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What the Stage Teaches the Studio:

Theatre-Based Training and its
Transfer into Service Design Practice

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Thank you all.

Abstract

Theatre and improvisation have spent over a century developing systematic approaches to presence, narrative, empathy, and collaborative sense-making under uncertainty. These are the same capacities that service design demands of its practitioners, and that conventional design training struggles to cultivate. Despite structural parallels identified in the literature, no empirical study has examined how service design practitioners specifically experience theatre-based training, or whether and how it transfers into their professional practice.

This study addresses that gap through a practice-led qualitative case study organised around a two-day Storytelling in Service Design workshop, conducted in December 2024 with fourteen first-year students of an Erasmus Mundus joint master's programme. Data was collected across four phases: a pre-workshop survey, facilitator field notes, a post-workshop survey, and six in-depth follow-up interviews conducted approximately three months after the workshop. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework.

The findings identify six themes. Embodied activity was the primary entry point to learning. A group storytelling exercise restructured the social conditions of the room and enabled everything that followed. Two narrative frameworks transferred with durability into professional practice, in both cases because they arrived after embodied encounter rather than before it. Most significantly, several participants independently generated narrative tools from internalised storytelling principles rather than applying what they had been taught, a form of cognitive reorientation that represents the study's deepest evidence of transfer. Shared vulnerability was the mechanism of learning rather than an obstacle to it. Transfer was real but uneven, shaped by timing, design gaps, and the absence of sustained practice opportunities.

The study makes three contributions. It provides the first empirical account of service design practitioners experiencing theatre-based training. It offers a differentiated transfer typology distinguishing direct application, indirect orientation shift, and structural constraint. And it generates actionable design insights for future workshop practice, including the primacy of practice-before-theory sequencing and the register mismatch between embodied and meditative learning modes. The study's scope is bounded by its single-workshop, single-cohort design, and its findings are offered as a carefully evidenced opening of terrain rather than a claim to generalisability.

Keywords: service design, applied improvisation, storytelling, theatre-based training, experiential learning, transfer, practitioner development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Where This Began

This thesis did not begin with a research question. It began with a workshop.

In December 2024, I designed and co-facilitated a two-day storytelling workshop for a group of first-year service design students. I had no particular expectation that it would become research. What I expected was a reasonably engaged group who would find the content useful in a general way and move on. What I found was something slightly different, a room that, by the end of Day 2, was louder and more alive than I had anticipated, full of people performing in front of each other and laughing about a story they had collectively invented about a human cursed to be turned into a fish.

That alone might have remained simply a good workshop. What moved it toward a thesis was a single exercise near the end. Participants were asked to take the storytelling techniques they had encountered and map them onto the double diamond to place them at the design process stages where they felt they would be most useful. What the groups produced was more specific and more fluent than I had expected. They could see, clearly and in their own words, how character-based storytelling connected to empathy research, how narrative structure connected to insight synthesis, how ethos, pathos, and logos connected to pitching and client communication. They were not mapping what I had told them; they were mapping what they had figured out.

Something had transferred. I did not know yet how much, or how durably, or whether it would survive the return to regular project work. But I was curious enough to find out. That curiosity though modest in origin, and honest in its modesty is where this thesis begins.

1.2 The Problem This Research Addresses

Service design is a field that makes large demands of its practitioners. It asks them to empathise deeply with users whose lives may be very different from their own, to facilitate complex conversations between stakeholders with competing interests, to communicate ambiguous findings in ways that are clear and compelling, and to hold uncertainty productively throughout an iterative process that rarely resolves neatly (Stickdorn et al., 2018). These are not technical skills. They are relational, communicative, and embodied and they are, by most accounts, difficult to cultivate through conventional training.

Theatre and improvisation have been developing systematic approaches to exactly these capacities for over a century. Presence, active listening, narrative construction under uncertainty, comfort with the unscripted these are the core concerns of theatrical pedagogy, and they map with unusual precision onto what service design demands of its practitioners (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). Applied improvisation is now a recognised professional development field, with documented impact across healthcare, business education, and management training (Felsman et al., 2020a; Jouin et al., 2026). The structural connection between theatrical practice and design thinking has been identified and argued for in the literature (Buur & Torguet, 2013; Ciravegna, 2021; Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

What the literature has not yet provided is direct empirical evidence from within service design itself. No existing study positions service design practitioners as its specific study population. No published account follows practitioners from a theatre-based training experience through to their professional practice over time and asks, with the benefit of distance, what actually carried over. The connection between these fields remains largely theoretical, supported by structural parallels and adjacent evidence, but not yet grounded in the accounts of service designers themselves.

This study makes three specific contributions to address this gap. First, it provides the first empirical account of service design practitioners experiencing theatre-based training, grounded in data collected across four phases over three months. Second, it offers a differentiated transfer typology that distinguishes between direct technique application, indirect orientation shift, and structurally constrained non-transfer, offering a more granular account of what transfer actually looks like in this context than the existing literature provides. Third, it generates a set of concrete, practice-grounded insights for workshop and curriculum design, including the primacy of practice-before-theory sequencing and the identification of register mismatch as a constraint on learning. These contributions are modest in scope but specific in content, and they are offered as a carefully evidenced opening of terrain rather than a claim to generalisability.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is organised around one main research question and three sub-questions.

Main research question: How do theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques contribute to the practice of service design, and what capacities do they develop in emerging service design practitioners?

SQ1 — Relevance: What is the potential relevance of theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques to the core demands of service design practice — empathy, narrative communication, and client-facing presence?

SQ2 — Experience: How did emerging service design practitioners experience and make sense of theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques through an immersive workshop encounter?

SQ3 — Transfer: To what extent and in what forms — as direct tools or as broader professional capacities — did these techniques transfer into participants' service design practice in the months following the workshop?

1.4 Scope and Positioning

This is a qualitative, inductive, and exploratory study. It does not set out to prove that theatre-based training improves service design performance. It sets out to understand how a specific group of emerging practitioners experienced a specific set of techniques, and what, if anything, those techniques became in their professional lives three months later. The aim is depth and honesty rather than breadth and generalisability.

The study is also, by necessity, a reflexive one. I was the workshop facilitator and the researcher. I came to this topic with seven years of experience as a theatre and improvisation practitioner and a genuine belief in the relevance of these techniques to design work, a belief the research confirmed, complicated, and qualified in ways I did not fully anticipate. That positionality is not a methodological weakness to be apologised for; it is a feature of practice-led research that must be named and held consciously throughout. The research design chapter addresses this in full.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature across three domains of service design practice and competencies, theatre and improvisation pedagogy, and experiential learning theory, and identifies the specific gap this study addresses. Chapter 3 sets out the research design, including the workshop context, the participant group, and the four-phase data collection arc. Chapter 4 presents the findings across six themes, from the embodied conditions that made learning possible to the structural factors that shaped and limited transfer, including a section dedicated to divergent findings and negative cases. Chapter 5 interprets those findings against the theoretical framework, answers the three sub-questions directly, and acknowledges the study's limitations

honestly. Chapter 6 states the contribution, names what the study cannot claim, and identifies the questions it opens for future research.

The thesis ends where it began: with a room full of people who surprised me. What follows is my best account of what happened in that room, what it meant, and what, if anything, it might mean beyond it.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review explores the intersection of three domains: service design practice, theatre and improvisation methodologies, and experiential learning theory. The central question is whether theatre-based training can develop the capacities service design practitioners need, and if so, how and why this works.

2.1.1 The Connect

Service design demands specific practitioner capacities that extend beyond technical skills. Practitioners must demonstrate effective presence when facilitating co-creative workshops with diverse stakeholders (Stickdorn et al., 2018), communicate complex findings through narrative and storytelling (Sagar et al., 2023), and manage uncertainty throughout iterative design processes (Stickdorn et al., 2018). These demands of being present, storytelling, and working through ambiguity are remarkably similar to the core practices of theatre and improvisation (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

Theatre practitioners have spent over a century developing systematic pedagogical approaches for cultivating presence, collaborative sense-making, narrative skills, and comfort with uncertainty (Stanislavsky, 1989). Applied improvisation has a growing track record in professional development, from business education to healthcare communication. Yet despite these apparent connections, the relationship between theatrical training and service design remains under-explored (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

When theatre techniques appear in service design contexts (role-playing, staging scenarios, service walkthroughs), they are typically presented as isolated tools without connection to the established

pedagogical traditions from which they derive (Buur & Torguet, 2013; Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021; Stickdorn et al., 2018). This review examines both the techniques and their theoretical foundations.

2.1.2 Theoretical Pillars

The literature review is standing on three main theoretical pillars as follows:

Experiential and transformative learning theory explains how adults learn through immersive, embodied experience combined with critical reflection, and under what conditions such learning transfers to practice. This pillar draws primarily on Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), Mezirow's transformative learning theory, and Schön's concepts of knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action (Mezirow, 1997; Schön, 2009).

Service design principles and competencies establishes the specific demands, processes, and practitioner capacities that define contemporary service design. This includes the five core principles of service design thinking—human-centered, co-creative, sequencing, evidencing, holistic and the particular capacities practitioners need: client-facing presence and facilitation, narrative communication, and managing uncertainty in iterative processes (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016).

Applied theatre and improvisation pedagogy documents the methods, principles, and learning theories underlying theatrical training when applied in professional development contexts beyond entertainment. This includes Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 2008), Johnstone's improvisation principles (Buur & Torguet, 2013), Spolin's theatre games, and the growing body of work on applied improvisation in organizational settings (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

These pillars are not presented in isolation but woven throughout the review to build understanding of how theatrical practices might develop service design capacities, addressing the study's research questions about relevance (SQ1), practitioner experience (SQ2), and transfer to practice (SQ3).

2.2 Service Design: The Practice and Practitioner

Service design is an interdisciplinary, human-centered approach to creating or improving services to ensure they are useful, usable, desirable, effective, and efficient (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). Rather than a static academic discipline, it functions as an integrative process that reshapes both front-stage customer experiences and the underlying operational processes and business models of an organization (Stickdorn et al., 2018). The practice is guided by a set of core principles: services are user-

centered, meaning they are experienced through the customer's eyes; co-creative, involving various stakeholders in the development process; sequential, visualized as interrelated actions over time; evidenced, by making intangible services tangible through physical artifacts; and holistic, by considering the entire environment of the service ecosystem (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016).

To effectively operate within this framework, the service designer must cultivate a set of core professional capabilities that balance user needs with organizational viability (Stickdorn et al., 2018). A primary capability is empathy, defined as a deep understanding of the user's circumstances, feelings, and motivations that involves relating to rather than merely knowing about the user (Kouprie & Visser, 2009). Designers must also act as facilitators who guide diverse, multidisciplinary teams through co-creative processes, using shared visual tools to bridge organizational silos (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Furthermore, practitioners require a holistic systems perspective, managing the complex interplay between the visible "front-stage" interactions and the internal "back-stage" processes such as systems, organizational structures, and business goals that enable the service to function (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Finally, service design demands a "bias toward action"; designers must be adept at "doing, not talking," employing iterative cycles of rapid prototyping to test and evolve concepts within realistic contexts before full-scale implementation (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Through these competencies, practitioners translate complex research into tangible visualizations, such as journey maps and service blueprints, which simplify intangible processes and provide a common language for the entire organization (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016).

