about? And it wasn’t a very folk-dancey folk dance, if you see what I mean.

B P13: There. Toe-tapping folk dance. That sounds so happy. It might be a ritual or something?

B P14: What is a folk dance?



00:06

They grab their partners back foot and under shoulder...

B P8: Interested. Got my attention.



00:09

...spinning them on one front knee...

S P4: So one of things I thought when I watched it earlier but didn’t mention – they look really chilled out. Like, they’re very kind of... [imitates arms flopping downwards]. Surely you should be a bit more energetic, when you’re trying to save someone’s life, but they seem very... “This doesn’t seem that big a deal...” Yeah, I don’t know why I thought that, but I thought “shouldn’t you be kind of... a little bit more... like, “get up and go”.

S P9: Definitely dolls again.



00:11

...legs making peculiar angles.

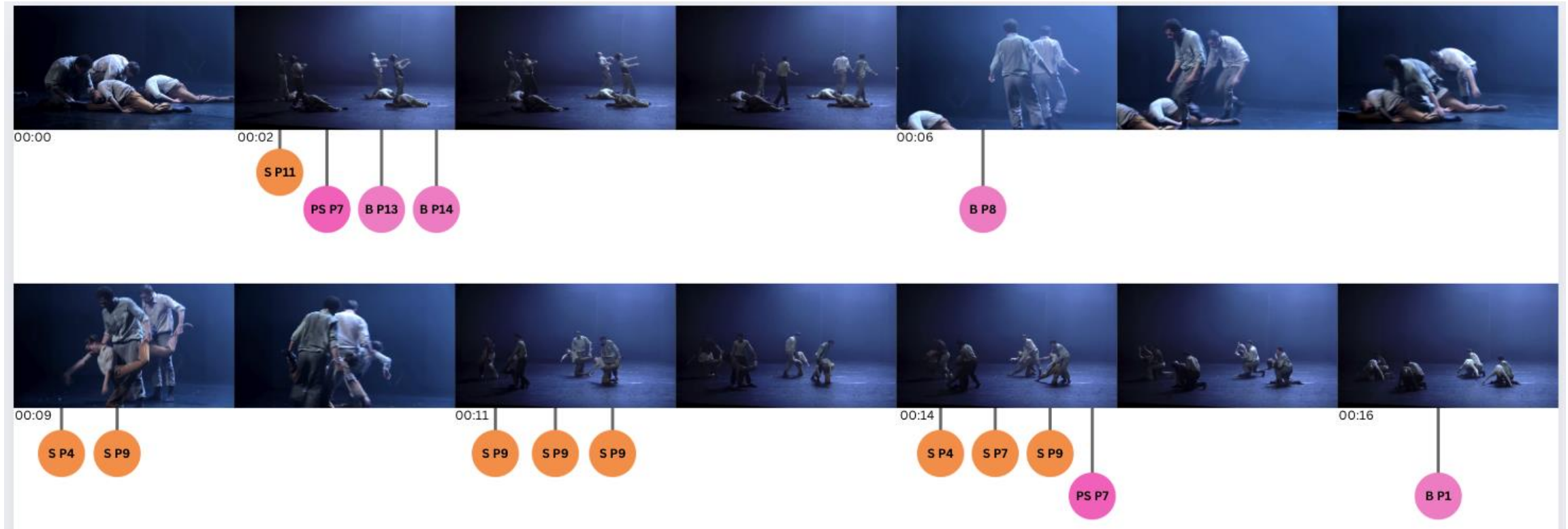
S P9: I I like that move. I like all that... hanging out. Yeah, it was my favourite bit.

S P12: I suppose the way the body... that’s the first time you see in that clip, bodies that are really limp. Sort of quite... surprising.

S P14: Here they’re kind of being made to do a pirouette on their knee.

Reception Study: Findings

"Heat map" of the think-aloud protocols



Reception Study: Findings

Answers to clip- and group-specific questions



Takademe, Robert Battle



AD: Turning in place, he feels around his body *<fig> as if being attacked by insects </fig>*. He stares ahead.

S: Sighted; PS: Partially Sighted; B: Blind

"Like he is being bitten by insects or something! [laughs]", S P2

"Yeah to me that almost seems like he's possessed, and he's trying to understand where this thing kind of... something is moving inside his body and he is trying to either locate it in a way or make sense of it", S P11

"The bit where it says 'as if being attacked by insects' is very good to help you visualise", B P5

"I wouldn't have thought that he was attacked by insects, no. That was an opinion that was planted", PS P3

Reception Study: Findings

Answers to clip- and group-specific questions



The Cellist, Katy Marston



AD: On one pointed toe, she turns in [arabesque](#) and sinks into a playing pose. [...] The cello flies the young Jackie high, as her older self [pirouettes](#) across the space.