2.3 The Narrative Thread in Service Design

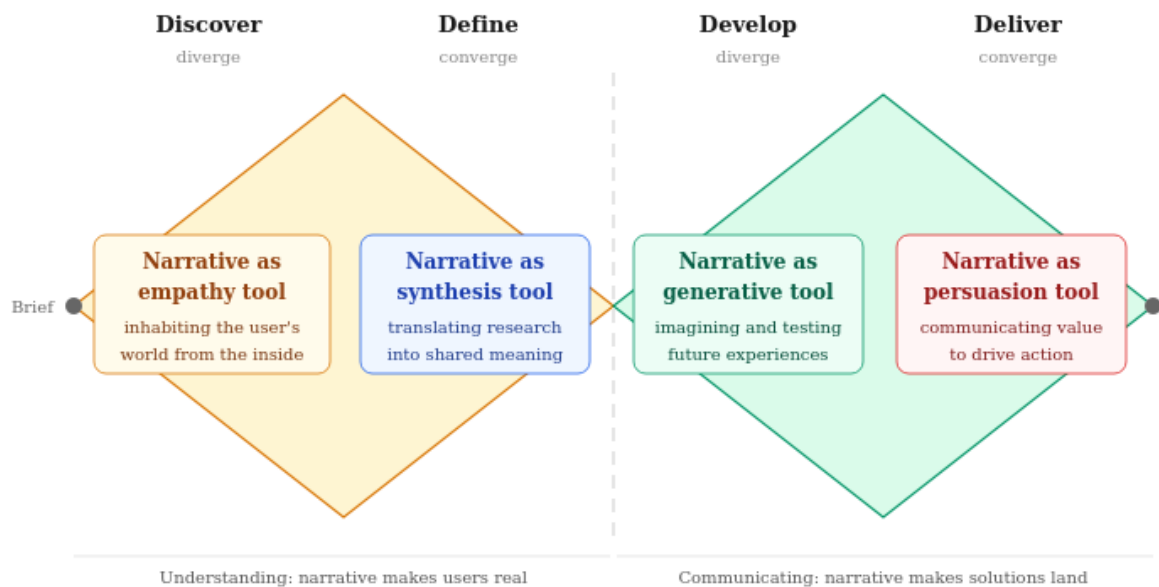
Building on the core capabilities of service design—empathy, co-creation, and systems thinking—narrative emerges as a fundamental tool that connects and enables these skills. Because services are intangible experiences that unfold over time, stories provide a natural and powerful way to make them understandable, tangible, and human-centered (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). Narrative shifts the focus from just solving a problem to designing a meaningful experience by structuring it as a sequence of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). This approach allows designers to translate complex user research and operational data into a coherent story that everyone in a multidisciplinary team can understand, creating a shared language that bridges organizational silos (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016).

The prevalence of narrative is most evident in the foundational tools of service design, particularly within the first half of the Double Diamond model. In the Discover and Define phases, designers use storytelling

to synthesize research findings into actionable insights. A persona, for example, is not just a list of demographics; it is a character profile that tells the story of a user's motivations, goals, and pain points, making the target user relatable and memorable (Ciravegna, 2021; Sagar et al., 2023). Similarly, the customer journey map is a visual story that documents the sequence of touchpoints a user interacts with, charting their actions, thoughts, and emotional highs and lows along the way (Stickdorn et al., 2018). These narrative artifacts transform abstract data into an empathetic and shareable format, ensuring that the design process remains grounded in the user's lived experience (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016)..

In the Develop and Deliver phases of the Double Diamond, narrative transitions from an analytical tool to a generative and communicative one. Designers use storyboards and scenarios to prototype future service experiences, creating a "comic-strip" style visualization that explains how a new concept will work in a real-world context (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). This form of storytelling allows teams and stakeholders to "experience" the service before it is built, making it possible to test interactions, identify potential problems, and gather feedback at a low cost (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). Finally, when communicating a finished service concept to the wider organization, storytelling is essential for gaining buy-in and driving implementation. A compelling narrative can illustrate the value of a new service far more effectively than a list of features, ensuring that stakeholders understand not just *what* has been designed, but *why* it matters to the user and the business (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016).

Figure 1. Narrative Function Across the Phases of the Double Diamond Design Process Model



Note. Adapted from *This Is Service Design Doing* by Stickdorn et al., n.d. Figure created by the author

2.4 Theatre and Improvisation: Pedagogies, Tools, and Core Concepts

To understand theatre and improvisation as systems for learning, they must first be defined in a pedagogical sense. Improvisation is a set of rules for creating content in the moment, while theatre acts as an embodied framework for exploring human interactions and social relationships (Jouin et al., 2026; Stanislavsky, 1989). Both disciplines function as systems of learning by moving away from passive observation and toward active participation, providing a laboratory where the rules of social interaction can be practiced, broken, and re-imagined in a safe way (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

2.4.1 The Principles of Improvised Collaboration

Improvisation is built on a few simple principles that enable a group to create something together in real-time. The most foundational principle is "Yes, and...", which requires a participant to first accept what their partner has offered (the "Yes") and then build upon it with new information (the "And") (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). This rule prevents "blocking", the common tendency to dismiss or negate others' ideas and instead fosters a cooperative environment where ideas evolve collectively (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

Beyond this primary rule, improvisation relies on several supportive habits. Active listening requires participants to tune into not only words but also a partner's physical cues, posture, and tone, ensuring that responses are grounded in the immediate context of the encounter (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). Another key habit is to make your partner look good, which encourages a focus on mutual support rather than individual performance, building strong team trust. Finally, the practice reframes mistakes as gifts (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). When an error occurs, the group is taught to celebrate it as an unexpected opportunity for discovery, often through a "Failure Bow," which shifts the focus from shame to learning (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Together, these principles create a psychologically "safe space" where individuals feel secure enough to take risks, experiment, and maintain a creative flow (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

2.4.2 The Actor's Process: Communion and Embodiment

While improvisational principles guide group interaction, the disciplined practice of the actor offers a deeper, more personal framework for developing embodied awareness and presence. A core goal of actor training, as outlined by Konstantin Stanislavski, is to achieve a state of "communion", a sincere, moment-to-moment connection with a scene partner (Stanislavsky, 1989). This state is achieved by maintaining an

"unbroken line of attention," where a performer remains fully engaged with their environment and partner, preventing their mind from wandering to the audience or other external distractions (Stanislavsky, 1989).

This pedagogical approach emphasizes that learning happens through the body, not just the brain (Diethelm, 2019). Actors are trained to engage in "work on themselves," using their own personal memories, emotions, and physical experiences to build a truthful "life of a human spirit" on stage (Schön, 2009; Stanislavsky, 1989). This process of "living the part" bridges the gap between a person's inner world and their outer behavior, ensuring every action has a clear, logical purpose (Stanislavsky, 1989). Through this training, the performer develops a habit of self-observation and rapid adjustment, a disciplined awareness of how they are impacting the scene and their partners, this is a key competency in any complex, collaborative work (Stanislavsky, 1989).

2.4.3 Participatory Theatre and the "Spect-Actor"

Participatory theatre methodologies, particularly those pioneered by Augusto Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, take the actor's process of embodied presence and turn it outward to address collective social dynamics (Boal, 2008). Boal challenged the traditional barrier separating the performer from the audience, arguing that passive observation limits the growth of the individual. He introduced the concept of the "spect-actor": a participant who is both a spectator and an actor, and who can actively enter the performance to alter its course (Boal, 2008).

Methods such as 'Forum Theatre' utilize this shift by presenting scenes of unresolved social conflict, which the spect-actor can "stop" at any point to intervene and test different solutions in a safe environment (Buur & Torguet, 2013). This technique effectively turns the theatre into a "rehearsal of reality," where the goal is not to present a finished artistic product, but to practice the act of intervention. Similarly, Image Theatre uses the human body as a sculptural medium to represent complex social issues, moving from an "actual image" of a problem to an "ideal image" of a solution (Boal, 2008). These techniques transform the stage into a laboratory for social change, where communities can rehearse alternative outcomes and develop the capacity to navigate complex social realities.

2.4.4 The Experiential Learning Loop

A common thread unifying these seemingly distinct practices from the fast-paced games of improv to the reflective work of the actor and the social engagement of participatory theatre is an underlying experiential learning model. This model operates as a continuous feedback loop: participants first perform an action, which provides the basis for observation and reflection. This reflection then serves as the foundation for a

new cycle of action, as insights are incorporated into the next attempt (Kolb, 1984). This cycle of "doing, observing, and reflecting" is essential because it emphasizes the learning process over the final result, rooting understanding in lived, embodied experience rather than abstract theory (Mezirow, 1997). The goal is not to find a single "right" answer, but to build the agility and adaptability needed to respond to complex and uncertain situations (Schön, 2009).

2.5 Applied Theatre and Improvisation in Professional Practice

While the previous section established the pedagogical foundations of theatre and improvisation, this section examines how these methods have moved beyond the stage into professional development contexts. Over the past three decades, theatrical techniques have been adapted for organizational learning, professional training, and capacity building across business, healthcare, education, and public sector settings (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). This migration reveals a consistent pattern: these methods are valued not for artistic expression, but for their capacity to develop specific professional capabilities that are difficult to cultivate through traditional training approaches (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016a).

2.5.1 The Scope and Growth of Applied Improvisation

Applied improvisation is now recognized as a distinct field of practice, defined as "the use of improvisational theater principles, tools, practices, skills, and competencies in non-theatrical contexts that can lead to personal development, team building, creativity, innovation and/or meaning" (Jouin et al., 2026). The Applied Improvisation Network, established to connect practitioners globally, currently lists over 7,000 members working in diverse professional contexts (Felsman et al., 2020b). This growth reflects a shift in how organizations approach professional development: rather than focusing solely on technical skills or knowledge transfer, there is increasing recognition that complex professional work requires capabilities such as adaptive thinking, collaborative sense-making, and comfort with ambiguity (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

Evidence of applied improvisation's reach can be seen across multiple sectors. In business education, programs such as those at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and Columbia Business School have integrated improvisation training into MBA curricula to develop leadership capacities, enhance communication skills, and promote creativity (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016a). In healthcare, programs like the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook University use improvisation to help scientists and physicians communicate complex information more effectively to public audiences (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016a). Schools of business, medicine, and education

have increasingly incorporated improvisation workshops, suggesting that the method addresses needs that extend across disciplinary boundaries (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016a). In informal science education, applied improvisation has similarly been used to develop learner-centred facilitation skills among museum educators, building the listening and observational habits central to responsive teaching (Skinner et al., 2022).

2.5.2 Evidence of Effectiveness Across Disciplines

A growing body of empirical research supports the effectiveness of applied improvisation across professional and educational contexts. A 2026 systematic review of 54 studies found improvements in communication (62.9%), empathy (25.9%), collaboration (25.9%), confidence (22.2%), and stress management (14.8%), with healthcare education accounting for the majority of studies (Jouin et al., 2026). Within this context, improvisation training consistently strengthens interpersonal skills, raises empathy scores, and develops communication competencies that mirror the demands of clinical practice. Outside healthcare, management students developed greater leadership flexibility through semester-long improvisation programs, mathematics teachers developed adaptive strategies for handling unexpected classroom situations, and engineering students showed significant improvements in communication skills, growth mindset, and collaborative research skills following an integrated improv workshop (Xia et al., 2025).

At the cognitive level, randomized experimental research found that even a single 20-minute improvisation session improved divergent thinking, uncertainty tolerance, and positive affect compared to matched control conditions. These outcomes are attributable to improvisation's co-creative, unscripted nature, which engages participants in repeated encounters with social unpredictability in a supportive environment. (Felsman et al., 2020).

At the organizational level, action research with a Finnish municipal organization found that improvisation workshops stimulated both individual and collective creativity, helping participants overcome self-criticism and develop greater sensitivity to others' contributions (Nisula & Kianto, 2018). A grounded theory study with senior organizational leaders further found that improvisation training shaped five linked competencies, including curiosity, empathy, humility, acceptance of failure, and openness to growth, that transferred directly into creative idea evaluation and adoption at work (Waldhier, 2023).

Across disciplines, the evidence converges on a consistent set of outcomes: improvisation develops presence, responsiveness, collaborative openness, and tolerance for uncertainty, capacities increasingly essential in complex professional environments.

2.5.3 Core Capacities Developed Through Improvisation

The literature identifies several core capacities that improvisation training develops, which align closely with the demands of contemporary professional work. First, improvisation enhances divergent thinking—the ability to generate multiple, diverse ideas in response to a problem (Felsman et al., 2020b). Two experimental studies found that participants who engaged in 20-minute improvisation sessions showed increased fluency, flexibility, and originality compared to control groups who participated in scripted social interactions (Felsman et al., 2020). The researchers concluded that improvisation's co-creative nature shakes up familiar schemas and encourages flexible deployment of knowledge to create novel combinations (Felsman et al., 2020).

Second, improvisation builds tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This is achieved through repeated exposure to unpredictable situations in a supportive environment, where participants learn that uncertainty can be navigated through attention to the present moment and collaboration with others (Felsman et al., 2020a). Studies found that improvisation training led to measurable increases in uncertainty tolerance and positive affect, suggesting that the practice helps participants reframe ambiguous situations as opportunities rather than threats (Felsman et al., 2020b). This capacity is particularly relevant for professional contexts characterized by rapid change and incomplete information.

Third, improvisation develops empathy and active listening skills (Jouin et al., 2026). Unlike traditional communication training that focuses on message delivery, improvisation requires participants to tune into verbal and non-verbal cues from partners, respond in the moment, and build on what others offer (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). Studies in healthcare education found that improvisation exercises increased empathy scores among medical students and helped develop skills in reading patients' emotional states (Jouin et al., 2026).

Fourth, improvisation cultivates collaborative capabilities and psychological safety within teams (Vera & Crossan, 2005). The principle of "making your partner look good" shifts focus from individual performance to mutual support, while the practice of celebrating mistakes reduces fear of judgment (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016a). Research on team dynamics found that these habits, when internalized, create conditions for what organizational scholars call "collective improvisation", the ability of groups to generate novel solutions together in real-time (Vera & Crossan, 2005).

2.5.4 The Pedagogical Approach

The typical structure of applied improvisation training follows a consistent pattern across contexts. Sessions begin with warm-up exercises that establish presence and focus, followed by games that introduce core principles such as "Yes, And..." and active listening (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Participants then engage in more complex exercises that require collaborative creation, often working in pairs or small groups (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016b). Crucially, each exercise is followed by structured reflection, creating the experiential learning cycle of action, observation, and sense-making (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

This pedagogical approach emphasizes that learning happens through doing, not through abstract discussion (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016b). As one facilitator notes, improvisation cannot be taught in the traditional sense but must be "awakened and enabled" through practice (Nisula & Kianto, 2018). The focus is on building habits and reflexes rather than acquiring information, which explains why improvisation training requires sustained engagement rather than one-off workshops (Vera & Crossan, 2005).

The role of the facilitator is critical in this process. Skilled facilitators create a balance between structure and freedom, providing enough constraint that participants feel secure but enough openness that discovery becomes possible (Khara & Lickiss, 2023; Jouin et al., 2026). They model the principles being taught, accepting offers, building on ideas, reframing mistakes, rather than simply explaining them. This "show, don't tell" approach aligns with the embodied nature of the learning (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

2.5.5 The Question of Transfer and Sustainability

Despite evidence of immediate impact, a critical gap remains in understanding how improvisation training transfers into ongoing professional practice. The 2026 review identified significant methodological limitations across studies: 72% lacked standardized assessment tools, most relied on self-reported measures immediately following training, and few included long-term follow-up to assess retention (Jouin et al., 2026). The review concluded that while improvisation shows promise, "significant methodological limitations—including heterogeneous interventions and assessments—hinder generalization of findings" (Jouin et al., 2026).

Several studies have examined this transfer challenge. A study of improvisation training for municipal teams found that while individual participants reported behavioral changes, team-level changes were more difficult to achieve (Vera & Crossan, 2005). Participants noted that their own improvisation skills improved, but translating these into collective team practice required that all team members receive training together,

that supervisors model the principles, and that organizational culture support experimentation. When these conditions were absent, improvisation remained a personal skill rather than becoming embedded in team practice (Vera & Crossan, 2005).

This points to a crucial distinction: improvisation techniques can be learned relatively quickly, but integrating improvisational ways of thinking into professional practice may require sustained support and favorable organizational conditions (Vera & Crossan, 2005). The literature suggests that transfer is more likely when improvisation training is part of a broader change effort, when leaders visibly support the approach, and when participants have opportunities to practice new skills in safe environments before applying them in high-stakes situations (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016).

2.5.6 Critiques and Limitations

The enthusiasm for applied improvisation has not been without critique. Some researchers warn against treating improvisation as a universal solution, noting that its effectiveness depends on context, participant readiness, and skilled facilitation (Rossing & Hoffmann–Longtin, 2016). The spontaneous, playful nature of improvisation can encounter resistance in professional settings where formality and structure are valued, or where participants perceive "games" as lacking seriousness (Rossing & Hoffmann Longtin, 2016).

There are also questions about whether improvisation's benefits are unique or whether similar outcomes might be achieved through other experiential methods. The field has been criticized for insufficient theoretical grounding and over-reliance on anecdotal evidence (Felsman et al., 2020). The 2026 review explicitly calls for more rigorous research, including randomized controlled trials, longitudinal studies, and the development of standardized protocols and assessment tools (Jouin et al., 2026).

Furthermore, most research has focused on communication and creativity, with less attention to other potential applications. The question of how improvisation develops capacities such as presence, facilitation skill, and the ability to navigate complex stakeholder dynamics remains under-explored (Jouin et al., 2026). This gap is particularly relevant when considering how improvisation might support practitioners in fields like service design, where these capabilities are central to professional effectiveness.

One further limitation running through much of this literature deserves particular attention because it has direct implications for how this study was designed. The majority of research on applied improvisation relies on self-report measures collected immediately after the training session, which conflates participants' initial enthusiasm and the novelty effect of the experience with durable learning (Jouin et al., 2026). The few studies that do include delayed follow-up tend to measure surface-level behavioural change, asking

whether participants reported using specific techniques, rather than examining whether the underlying orientation toward uncertainty, collaboration, or narrative has actually shifted. This means the evidence base, while encouraging in volume, is considerably thinner on the question of what genuine professional transfer looks like than it first appears. It is precisely this gap that the present study attempts to address, through a deliberate three-month follow-up interval and an interview design that asked participants not whether they had used the techniques but how, if at all, their professional thinking had changed.

2.6 Applied Improvisation and Design Practice

The intersection of improvisation and design is not a new phenomenon, yet it remains under-theorized. Researchers have identified five shared practices between improvisational theatre and design thinking: collaboration, exploration, generation, experimentation, and communication (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). Like improvisers who strive to co-create performances by combining different people's contributions into a unified concept, designers work to synthesize diverse perspectives into coherent solutions (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). This structural parallel suggests that improvisation is not merely a supplementary tool for designers but rather a complementary discipline that operates on the same underlying logic as design itself. Both fields prize spontaneity, responsiveness to others, and the ability to generate novel ideas under conditions of uncertainty (Li, 2024).

Within design practice, improvisation has been applied at two distinct levels. At the activity level, specific improv techniques have been integrated into the ideation phase of team design processes to address persistent challenges: communication barriers, lack of motivation, creative block, and cognitive rigidity (Li, 2024). The "Yes, And" technique, drawn directly from improvisational theatre, has been adapted into structured design methods such as the Design Improv framework, which guides teams through cycles of problem definition, idea generation, and creative refinement (Li, 2024). Research involving industrial design workshops found that this approach created a relaxed and humorous atmosphere that encouraged "wild" ideas, overcame fear of judgment, and reduced the production blocks common in conventional brainstorming (Li, 2024). At the practitioner level, improvisation training prior to design activity has been shown to increase the quantity and quality of ideas generated; one study found that improvisers generate up to 25% more ideas than professional product designers, and that a two-hour improv workshop increased designers' idea generation capacity by 36% (Gordon, 2024; Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

Beyond ideation, improvisation has proved particularly valuable for design facilitation, the complex role of guiding non-designers through creative processes. Design facilitators who possess an improv mindset demonstrate a greater capacity to read the room, remain flexible when processes deviate from plan, and

tolerate the ambiguity inherent in open-ended design challenges (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). Practitioners interviewed in qualitative research described how improv experience freed them to respond to the evolving needs of a group rather than rigidly following pre-planned structures, enabling what one described as "co-creating with the team" (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021). This capacity is especially significant in service design contexts, where facilitators must manage diverse stakeholder groups whose expertise, expectations, and communication styles vary considerably. The improv principle of curious listening, attending not only to what is said but to body language, status dynamics, and emotional undercurrents, was consistently identified as a core facilitation asset (Hurwich et al., 2024; Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

Arts-based design methods that draw explicitly on theatrical improvisation have also emerged as a distinct strand of practice. Design Drama, for example, integrates theatre games, creative improvisation exercises, and storytelling techniques into the design process to develop empathy, divergent thinking, and team cohesion (Ciravegna, 2021). Similarly, ethnographic research in organizational settings has demonstrated that theatrical improvisation in participatory design sessions helps users actively engage, share ideas about future services, and embody the perspectives of different stakeholders (Buur & Torguet, 2013). These methods share a common logic with service design's emphasis on co-creation and human-centeredness, suggesting that theatrical improvisation is not an external addition to design practice but rather an amplification of capacities already central to it.

Table 1. Shared Professional Capacities Between Theatre and Improvisation Practice and Service Design Practice

Shared capacity	Theatre and improvisation	Service design	Why they meet here
Empathy	Inhabiting another's perspective through character and roleplay	Relating to users from the inside, not just observing them	Both require felt understanding
Uncertainty tolerance	Creating meaning in real time without a script	Holding ambiguity across open-ended design processes	Both demand acting without knowing what comes next

Collaboration	Yes, and to build on others rather than blocking	Co-creating with diverse, multidisciplinary stakeholders	Both depend on generative, non-blocking group dynamics
Narrative thinking	Constructing stories live under pressure	Communicating complex findings as compelling narratives	Both use story as the primary tool for shared meaning
Presence and adaptability	Responding to what is actually happening, not what was planned	Reading and adjusting in live facilitation situations	Both reward attention over preparation
Communicative presence	Using voice, body, and gesture as deliberate instruments	Presenting with the confidence that secures stakeholder trust	Both require the practitioner to perform, not just think

Note. Created by the author.

It is worth noting, however, that the analogy between theatre and design has limits that the literature tends to understate. Most of the evidence that improvisation improves design outcomes is concentrated in the ideation and early creative phases of the process, and the research base thins considerably when the focus moves to later-stage activities such as synthesis, stakeholder communication, and delivery (Jouin et al., 2026). The improvisational orientation, which prizes spontaneity, openness, and the acceptance of ambiguity, may be less naturally suited to the convergent, argument-structured work of the Deliver phase, where stakeholders expect coherent recommendations rather than continued exploration. There is also an implicit assumption in much of this literature that all designers occupy co-creative and facilitative roles, when in practice many work in more technically constrained or individually structured contexts where the relevance of improvisation training may be less direct. The present study contributes to this question by examining transfer at the specific stage of the design process that participants happened to be in at the time of the workshop, which was the final presentation phase rather than the early empathy and user research phases most commonly discussed in the existing literature.

2.7 Narrative as a Common Backbone

Across the three fields examined in this literature review, narrative functions not merely as a communication tool but as a fundamental structuring logic — the mechanism through which experience is organized, meaning is made, and human understanding is shared. In theatre, this logic is explicit: Stanislavski's concept of the "through line of action" positions narrative as the spine that gives coherence to performance, binding individual moments into a meaningful arc that actors and audiences can follow together (Stanislavsky, 1989). In improvisational theatre, narrative is not pre-scripted but co-constructed in real time, emerging from the spontaneous contributions of performers who accept each other's offers and build forward, a live enactment of what Bruner identified as the narrative mode of thought, through which human beings make sense of experience by organizing it into sequential, cause-and-effect structures (Bruner, 1986). The capacity to generate, sustain, and redirect narrative under conditions of uncertainty is, in this sense, a core technical competency of both the theatrical actor and the improv performer.

Service design, as the literature reviewed has established, depends on this same narrative logic, though it rarely names it as such. The sequencing principle articulated in *This Is Service Design Thinking* positions the entire customer journey as a story to be orchestrated, one with rhythm, climax, and resolution (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). Storytelling is identified in *This Is Service Design Doing* as a discrete implementation method for communicating service concepts across organizations, situating new services within narrative contexts that preserve their emotional resonance as they move through complex stakeholder structures (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2016). Hayama's research demonstrates that when narrative is placed at the center of service design process, rather than applied as a finishing layer, it transforms ideation itself, enabling designers to access deeper psychological needs, generate more concrete user insights, and produce services with genuine emotional resonance (Hayama, 2025). Sagar et al. (2023) formalized this relationship further by mapping storytelling elements directly onto service design elements: setting onto problem space, characters onto personas, plot onto customer journey maps, and narrative arc onto prototypes and interventions, revealing that the two disciplines share not only vocabulary but underlying structural grammar (Sagar et al., 2023). In co-production contexts specifically, public narrative has been shown to deepen participant engagement and support shared meaning-making across diverse stakeholders, reinforcing story as a structural mechanism rather than a presentational layer (Moniz et al., 2023).

It is precisely this shared narrative grammar that makes theatre and improvisation methodologically relevant to service design, beyond the general capacities of creativity and collaboration already documented in

section 2.6. Theatrical and improvisational training develops practitioners who can think narratively under pressure — constructing, reading, and responding to emerging stories in real time, across multiple characters and perspectives simultaneously. The Design Drama method makes this connection explicit, embedding storytelling as a core design stage through which users are understood not as data points but as characters with inner motivations, arcs, and pains (Ciravegna, 2021). The empathy framework developed by Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser similarly positions narrative tools (personas, scenarios, storyboards) as the primary means through which designers achieve the immersion and connection phases of empathic understanding (Kouprie & Visser, 2009). What theatre and improvisation offer service design, then, is not simply a set of useful exercises but a discipline of narrative thinking: a practiced capacity to inhabit stories, build them collaboratively, and use them as instruments of understanding and design.