S: Sighted; PS: Partially Sighted; B: Blind

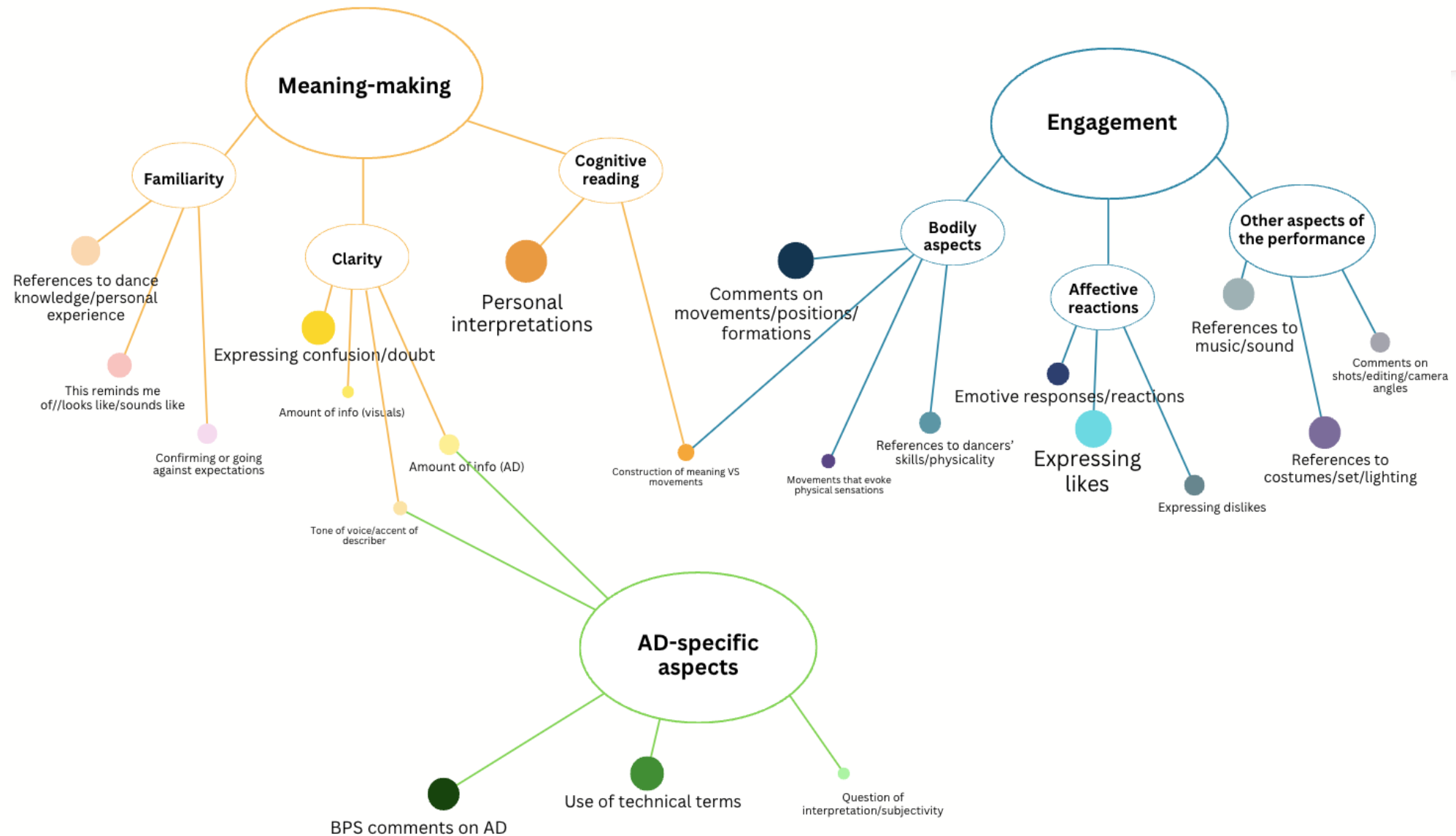
"Arabesque rings a bell. [laughs'] But I'm not 100% sure", S P3

"I know those terms because of my dance background, but I don't think they'd make sense otherwise", S P8

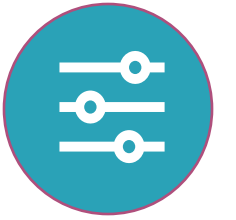
"Well, I'd rather they told me what an arabes... What the word means, to be honest, because that means nothing to someone who's not a dance expert", PS P12

"A pirouette I know, arabesque not so much. I just know it's a ballet term [...]. It's still enjoyable even if you don't know about it, but I suppose the onus is on the person to find out what those words mean if you don't know them", B P5

Reception Study: Thematic Map



Preliminary conclusions



- Exploratory study
- First steps towards a systematic approach to dance AD

- Unique characteristics of dance AD compared to AD for other products
- Marked presence of technical terms, figurative language

- Meaning-making and engagement are multilayered and highly subjective
- Call for more description of physical aspects of the performance



Thank you!

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