That said, the framing of narrative as a universal backbone of service design warrants some qualification. The service design literature tends to emphasise narrative in contexts where practitioners are communicating findings to stakeholders or facilitating empathy with users. It is less clear how narrative logic operates in the more operational, back-stage design work that is equally central to the discipline, and not all practitioners identify storytelling as their primary working mode. There is also a meaningful distinction between narrative fluency and narrative thinking. A practitioner may know and be able to apply storytelling frameworks without having internalised the underlying logic that makes those frameworks generative in novel situations. The former is a transferable technique; the latter is a cognitive reorientation. The difference between them is precisely what this study's three-month follow-up design was intended to illuminate, and the distinction between Theme Three and Theme Four in Chapter 4 maps directly onto it.

2.8 Experiential and Transformative Learning: The Pedagogical Engine

The preceding sections have documented what theatre and improvisation develop and where those capacities align with service design demands. What has not yet been explained is *how* that development happens, what is the underlying learning mechanism that makes embodied, performative training effective for professional capacity building. Three interrelated theoretical frameworks address this question: Kolb's experiential learning theory, Schön's concepts of knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action, and Mezirow's transformative learning theory.

2.8.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Kolb's (1984) foundational model proposes that learning occurs not through passive reception of information but through a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract

conceptualization, and active experimentation (D. Kolb, 1984). The learner moves through the cycle repeatedly, with each iteration deepening understanding and building more adaptive capability. This cycle maps directly onto the structure of applied improvisation training: participants first engage in an exercise (concrete experience), pause to reflect individually and collectively on what occurred (reflective observation), identify principles that explain what happened (abstract conceptualization), and then apply those principles in a subsequent exercise (active experimentation). The Applied Improv three-step process, teaching or demonstrating the skill, experiential application by participants, and reflection to develop new insights, mirrors Kolb's cycle precisely, which explains why improvisation training has been repeatedly characterized as a "proven impactful way to facilitate experiential learning." (Freitag Granholt & Martensen, 2021).

Crucially, this cycle cannot be compressed. The reflection phase is not optional, it is the moment that "realizes" or completes the exercise, converting raw experience into transferable learning (Korsnes et al., 2025). When reflection is omitted, participants may enjoy the activity without integrating its lessons into their behavioral repertoire. This has direct implications for service design training: theatrical exercises used without structured debriefing risk remaining entertaining but shallow, while the same exercises followed by careful facilitated reflection can produce durable shifts in how practitioners approach facilitation, empathy, and uncertainty.

2.8.2 Schön's Reflection-in-Action

Where Kolb describes learning through cycles of experience and reflection *between* episodes of practice, Schön (1983) identifies a more immediate form of learning that occurs *within* the flow of professional action itself. His concept of "reflection-in-action" describes the practitioner's capacity to think about what they are doing while doing it, to notice unexpected results, reframe the situation on the spot, and adjust their approach in real time. This is distinct from the technical rationality model, which assumes professionals apply predetermined knowledge to well-formed problems. In practice, Schön argues, the most significant professional work occurs in what he calls "the swampy lowland" situations characterized by uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict where no established technique reliably applies. (Schön, 2009).

This framing is directly relevant to both theatrical performance and service design facilitation. The actor who encounters an unexpected response from a scene partner, the improv performer who must incorporate a suggestion they did not anticipate, and the service designer facilitating a co-creation session with stakeholders whose needs conflict are all operating in conditions that demand reflection-in-action rather than the application of pre-learned scripts. Theatrical training, by placing practitioners repeatedly in

unscripted, high-stakes collaborative situations, develops precisely this capacity: the habit of staying present, reading what is actually happening, and responding thoughtfully within the flow of action rather than retreating to prepared responses.

2.8.3 Mezirow's Transformative Learning

While Kolb and Schön explain how practitioners develop and refine competencies, Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory addresses a deeper question: how do practitioners change the underlying assumptions and frames of reference through which they interpret their work? Mezirow argues that significant adult learning often requires a "perspective transformation", a shift in the meaning structures through which experience is understood, triggered by what he calls "disorienting dilemmas": experiences that cannot be accommodated within existing frameworks and therefore demand fundamental reexamination. (Mezirow, 1997).

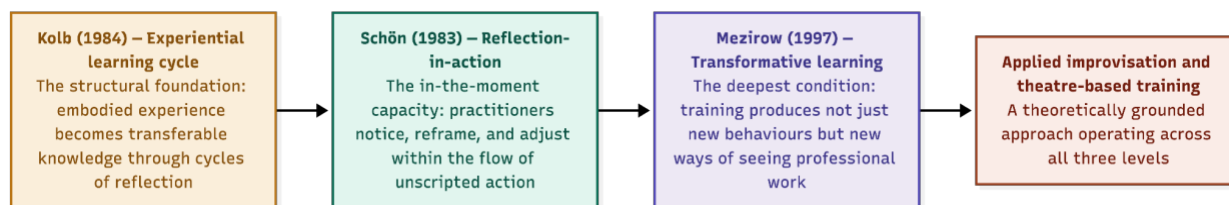
Applied improvisation and theatre exercises frequently function as precisely such disorienting dilemmas. Participants encounter their own habitual blocking behaviors, their instinct to control rather than collaborate, their discomfort with not knowing what comes next, and these encounters, when followed by structured reflection, create the conditions Mezirow identifies as necessary for transformative learning. (Mezirow, 1997). Research on improvisation workshops in organizational settings found that the exercises acted as "habit breakers and eye openers," prompting participants not merely to acquire new skills but to recognize and begin to question the assumptions underlying their habitual ways of communicating and collaborating (Nisula & Kianto, 2018). This is a fundamentally different and deeper outcome than skill acquisition alone: it is a shift in professional identity and orientation that, when achieved, is more likely to persist and transfer across contexts.

While Kolb (1984), Schön (1983), and Mezirow (1997) are foundational works, their frameworks remain among the most actively applied theoretical tools in professional and experiential education. Kolb's learning cycle has been updated and reaffirmed for contemporary higher education contexts by (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2017), and recent empirical work continues to validate experiential learning's effects on engagement and capability development (Kong, 2021). (Bell & Bell, 2020) demonstrate the continued utility of applying all three frameworks together to understand complex experiential professional learning processes. Transformative learning theory has been described as one of the most prominent frameworks in current educational scholarship (Singer-Brodowski, 2025), with Mezirow's concept of the disorienting dilemma remaining an operationally useful tool in recent applied research (Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2023). The age of these theories is thus a reflection of their enduring explanatory power rather than a limitation.

2.8.4 The Pedagogical Framework This Creates

Together, these three theories establish a coherent pedagogical logic for theatre-based professional training. Kolb provides the structural cycle through which embodied experience becomes transferable knowledge. Schön identifies the in-the-moment reflective capacity that effective practitioners develop through repeated unscripted practice. Mezirow explains the conditions under which training produces not just new behaviors but new ways of seeing, the kind of deep learning that transfers to novel professional situations rather than remaining context-bound. Applied improvisation, as structured around these principles, is therefore not simply a collection of engaging activities but a theoretically grounded pedagogical approach capable of developing the complex, adaptive capacities that service design demands.

Figure 2. Theoretical Foundations of Theatre-Based Professional Training: A Synthesis



Note. Figure created by the author. Synthesised from Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983; Mezirow, 1997.

2.9 Synthesis and Gap Statement

The literature reviewed across this chapter has traced three parallel bodies of knowledge that, when read together, reveal a coherent but as yet unresolved connection. Service design is a practice built on human-centred, co-creative, and narrative principles that demands specific practitioner capacities: empathy, facilitation skill, presence, tolerance for uncertainty, and the ability to build collaborative meaning across diverse stakeholder groups. Theatre and improvisation are disciplines with over a century of systematic pedagogical development built around precisely those capacities. And the experiential and transformative learning frameworks reviewed in Section 2.8 offer a theoretical account of why immersive, embodied training might produce durable professional competence, one that goes beyond skill acquisition to the restructuring of how practitioners see and respond to their work. The structural parallels between these domains are well documented. What remains unresolved, both theoretically and empirically, is whether and how the connection holds when examined from within service design practice itself.

The theoretical frameworks that make this connection legible are themselves contested, and this is the first dimension of the academic gap the present study addresses.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which provides the structural logic for understanding how embodied activity converts into transferable knowledge, has been extensively critiqued for its reliance on a linear, stage-by-stage model that does not adequately account for the conditions under which deep learning, as opposed to surface repetition, actually occurs. A 2025 systematic review examining the application of Kolb's cycle across educational contexts found that while the cycle remains widely used, it is insufficiently theorised in relation to the cognitive depth of learning it produces, and that the conditions distinguishing shallow from transformative cycles remain poorly understood (Henríquez et al., 2025). Applying Kolb's framework to a theatre-based training context, where the embodied and the conceptual are deliberately sequenced and the depth of learning can be examined across a three-month interval, offers an opportunity to test and extend this understanding in a setting where the cycle's structure is both visible and analytically tractable.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which provides the language for describing the deeper perspective shifts that theatre-based training is capable of producing, has been critiqued for undertheorising the role of emotions and affective processes in how those shifts occur. Mälkki (2010) argues that Mezirow's account of reflection as the primary engine of transformation is overly rationalistic, and that the emotional dimensions of disorienting dilemmas, including the discomfort, vulnerability, and affective exposure that precede critical reflection, are treated as incidental rather than constitutive of the transformative process. Carter and Nicolaides (2023) extend this critique, arguing that transformative learning is not primarily a cognitive event but an emotional and relational one, and that theoretical accounts which bracket affect in favour of rational reflection misrepresent how transformation actually unfolds in practice. A theatre-based training context, where shared vulnerability and emotional exposure are deliberately designed structural features of the pedagogy rather than accidental byproducts, is particularly well positioned to contribute to this ongoing theoretical conversation.

Schön's concept of reflection-in-action, which provides the framework for understanding how practitioners learn in the moment of collaborative, unscripted performance, has similarly been identified as in need of updating for contemporary design contexts. Tan, Kocsis, and Burry (2023) argue that Schön's original formulation, developed primarily through observation of individual practitioners working alone, does not adequately account for the collaborative, multi-stakeholder, and socially embedded conditions in which contemporary design reflection occurs. They call for

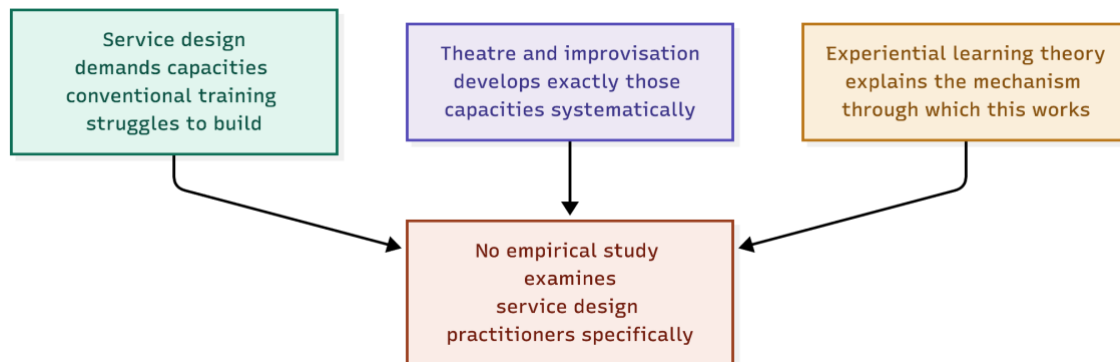
a reconceptualised account of reflective practice that takes seriously the social and relational dimensions of design work, dimensions that theatre and improvisation, as fundamentally collective practices built on real-time response to others, are structurally well placed to illuminate.

The second dimension of the gap is empirical, and it sits within and is shaped by these theoretical insufficiencies. What the literature has not yet provided is direct evidence of how service design practitioners experience theatre-based training, whether and how the capacities it develops transfer into their specific professional practice, and what conditions enable or constrain that transfer. The studies reviewed in sections 2.5 and 2.6 document improvisation's effectiveness across healthcare, business education, management, and engineering and identify its alignment with design thinking, but none position service design practitioners as a specific study population, and none examine the full arc from training experience through to professional practice transfer within a service design context. This absence matters because service design is not simply a context where general professional development findings can be assumed to apply. It is a discipline with its own pedagogical challenges, including the difficulty of teaching practitioners to work fluidly across the human, organisational, and systemic dimensions of complex service problems, and one in which innovative approaches to professional formation are being actively sought (Salinas et al., 2023). The connection between theatre, narrative, and service design articulated in sections 2.3 and 2.7 remains largely theoretical, supported by structural parallels rather than practitioner accounts. The design facilitation literature reviewed in section 2.6 identifies the improv mindset as valuable for facilitators but does not examine how it is acquired, sustained, or integrated into professional identity over time. A parallel gap exists in relation to embodied methods more broadly: while Jylkäs and Kuure (2018) demonstrate that embodied design methods can act as catalysts for new forms of professional knowing in industrial service design, the conditions under which embodied training produces durable transfer into service design practice remain unexamined. The present study addresses these converging gaps by following a specific cohort of emerging service design practitioners from a theatre-based training experience through to their professional practice three months later, examining both what transferred and what the conditions of that transfer were.

It addresses the following question: How do service design practitioners experience theatre-based training, and in what ways, if any, does such training develop capacities relevant to their professional practice?

To explore gaps, the following chapter introduces a purpose-designed workshop intervention and the research framework constructed around it, both shaped by the theoretical foundations established here.

Figure 3. Three Converging Bodies of Knowledge and the Empirical Gap This Study Addresses



Note: Created by the author

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore how theatre and improvisation-inspired techniques can be used by service designers in their practice. This includes both their direct use as practical tools and their indirect influence on developing skills such as empathy with users, client communication, and narrative building.

This chapter outlines the research design of the study. It explains the choice of an interpretivist-constructivist approach within a pragmatist worldview, and discusses the qualitative, inductive, and exploratory nature of the research. Together, these choices reflect the study's focus on exploring new possibilities at the intersection of theatre and service design.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

3.2.1 Philosophy

This research adopts an interpretivist-constructivist stance within a pragmatist worldview. It understands knowledge as subjective and shaped by lived experience and context, while also valuing its practical use in real-world situations (Dewey, 1938). From this perspective, different practitioners may interpret and apply the same storytelling technique in different ways, and these varied experiences are all valid and worth examining.

This orientation is particularly well-suited to a study exploring how theatre- and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques contribute to service design practice. In this field, knowledge is not produced in controlled environments but through complex, relational interactions between designers, users, clients, and other stakeholders.

The study is further informed by ideas from embodied cognition and practice-based knowledge, which suggest that understanding is not only intellectual but also shaped through physical, sensory, and relational experience (Schön, 1983). This is especially relevant here, as theatre and improvisation techniques operate through action, presence, and shared experience. Such forms of knowledge are often difficult to standardize or measure quantitatively, yet they can lead to meaningful shifts in how practitioners understand and engage with users. For instance, a designer who has physically stepped into a user's role through roleplay may develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding than one who has only engaged with empathy at a conceptual level. Capturing this kind of experiential knowledge requires a research approach that takes embodied and practice-based ways of knowing seriously.

3.2.2 Research Approach and Orientation

Given this philosophical grounding, a qualitative research approach follows naturally. Qualitative research is concerned with the depth and richness of human experience — it asks how and why, not how many or how much (Lim, 2025). In this study, knowledge is understood to be embodied, contextual, and constructed through experience; the methods used to access this knowledge must be capable of holding that complexity. A scale or survey cannot capture how a practitioner internalizes a storytelling technique, or how that technique quietly reshapes the way they relate to users months later. Qualitative methods can.

The study is also inductive in its orientation. Rather than starting off with fixed hypotheses to test, insights emerged from the data itself (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). There is something fitting about this: improv

is by its very nature about responding to what actually happens rather than what was planned. Studying it deductively would contradict its own logic.

The study is further exploratory in nature. The specific relevance of theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques to service design practice, not as classroom exercises but as genuine professional instruments, is not yet well mapped in existing research (Stebbins, 2001). This study opens that route of exploration.

Finally, while primarily qualitative, the study is supported by light descriptive survey data gathered at two points in the research process. These surveys served a contextual purpose and do not constitute a separate strand of inquiry. Overall, this is a qualitative, inductive, and exploratory study, consistent with Creswell and Creswell's (2022) position that qualitative research is most appropriate when the phenomena under investigation are embodied, relational, and rooted in lived practice.

3.3.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this study is a **practice-led case study**. It brings together two complementary orientations that together accurately describe how this research was designed, conducted, and understood.

A case study focuses on one specific situation, group, or event, studied in enough depth to produce meaningful understanding (Yin, 2018). This study investigates a specific group of emerging service design practitioners who encountered theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques through a two-day workshop, and whose experience of those techniques, both during the workshop and in their professional practice three months later, forms the subject of analysis. The aim is not to claim universal truth from one group in one place. As Stake (1995) argues, the goal of case study research is not statistical generalization but rather the kind of understanding that enables others in similar contexts to recognize what is relevant and applicable to their own work.

The practice-led dimension refers to the origin of the research itself. The workshop did not begin as a research instrument. It existed first as a teaching practice, designed and facilitated by the researcher as part of a formal teaching assistantship course. The research questions grew out of that experience, from what was noticed and observed in the room, and from a genuine curiosity about whether what happened there would carry over into real professional life. This situates the study within a practice-led tradition, in which practice is itself a site of knowledge production (Smith & Dean, 2009). The researcher's facilitation observations inform the interpretation of the findings, but participant data, consisting of surveys and in-depth interviews, remains the primary evidentiary foundation.

Together, these two orientations produce a research strategy that is honest about its scope. It does not claim more than one workshop and six interviews can offer. But it takes seriously what this specific group of practitioners, followed carefully across time, can reveal about the practical tools these techniques offer service designers, and about the deeper capacities that embodied storytelling practice can develop over time.

3.3.2 Workshop as a tool of intervention

Context

The empirical heart of this study is a two-day workshop titled Storytelling in Service Design, conducted on the 1st and 2nd of December 2024 at Adatu Fabrika in Kuldīga, Latvia. The workshop was designed and led by the researcher as part of a teaching assistantship course, an elective within the Service Design Strategies and Innovation joint master's program at the Estonian Academy of Arts, and co-facilitated by a peer from the same program.

The Workshop

The workshop ran for four hours on each day, with short breaks built in to maintain energy and allow participants to absorb the material. Both days were designed to be dynamic, drawing on a mix of individual reflection, paired work, and group activity to accommodate different learning styles and keep the environment inclusive and engaging.

Day 1 centered on storytelling thinking. Participants explored what stories are, the storytelling frameworks most relevant to service design, and the core elements that make a story work. This was not purely lecture-based — concepts were encountered through practice. One of the central exercises drew on Konstantin Stanislavski's Given Circumstances, approached through a guided meditative technique that asked participants to inhabit a character's situation from the inside rather than describe it from the outside.

Day 2 moved into storytelling doing, deliberately shifting into more embodied and physically engaged territory. This was a considered design choice; participants were eased into vulnerability progressively, with Day 1 building the familiarity and safety that Day 2 required. Exercises included the No Hands Game, a Yes And story circle in which each participant contributed one sentence to a collectively built narrative, and an adapted form of Change. Group work dominated the day, and the atmosphere moved further from the conceptual and closer to the instinctive.

A full description of the workshop programme, including exercise details and sequencing, is provided in Appendix A.

3.3.3 Participants

The workshop involved 14 participants, all first-year students of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's program in Service Design Strategies and Innovation. At the time, they were actively engaged in live service design projects, and participation in the workshop was voluntary.

The group was internationally diverse, with students from different countries and professional backgrounds, all training to become service design practitioners.

This context is important for the research. The workshop introduced participants to theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques through a shared, hands-on experience. As they were already working on real projects, the study explored whether these techniques carried over into their practice, either as practical tools or by shaping how they approached their work over time.

3.4 Positionality

Several layers of positionality shape this research and must be made explicit. The researcher brings a deep personal investment in theatre and improvisation, as a performer with over seven years of experience, these practices have been a direct and indirect presence in professional life long before this study began. This embodied familiarity with the subject matter enriches the interpretive lens through which participant experiences were read and understood, but it also means the researcher entered the study with a genuine conviction about the relevance and value of these techniques. That conviction is acknowledged here rather than hidden.

This investment was also visible to participants. The workshop was designed and led by the researcher and co-facilitated by a peer from the same program, meaning the enthusiasm and energy brought to the subject matter inevitably shaped the atmosphere in the room and may have influenced how participants engaged with the material. It is also worth noting that the researcher was a student of the same master's program, one year ahead of the participants. This created a particular dynamic, one where participants may have felt more comfortable being vulnerable and playful than they would with a professor, but where the authority of the researcher role was also less formally established.

The participants were a diverse, international group drawn from multiple cultural and professional backgrounds. The researcher was familiar with this kind of group dynamic, having worked and studied within a similarly diverse cohort throughout the same program. This familiarity made it easier to read the room, respond to different comfort levels, and create an environment where participants from different backgrounds could engage on equal terms.

The researcher's familiarity with the participants' program also brought a specific awareness of their context. At the time of the workshop, participants were approaching the final presentation stage of their service design projects, meaning they were largely past the empathy development phase. This shaped what kinds of immediate transfer were realistically possible and is returned to in the limitations section.

Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process through video recordings of the workshop, observational notes capturing participant reactions in the room, and formal interviews conducted in the months that followed. These measures ensured that interpretation remained grounded in what participants actually said and experienced, rather than in what the researcher expected or hoped to find (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

It is important to also note that the researcher had a dual role of researcher and facilitator. This dual role as facilitator and researcher also created a specific power dynamic that requires honest acknowledgement. Participants encountered the researcher as someone who had designed and led the workshop they were being asked to evaluate. This prior relationship means participants may have felt some social obligation to report positive outcomes, or to frame their experiences in ways they believed aligned with the researcher's interests and investment. The warmth and informality that characterised the workshop, while enabling the openness and vulnerability that made the learning possible, may paradoxically have made it harder for participants to express criticism or disappointment freely in the interviews that followed three months later. Several deliberate measures were taken to counteract this risk. Interview questions were open-ended and framed explicitly to invite accounts of what had not worked or had not transferred. The interview guide included direct prompts asking participants to identify limitations, disappointments, and moments of disengagement. The three-month interval between the workshop and the interviews provided enough temporal distance for initial enthusiasm to settle and for a more honest assessment to form. Negative and divergent cases were actively sought during analysis and are documented throughout Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the possibility that some accounts were shaped by a desire to affirm the facilitator's investment cannot be fully eliminated, and this should be held in mind when reading the findings.

3.5 Data Collection

The research was organized into four sequential phases of data collection, each capturing a different layer of participants' experiences over time. The logic of the design moves from context, through immersive experience, to immediate reaction and lasting impact. This was a deliberate arc that reflects the study's core interest not just in what happened in that room in Kuldiga, but in what it meant and whether it mattered beyond it.

Phase 1 — Pre-Workshop Survey (*one week before, November 2024*) Administered to all students of the first year SDSI one week before the workshop. It served as both a registration tool and a contextual instrument to establish background on participants' prior experience with storytelling, as well as their current practice challenges, expectations, and concerns. It received 24 responses, but it was not meant to generate analytical findings; rather, it established the human and experiential context within which everything that followed would be interpreted.

Phase 2 — The Workshop: Observation and Documentation (*1st–2nd December 2024*) The workshop itself was a primary site of data collection. The researcher maintained detailed field notes throughout both days, recording observations about participant engagement, group dynamics, and moments of breakthrough or resistance. Video recordings and photographs provided a complementary documentary record.

Phase 3 — Post-Workshop Survey (*immediately after Day 2, 2nd December 2024*) Completed by all 14 participants immediately upon conclusion of Day 2. It captured raw, immediate reactions; what resonated, what did not, and what key insights participants were taking away in that moment. Its strength is its freshness; its limitation is its lack of distance. It is a first layer, not a final word.

Phase 4 — Follow-Up Interviews (*approximately three months after, early 2025*): Six in-depth interviews were conducted approximately three months after the workshop with six participants from the original cohort. This is the richest and most significant source of data in the study. It is the phase where all three sub-questions are most directly addressed. By this point, participants had returned to real project work. The interviews asked what they remembered, what they had tried, what had worked, and how if at all the workshop had shaped their practice. This included both specific moments of direct application of technique and subtler shifts in how participants approached empathy work, client storytelling, pitching, and the human texture of their design process. The three-month interval was deliberate as it was long enough for immediate enthusiasm to settle, and for genuine professional integration or its absence to become visible.

Table 2. Data Collection Phases, Instruments and Respondents

#	Phase	Timing	Instrument	n	Purpose
1	Pre-workshop survey	One week before, November 2024	Online form (PRE)	24	Establish prior experience and context
2	Workshop observation	1–2 December 2024	Field notes, video, photographs (FN)	14	Document engagement and group dynamics
3	Post-workshop survey	Immediately after Day 2	Feedback form (POST)	14	Capture immediate reactions and takeaways
4	Follow-up interviews	Three months later, early 2025	Semi-structured interviews (INT-A to INT-F)	6	Explore what transferred into practice

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3.6 Quality and Trustworthiness

Ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study requires transparency about how data was collected, how interpretation was managed, and how the researcher's own position was held in check throughout the process. Several measures were taken to address this.

During the workshop, data was captured through multiple means, video recordings, photographic documentation, and observational field notes, so that the researcher's in-the-moment impressions could later be checked against a more complete record. Participants were also given regular space to reflect and provide feedback throughout both days, ensuring that their experience was being captured as it happened rather than reconstructed later.

The formal interview process was designed to minimise researcher influence. Questions were open-ended and deliberately avoided leading participants toward any particular conclusion. The full interview guide is provided in Appendix B. All interviews were held online through Google Meet and were recorded with the consent of the participants. Later, they were transcribed for further analysis.

The researcher remained conscious throughout of the dual role of facilitator and researcher, and of the personal investment in the subject matter. Rather than claiming neutrality, the approach taken was one of active reflexivity, acknowledging that perspective and working to ensure that participant voices, rather than researcher expectations, drove the findings.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis method, adapted for the multi-source nature of this study's data set. Thematic analysis was chosen because it is flexible enough to work across different data types (interview transcripts, open-ended form responses, observational notes), theoretically compatible with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning the study, and well suited to generating analytically rich themes rather than purely descriptive summaries.

To make the analytic process transparent, Table 3 illustrates how a data extract moves through each stage of analysis with four examples drawn from across the data set. The examples are selected deliberately from different source types, including interview transcripts and facilitator field notes, to show that analysis drew on the full range of data rather than interviews alone. In the first stage, each extract was read closely and assigned an open code that stayed close to the language and meaning of the data. In the second stage, related codes were grouped into broader categories on the basis of shared mechanism or analytical significance. In

the third stage, categories were developed into overarching themes, each of which makes an interpretive claim about what the data means in relation to the research questions rather than simply describing what participants said. In total, 80 open codes were generated across all data sources, organised into 9 categories, and developed into 6 themes.

Table 3. Example table showing how data extracts were coded and grouped into themes during thematic analysis

Data extract	Open code	Category	Theme
"In every project I'm resolving, I'm like: okay, this is my persona... so where is the resolution? It's missing this important part." (<i>INT-F, follow-up interview</i>)	independently constructed narrative framework	Self-generated tools from internalised principles	T4: Narrative thinking as cognitive transfer
"In normal classes you mostly have theory and don't do much physically... what stood out was using our bodies." (<i>INT-A, follow-up interview</i>)	body as primary learning mode	Embodied vs conceptual engagement	T1: The body as the entry point
Participants took spontaneous notes once CICARI was introduced; no note-taking observed during earlier lecture content. (<i>Facilitator field notes, Day 1</i>)	framework received differently after embodied exercise	Sequencing of practice before theory	T3: Narrative frameworks as design tools
"These skills require continuous practice... I understood that confidence needs to be maintained." (<i>INT-A, follow-up interview</i>)	single workshop insufficient for sustained change	Structural constraints on transfer	T6: Transfer, integration, and limits

Throughout the analysis, negative cases, data that complicated, qualified, or contradicted the dominant patterns were actively sought and documented. These include: variation in participants' response to Day 1 versus Day 2; the mediating effect of prior theatrical experience on embodied exercise impact; the persistence of inhibition in the shyest participants despite the overall arc toward engagement; and the incomplete landing of some meditative visualisation exercises. These complications are presented honestly in Chapter 4 and are discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to the study's limitations and implications for workshop design.

Participants are referred to throughout the analysis using source codes: INT-A, INT-B, INT-C, INT-D, INT-E, INT-F, PRE (pre-registration form), POST (post-workshop form), and FN (facilitator notes). First names

are used only in this methodology chapter when describing the participant sample. This approach balances transparency about the sample's composition with appropriate analytical distance in the findings.

3.8 Ethics

This study was conducted in the absence of a formal institutional ethics review requirement. Nevertheless, a number of measures were taken to ensure that participants were treated with care and that their data was handled responsibly.

Participation in the workshop was entirely voluntary. Following the workshop, all 14 participants were informed in writing that the experience would be used as the basis for academic research. None raised any objection. Those who were subsequently invited to participate in interviews received a verbal briefing about the nature and purpose of the research, and each explicitly consented to having their voice recorded for research purposes.

No personal data was collected or retained. All data used in this study — including photographs, video recordings, and interview material — was fully anonymised. Participants are referred to throughout by assigned codes rather than by name, and no identifying information appears anywhere in the research.

3.9 Limitations

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged honestly.

The most significant is the scope of the research itself. This was a single workshop, conducted once, with a specific group of emerging practitioners in a specific context. While the findings offer meaningful insight into this particular group's experience, they cannot be generalized broadly. A similar workshop conducted in a different cultural setting, with a different facilitator, or within a different program structure may produce significantly different outcomes.

The participant group also presents limitations. Fourteen students took part in the workshop, of whom only six were interviewed in the follow-up phase. All participants came from the same master's program, meaning they share a similar educational background and institutional context. They were also emerging practitioners rather than established service designers, which shapes the kind of transfer that was possible and the depth of professional experience against which these techniques could be tested.

The timing of the workshop created a further constraint. Participants encountered these techniques at the end of their service design projects, when they were largely past the early stages of the design process — the empathy research, user insight, and convergence phases where many of these techniques might find their most natural application. The immediate practical transfer was therefore largely limited to final pitches and client presentations. To address this, one workshop activity specifically asked participants to map the storytelling techniques and frameworks they had encountered onto the different stages of the double diamond, drawing on their existing project experience. This provided some insight into how they imagined broader application, even where direct use had not been possible.

Finally, because the workshop was not originally conceived as a research instrument, some data from the event itself was lost before its research potential was recognized. Physical artifacts, such as participant story notes, were not fully retained, which limited the documentary record available for analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study across six themes that emerged from thematic analysis of the full data set. Data was collected across four phases: a pre-workshop registration survey (PRE, n=24), facilitator observations across both workshop days (FN), a post-workshop feedback survey (POST, n=14) completed immediately after Day 2, and six in-depth follow-up interviews conducted approximately three months later. Interview participants are referred to throughout as Participants A through F (INT-A to INT-F).

The six themes move from the immediate conditions that made learning possible, through the specific frameworks and cognitive shifts that transferred into professional practice, to the structural factors that shaped and limited that transfer. Together, they build toward answers to the study's three sub-questions: how theatre and improvisation-inspired techniques are relevant to the core demands of service design practice (SQ1); how emerging practitioners experienced and made sense of those techniques through the workshop (SQ2); and to what extent and in what forms they transferred into practice in the months that followed (SQ3). Themes One, Two, and Five speak most directly to SQ2, addressing the conditions of learning and the quality of participants' encounter with the material. Theme Three and the first half of Theme Six address SQ3, documenting what transferred and how. Theme Four — the study's most analytically significant finding — addresses all three sub-questions simultaneously, as it reveals not only that transfer occurred but that it took a form with direct relevance to the professional demands of service

design. Negative cases — findings that complicate or qualify the dominant patterns — are woven into the relevant themes. The chapter reports what the data shows; interpretation in relation to the study's theoretical framework is reserved for Chapter Five.

4.2 Theme One: The Body as the Entry Point

The most consistent finding across all data sources is that physical, embodied activity was the primary catalyst for engagement, group cohesion, and durable recall. When asked three months later what they remembered from the workshop, five of six participants reached first for Day 2 — the day structured entirely around voice, movement, gesture, and live storytelling performance. Day 1's writing exercises and lecture content were valued but recalled less vividly and with less affect. This pattern is directly relevant to SQ2: the quality of how practitioners experienced these techniques was inseparable from their physical and sensory register.

Facilitator notes document this pattern playing out in real time. The workshop opened slowly. The personal storytelling introduction did not produce the intended response, and a folk tale from Punjabi tradition that was intended to illustrate narrative's power lost the room. The facilitator noted that the story lacked cultural relatability for this internationally diverse group, and that the lecture format was wrong for the material. The first observable shift came from the breath-constrained circle exercise, in which participants were invited to tell the story of their journey to the programme in a single breath. Bodies became active, people made eye contact, laughter entered the room.

Day 2, conducted in a furniture-cleared open space, extended this logic across an entire day. Voice projection, vocal orchestration, movement at varying speeds and scenarios, gesture mirroring, and the No Hands storytelling game progressively escalated participants' exposure to discomfort and performance. By the end of the day, even the participant who had been visibly most inhibited had performed in front of the group. Participants named this quality of experience clearly in their interviews:

"In normal classes, you mostly have theory and don't do much physically, but this workshop was very practical. What stood out was applying it — using our bodies and connecting it to real life." (INT-A)

"With writing, I feel more in control — you can reflect and prepare. But Day 2 was very spontaneous. It was a bit scary, but also more fun." (INT-E)

Several participants described the embodied exercises as enabling a form of professional imagination that writing had not — a finding with implications for SQ1, insofar as it points to the specific value these techniques offer that conventional service design training typically does not. Participant A described the vocal exercises as making her picture herself giving a conference talk, and understanding what she would need to practise to get there. Participant C described using what he called his bodily and kinesthetic intelligence to engage with exercises in a way that felt natural and creative rather than structured.

One significant negative case qualifies this pattern. Participant B, who had prior drama experience, found Day 2 familiar rather than revelatory. For her, the embodied exercises did not produce the same sense of discovery:

"I've been mildly exposed to vocal projection, and I did a little drama in high school, so it wasn't foreign. It was, like, okay, cool — and that was about it." (INT-B)

Her most significant moment came instead from a conceptual framework on Day 1. This divergence matters for SQ2: the quality of practitioners' experience of these techniques depended partly on their novelty. For participants without prior performance experience, they functioned as genuine encounters with the unfamiliar; for those with prior exposure, conceptual content held more surprise. A further limit is also worth noting: facilitator notes record that the shyest participants never fully allowed themselves to project at full volume even by the day's end. Group conditions made risk-taking more possible for most, but did not dissolve inhibition entirely for all.

4.3 Theme Two: Collective Story-Making as Threshold Experience

Within the broader pattern of embodied learning, one activity functioned differently from the rest: the group circle storytelling exercise near the end of Day 1, in which participants contributed one sentence at a time to build a collectively authored story. Where most activities developed individual skills, this exercise restructured the social conditions of the room. It was less a teaching moment than a social turning point — and as such, it speaks centrally to SQ2, illuminating the relational conditions under which practitioners were able to meaningfully engage with what the workshop offered.

Facilitator notes describe it as the high point of Day 1. Energy rose, creativity was visible, and improvement across successive rounds was clear. The story the group built — about a human cursed to be turned into a fish — was still being referenced in interviews three months later. What the exercise appeared to do was demonstrate, through shared experience, that creative risk in front of others could be

safe and pleasurable. The laughter and momentum it generated carried forward into the more individually demanding exercises of Day 2.

Participant D described keeping the written piece she and a classmate developed during the paired story exercise, and considering developing it further as a short story. Participant E described how she and a classmate who had attended together still referenced moments from the workshop months later:

"Of all the workshops or extra classes I've attended, this was one of the more engaging ones — it kind of left us with a sort of connection. We still have these remnants, inside jokes, reflections about that workshop." (INT-E)

The group storytelling exercise built a shared reference point — something they had made together and laughed about together — that lowered the threshold for subsequent vulnerability. Day 2's more demanding exercises were undertaken by a group that had already proved to itself that collective creation was possible and enjoyable. The exercise was not simply an activity; it was the social foundation the rest of the workshop was built on.

4.4 Theme Three: Narrative Frameworks as Practical Design Tools

Two specific frameworks from the workshop transferred into participants' professional practice with notable durability three months later: the CICARI storytelling structure and the rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos. Both were retained with clarity, and both were retained for the same reason — they arrived after participants had already encountered their logic through practice, not before. This theme speaks directly to SQ1 and SQ3: to what makes these techniques relevant to service design practice, and to how that relevance was sustained beyond the workshop itself.

The CICARI framework, which structures a story through character, incident, conflict, action, resolution, and insight, was introduced during Day 1 after participants had already built a story collectively through the circle exercise. Facilitator notes record surprise at the level of engagement this segment produced: participants began taking spontaneous notes, which had not happened during earlier lecture content. Several named CICARI explicitly in the post-workshop survey, with one participant citing it both as what they liked most and as their key takeaway. The sequence mattered: the framework arrived as a name for something already lived, not as an instruction about something yet to be done.

Ethos, pathos, and logos was introduced using a video example before the conceptual label, and the discussion that followed was well-participated and energetic. Participant B, for whom this was the single

most significant moment of the entire workshop, described it as working differently from the storytelling formulas she had previously encountered:

"In contrast to frameworks like the hero's journey, it was a lot more like: these are actually ingredients that you can freehand into your meal, instead of it being a recipe. That gave me a very different spin on how I can formulate my own story." (INT-B)

Both frameworks showed up in participants' accounts of their professional lives three months later — evidence relevant to SQ3. Participant B described using the ethos-pathos-logos structure to think about pacing and composition when preparing presentations — as a set of analytic levers she could adjust rather than a sequence to follow. Participant A described attempting to apply what she had learned from the workshop immediately in the final presentation of her first-semester course: standing more deliberately, using her hands more intentionally, attending to posture and projection.

The inverse of this pattern was also visible, and it carries a cautionary implication for SQ1: the relevance of these techniques is not inherent but depends on how they are taught. Facilitator notes document several moments where conceptual content arrived without an embodied anchor and produced disengagement: the folk tale, the section on types of storytelling that remained on screen while participants sat passively. One post-workshop response captured the consequence of incomplete experiential grounding directly: *I didn't understand the point of building our own story on Day 1. It felt unfinished, and I didn't take much with it* (POST). Day 1 ended abruptly, without the planned closing group activity, leaving the stories participants had constructed unshared and unconnected to a framework. At least one participant's learning loop closed on incompleteness rather than insight.

4.5 Theme Four: Narrative Thinking as Genuine Cognitive Transfer

The most analytically significant finding in this study is not the recall of specific frameworks but the emergence of narrative thinking as a restructured way of approaching design problems — a cognitive shift that operated independently of any particular technique taught in the workshop. This finding is the most complete answer the data provides to all three sub-questions simultaneously. It confirms SQ1 by demonstrating a form of relevance that goes beyond technique application to a restructured professional orientation; it addresses SQ2 by revealing the depth at which some participants internalised the workshop's underlying logic; and it represents the most meaningful answer to SQ3, as it describes transfer not as deliberate performance of learning but as a changed default way of thinking.

The clearest illustration came from Participant F. Three months after the workshop, she described filtering every new design case through a recurring internal question: who is the persona, what is the conflict, and where is the resolution? This logic was not a framework explicitly taught in the workshop. It was a structure she had independently constructed by absorbing the underlying storytelling principles encountered there and mapping them onto her design practice:

"In every project I'm resolving, or when they give us any case, I'm like: okay, this is my persona, and this is my topic. So where is the resolution? It's missing this important part. That's the main thing stuck in my mind, and I keep using it." (INT-F)

"If you have a persona, a conflict, and a solution — why is it not a story, if you have all the main elements a story includes? That's what I would say to someone sceptical." (INT-F)

The significance of this account is that it represents deep cognitive transfer rather than surface technique application. Participant F came from an engineering background with no prior conscious engagement with storytelling as a professional tool. She had not been given a three-part story template to apply. She had encountered storytelling principles through embodied and collaborative exercises, absorbed their underlying logic, and independently generated her own tool from that logic. The framework she was using was hers, not the workshop's.

Other participants described related but distinct forms of narrative thinking relevant to the SQ3 question of what forms transfer takes. Participant D, whose background was in journalism, described the workshop as activating a more conscious version of something she already did intuitively — specifically in research contexts, where she now thought more explicitly about how to shape users' stories into narratives with genuine emotional and structural integrity:

"One of the key parts of a designer's storytelling work is story facilitation. The structures we learn from workshops like yours will help us tell an impact story from the user's perspective. Right now we're working on a project on mental health, and I'm thinking about how we're going to tell the story of how our design could help people through the perspective of users." (INT-D)

Participant C described a quieter form of the same shift: a growing consciousness about how he presented himself professionally, attending specifically to simplicity and digestibility in his LinkedIn introduction and CV, thinking about whether a reader could understand who he was within seconds of reading.

Several participants described a further form of transfer — not conscious technique application but a diffuse orientation shift operating beneath deliberate awareness. Participant D articulated this directly:

"I haven't really used it explicitly yet — but maybe I am, and not actively noticing, because it just comes up naturally." (INT-D)

This accumulation mode of transfer — learning that shows up as a change in default orientation rather than as a deliberate act — was present to varying degrees across the accounts. It is the hardest form of transfer to document, and the three-month interview interval was sufficient to distinguish it from immediate post-workshop enthusiasm, but it may require a longer horizon to become fully visible.

4.6 Theme Five: Vulnerability, Psychological Safety, and the Conditions of Learning

Shared vulnerability was not an obstacle to learning in this workshop — it was the mechanism of it. This theme addresses SQ2 most directly: the quality of how practitioners experienced the workshop was inseparable from the emotional and relational conditions the workshop created. Across all data sources, participants and the facilitator consistently described the development of a group atmosphere in which being imperfect, uncertain, or emotionally exposed was not just tolerated but normalised. This atmosphere was deliberately built, and its development was traceable across the two days.

Facilitator notes document a careful progression of exposure. Day 1 moved from individual reflection to paired sharing to group storytelling. Day 2 began with gentle body-awareness exercises before escalating to voice projection, movement performance, and eventually full storytelling in front of the group. The circle format was central to this: when everyone occupies an enclosed space and is nudged into uncomfortable situations together, the facilitator observed, vulnerabilities become familiar rather than threatening. The facilitator's own deliberate failure in the opening exercise established early that imperfect attempts were not just acceptable but modelled from the front.

The closing vulnerability circle on Day 2 — a small, seated, intimate discussion of stage fright and personal experiences of public speaking — was described in the facilitator notes as a moment of genuine trust and openness. Participant F named it as her single most significant moment in the entire workshop. What had shifted was not her skill but her understanding of the experience others were having:

"It was really good to see that everyone goes through that — even the most confident person you see in the room feels nervous when talking to more people. It was interesting to see how people have their own techniques. You can connect to the human." (INT-F)

Participant E described a specific discovery during a live storytelling exercise in which she had been given cues to shift the direction of an ongoing story. She felt internally disordered — as though she was a mess — but discovered that to the group she appeared calm and composed:

"What happens is not necessarily what's in your head. In my head, I felt like I was all over the place. But externally, it came across as calm and composed. That made me realise that what we feel internally isn't always how others perceive us." (INT-E)

This discovery — that internal experience and external perception can diverge significantly — speaks also to SQ1, pointing to a specific competency these techniques develop that conventional service design training rarely addresses: the practitioner's calibration of their own communicative presence under pressure. Participant C described the non-judgmental atmosphere using a framework from his own knowledge about learning environments — one characterised by accessible entry, flexible limits, and wide creative space — and noted that without it, the activities would not have worked. Participant A described the social environment, rather than the physical space, as the thing that made experimenting possible:

"Everyone was open and friendly, so you felt free to experiment — even if it meant doing something silly. That made the experience more enjoyable and effective." (INT-A)

Two limits are worth noting honestly. First, inhibition persisted in some participants even within this broadly safe environment. Facilitator notes record that the shyest members of the group never fully let themselves project at full volume, and that individual safety did not always follow from group safety. Second, the Change game — an improvisation exercise in which a performer must adapt live to unexpected cues — was compromised by a facilitation error. Instructions were unclear, the exercise was conducted with only one performer and the rest as spectators, and participants were deprived of the experience of actually being on stage themselves. The concept was observed but not embodied, and its potential impact was accordingly reduced.

4.7 Theme Six: Transfer, Integration, and the Limits of Short-Form Learning

Transfer from the workshop into professional practice was real across the group, but it was uneven, partial, and shaped by conditions external to the workshop itself. This theme addresses SQ3 directly — not only documenting what transferred and in what forms, but examining the structural conditions that enabled or constrained that transfer. Some participants described direct and deliberate application of specific things they had learned; others described a more diffuse accumulation of orientation; and for some, immediate application was structurally constrained by timing.

The most direct transfer came in the form of framework application and presence awareness in presentation contexts. Participant F described using a narrative structure she had independently developed from workshop principles across every subsequent design project. Participant A described applying awareness of posture, gesture, and vocal projection in the final presentation of her semester course, which fell within a week of the workshop. Participant E described becoming less rigid and more expressive in subsequent project presentations, though she attributed this partly to other concurrent learning experiences:

"Not directly in any specific elements, but indirectly, yes. I think I've become a bit less formal and so boxed up about presentations, and learning to embody myself more as a narrator of that project." (INT-E)

A structural constraint shaped what was possible for the whole group, and it is worth examining carefully in relation to SQ3: the workshop took place at the end of the first semester, when participants were completing rather than beginning their design projects. They were largely past the empathy research and user insight phases — the stages where techniques like character inhabitation, story facilitation, and persona-building might have found their most natural home. Immediate transfer was therefore largely confined to final presentations. The three-month follow-up interval, which captured participants into a new semester with new projects, was what allowed deeper integration accounts to become visible at all.

A specific design failure also limited transfer for at least one participant. Day 1 ended abruptly, without the planned closing group activity, because a scheduling error had omitted the lunch break, creating unexpected time pressure. The stories participants had built during the individual writing sequence were left unshared and unconnected to a concluding framework. One post-workshop response named the consequence directly: *I didn't understand the point of building our own story on Day 1. It felt unfinished,*

and I didn't take much with it (POST). The learning loop requires closure to convert experience into transferable insight. Where it was left open, the investment was not lost but its conversion was impaired.

The meditative visualisation exercises — including the Insight Sack and the character embodiment sequence on Day 1 — produced clearly divided responses. Some participants found the eyes-closed format hard to engage with; others described it as a bit dramatic (POST). Participant B offered the most considered account: the workshop fell during an intensive pitch preparation period, making it harder to mentally arrive, and different people engage differently with imagistic forms of sense-making. The exercises were designed to develop empathic imagination — a capacity with direct relevance to SQ1, as the ability to inhabit a character's circumstances from the inside is one of the core competencies service design demands — but their effectiveness depended on a settled mental state and established group trust that were not yet fully present at the point in the programme where they were placed.

Participants were consistent in identifying what would be needed to sustain and deepen the learning beyond the workshop — an observation that bears directly on what this study can and cannot claim in answer to SQ3. The most common observation was that embodied skills require ongoing practice to maintain — that confidence in voice, physical presence, and spontaneous storytelling is not a one-time acquisition:

"I realised that these skills require continuous practice. After the workshop, I felt more confident, but I also understood that confidence needs to be maintained. So something that shifted for me was recognising the need to keep doing these kinds of exercises more often."

(INT-A)

Participant C expressed enthusiasm for returning to the material in future iterations, noting that repeated encounters with the same core principles — rather than a single comprehensive workshop — would likely produce stronger outcomes. Participant E described the workshop as valuable not only for individual skill development but for the team-building effect it had produced: the shared experiential reference that persisted in the relationships between participants long after the event itself had ended. Participant D articulated the underlying condition most directly — and in doing so, offered perhaps the most resonant answer to all three of the study's sub-questions at once:

"In human-centred design, we're designing for people — but theatre and storytelling are fundamentally about human expression. If we don't create space for that expression, how can we truly design for humans? Those frameworks can become limiting. To think beyond

them, we need to step outside of them — and this kind of workshop helps create that space."

(INT-D)

4.8 Summary

Across the six themes, the data presents a coherent picture of how the workshop functioned and what it produced in relation to each of the study's sub-questions. Embodied activity was the entry point to learning — the condition without which the more conceptually demanding work would not have been possible, and the register in which participants most vividly encountered what these techniques have to offer (Theme One, SQ2). A single collective storytelling exercise restructured the social atmosphere of the room in ways that enabled everything that followed, revealing how fundamentally the quality of learning depended on relational conditions (Theme Two, SQ2). Two specific frameworks transferred with durability into professional practice, and did so because they arrived after embodied encounter rather than before it — pointing to a clear relevance to service design that was enacted rather than argued (Theme Three, SQ1 and SQ3). Beyond framework recall, the most significant finding was the emergence of narrative thinking as a genuine cognitive shift: participants independently generating tools from internalised storytelling logic rather than applying what they had been taught, representing the deepest form of transfer the data documents (Theme Four, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3). Shared vulnerability was the mechanism of learning rather than an obstacle to it, built deliberately through progressive exposure and the circle format, though with limits for the most inhibited participants (Theme Five, SQ2). Transfer was real but uneven, shaped by timing, by design failures that left learning loops open, and by the absence of sustained practice opportunities — with participants consistently identifying ongoing practice as the condition the workshop alone could not provide (Theme Six, SQ3).

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

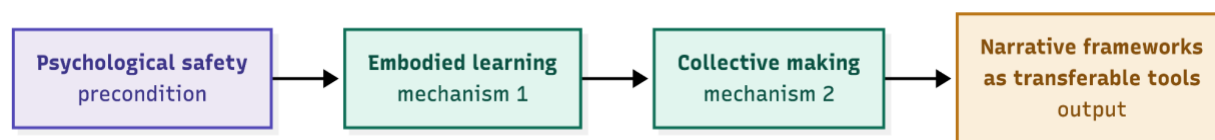
This chapter interprets the findings of Chapter 4 against the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2, and uses that interpretation to answer the study's three sub-questions directly. It acknowledges limitations honestly and closes with implications for practice and future research. Because a conclusion chapter follows, this chapter focuses on interpretation and argument rather than summation.

5.2 Interpreting the Findings Through Theory

The literature review established three frameworks for understanding how embodied training produces professional learning: Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action, and Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory. The findings do not sit uniformly within any one of these. Different moments in the workshop, and different participant accounts, map onto different levels and being honest about which level was reached, and for whom, is more analytically useful than claiming the highest level across the board.

For the majority of participants, the dominant learning mode was Kolb-level: concrete embodied experience, the voice exercises, the story circle, the gesture work, followed by reflective observation that produced transferable conceptual handles. The CICARI framework (a framework for narrative building for project communication) and ethos-pathos-logos structure were all retained and applied because they arrived as names for things already experienced, not as instructions about things yet to be done. This sequencing of practice before theory is precisely what Kolb's cycle predicts as the condition for durable conceptual learning, and the facilitator notes confirm it worked: "a lot of people were seen taking notes... it was very little but very to the point and useful as it was introduced after they had already practised it" (FN). The conditions that made this possible did not operate independently, psychological safety enabled embodied learning, which enabled collective making, and together they produced the frameworks that transferred. Figure 3 illustrates this sequence.

Figure 4. Conditions for learning in Theatre-Based Service Design Training



Note: Created by Author

Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action maps onto a specific subset of findings: the moments where participants discovered something about themselves as communicators in the act of performing. Participant E's realisation that her internal disorder was invisible to the group, "what happens is not necessarily what's in your head" (INT-E) is precisely the kind of in-the-moment self-correction that Schön describes. It did not arise from debriefing after the exercise but from being inside it. This form of learning is harder to design for deliberately, but the data suggests it emerged most reliably from the live, witnessed, unscripted exercises of Day 2.

Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning of the deeper reframing of assumptions and professional frames was present but limited to specific moments and specific participants. Participant F's emergence of an independently constructed narrative logic for design problems represents a genuine perspective transformation: she did not apply a framework she had been given, she generated one from internalised principles. This is a Mezirow-level outcome. But it would be an overstatement to claim this characterised the workshop for most participants. The majority reached Kolb. Some moments touched Schön. A few reached Mezirow. A two-day workshop can reliably produce the first; the second emerges under the right exercise conditions; the third is a fortunate consequence of depth of engagement that cannot be guaranteed by design alone.

The incomplete landing of the meditative visualisation exercises is explained well by this framework. These exercises required the quiet interiority that Mezirow associates with critical reflection, a different register entirely from the social, energetic conditions the rest of the workshop created. The two registers are not incompatible, but they need different environmental and temporal contexts. Placing meditative exercises inside a high-energy group session was a register mismatch the data documents clearly.

5.3 Answering the Sub-Questions

SQ1 — Relevance to service design practice

The findings confirm relevance, but add a specificity the literature does not fully anticipate. The existing research tends to locate the value of these techniques in empathy development and early user research (Ciravegna, 2021; Kouprie & Visser, 2009). The findings here suggest an equally significant — and arguably more continuous — relevance in the communication and client-facing dimensions of design work: presentation, pitching, facilitation, and stakeholder storytelling. Because the workshop was placed at the end of the semester when empathy phases were largely complete, participants applied what they had learned primarily to final presentations and subsequent project communication. This produced a different relevance profile than the literature predicts, but not a lesser one. The demand to communicate clearly, adapt to audiences, and inhabit rather than report a design story is present across every phase of the design process, not only its opening.

The finding that relevance was experienced spontaneously rather than argued for is significant. Participants connected workshop content to their professional situations without prompting — in live projects, in presentations, in how they wrote their own professional introductions. This quality of

unprompted transfer is the marker that distinguishes genuine professional integration from workshop performance.

SQ2 — How practitioners experienced these techniques

Participants experienced the workshop through a consistent arc: nervous anticipation, social threshold crossing through the group story circle, progressive embodied risk-taking, and an expanded self-perception by Day 2's close. This arc was not uniform — it was mediated by prior theatrical experience, cultural background, and individual inhibition levels — but its shape was recognisable across most accounts.

The most distinctive feature of participants' experience, across all six interviews, was that the learning happened *with* other people rather than in spite of them. The social dimension was not supplementary to the learning; it was constitutive of it. Participant A put it simply: "I think it was more about the people" (INT-A). This aligns with Vera and Crossan's (2005) argument that improvisational learning is fundamentally collective — it cannot be replicated through individual self-study, because its mechanisms depend on real-time response to other people's unpredictability.

SQ3 — Transfer into practice

Transfer took three distinct forms. Direct transfer — the deliberate application of specific frameworks or techniques to identifiable professional situations — was visible in a subset of participants and was concentrated in narrative frameworks and presence awareness in presentations. Indirect transfer — a diffuse orientation shift, heightened metacognitive awareness, or what Participant D called "accumulating knowledge" (INT-D) — was more broadly distributed but harder to pin to the workshop specifically. Structural non-transfer — cases where timing, design failures, or the absence of sustained practice constrained what was possible — was also real and should not be minimised.

The most significant structural constraint on all three forms was timing. The workshop's placement at the end of the first semester, past the empathy and user research phases, narrowed the profile of immediate application. The three-month follow-up interval revealed what the semester's structure had initially concealed: deeper integration, once participants were in new projects, was visible in ways that an immediate post-workshop survey could not have captured.

Table 4. Transfer into Professional Practice Across Participants

Participant	Form of transfer	Evidence in practice	Depth of transfer
INT-A	Broader capacity	Began thinking about how to tell user stories in spoken form after previously working only in print. Reflected on jargon and audience-awareness; applying this to a live mental health care project.	<i>Latent / accumulative</i>
INT-B	Direct tool	Applied physical and vocal techniques — posture, gesture, and voice projection — in the final Service Design Basics course presentation shortly after the workshop.	<i>Immediate / behavioural</i>
INT-C	Both	Rewrote LinkedIn introduction and CV using word-clarity principles from the workshop. Started an ideas notebook following a Day 1 exercise. Became more conscious of storytelling in professional self-presentation.	<i>Gradual / ongoing</i>
INT-D	Direct tool	Applies the persona–conflict–resolution framework to every design project and case study. Uses it to make the double diamond process legible to non-designers.	<i>Immediate / deeply integrated</i>

INT-E	Direct tool	Uses ethos, pathos, and logos as a mental checklist when structuring presentations — asking whether the right balance of emotion, logic, and context is present.	<i>Gradual / cognitive</i>
INT-F	Broader capacity	Reports becoming less formal and more expressive in presentations. Describes a shift from a rigid delivery style toward embodying the project story rather than reporting it.	<i>Gradual / dispositional</i>

Note. Evidence drawn from follow-up interviews conducted approximately three months after the workshop. Created by the author.

5.4 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes three contributions to the theoretical understanding of theatre-based professional training and its relationship to service design practice.

The first contribution is empirical and foundational. By positioning service design practitioners as the specific study population, the study fills a gap the literature explicitly identifies but has not previously addressed. The existing body of applied improvisation research has been conducted primarily in healthcare, business education, and management settings. This study provides the first empirical account from within service design, with findings gathered at a sufficient temporal distance from the workshop to distinguish genuine integration from immediate enthusiasm. That temporal distance matters: it is what makes it possible to see the difference between a technique participants remembered at the end of Day 2 and a cognitive shift that was still shaping how they approached their design work three months later.

The second contribution is analytical. The most significant finding in this study, that Participant F independently constructed a narrative framework from internalised storytelling principles rather than applying anything explicitly taught, represents a form of transfer the improvisation literature tends not to

document. Most studies in this field rely on immediate post-training measurement and therefore cannot capture the slow cognitive reorientation that only becomes visible with time. The differentiated transfer typology developed here, distinguishing direct application, indirect orientation shift, and structural constraint, offers a more granular account of what transfer actually looks like than the binary present or absent framing that characterises much of the existing research. Mapping the specific findings onto the three levels of Kolb, Sch\u00f6n, and Mezirow, rather than claiming the highest level across the board, adds theoretical precision: it clarifies which outcomes a two-day workshop can reliably produce, which emerge under the right conditions, and which represent the deeper transformation that cannot be designed for but only created conditions for.

The third contribution is conceptual. The study introduces and evidences the notion of register mismatch as a constraint on theatre-based workshop design. The data shows clearly that the meditative visualisation exercises, which require quiet interiority and individual stillness, did not function well inside a high-energy group session built around movement, voice, and collective performance. These are not simply exercises that were poorly facilitated; they operate in a fundamentally different learning register from the rest of the workshop, one that requires different conditions of trust, time, and pace. This distinction has not been articulated in the existing applied improvisation literature, which tends to treat all embodied exercises as operating within the same pedagogical logic. Naming it precisely opens new design questions for anyone building similar workshops.

5.5 Limitations

Several limitations require honest acknowledgement.

The most fundamental is scope. This was a single workshop, conducted once, with fourteen participants from one master's programme, of whom six were interviewed. The findings offer meaningful insight into this specific case; they cannot be generalised beyond it without qualification. A workshop facilitated by someone without the researcher's theatrical background, or conducted in a different cultural or institutional context, may produce meaningfully different results.

The researcher's dual role as facilitator and analyst is a layered positionality that reflexive measures — open-ended interview questions, active pursuit of negative cases, the three-month interval between workshop and interview — can mitigate but not eliminate. The genuine investment in the subject matter that made the workshop energetic is the same investment that risks shaping interpretation toward confirmation. This tension is acknowledged throughout but cannot be fully resolved.

The three-month follow-up interval, while appropriate for this study's purposes, is also a limit. Participants were still in early professional formation. The situations where workshop learning would find its most mature application, independent professional practice, client-facing design work, team facilitation in complex organisational contexts had not yet been encountered by most participants at the time of interview. A twelve-month follow-up, or a study at the point of transition into professional roles, would produce a richer and more demanding account of transfer.

Finally, the participant group's homogeneity of same programme, same year, similar institutional context limits what the findings can say about practitioner diversity. How practitioners from significantly different cultural backgrounds, or with many years of established professional practice, would experience these techniques remains an open question.

5.6 Implications

For workshop facilitators

The clearest practical implication of the findings is sequencing: practice must precede theory, every time. The data shows consistently that frameworks only transferred durably when they arrived as names for things participants had already encountered through embodied activity. Lecture content introduced before embodied experience produced disengagement; the same content introduced after a related exercise produced spontaneous note-taking. Concretely, this means no framework should be introduced until participants have done something that enacts its underlying logic. The CICARI structure should follow the story circle, not precede it. Ethos, pathos, and logos should follow a live persuasion exercise, not introduce one.

The meditative visualisation exercises need to be repositioned. The findings indicate they require a different social and temporal context from the high-energy group work that defines the rest of the workshop. They should be placed later in the programme arc, after group trust is well established, or offered as optional supplementary material rather than embedded in the main session. The Change game should be restructured so that every participant is on stage, not just one performer with the others watching; the exercise's value depends on the disorientation of actually being there, not on observing someone else. And the Day 1 closure is not optional: the data includes at least one clear case where an incomplete ending left a participant's experience unanchored, and the learning loop unclosed. Scheduling pressures should not be allowed to cut it.

For service design educators

The findings support a case for theatre-based techniques as a core component of practitioner formation rather than elective enrichment. The capacities documented here, narrative consciousness, physical presence, comfort with communicative uncertainty, are precisely the ones that distinguish effective from ineffective service design practice and that conventional studio-based curricula consistently struggle to cultivate. A single two-day workshop is a beginning. What the data also shows is that timing within the curriculum matters as much as content. This workshop was placed at the end of the first semester, after students had largely completed their projects. Their opportunities for immediate application were therefore confined to final presentations. Placing a comparable workshop at the beginning of the programme, before students engage with their first design projects, would allow them to encounter these techniques at the stages of empathy research, facilitation, and user insight where the techniques are most directly applicable.

For curriculum designers

The benefits of theatre-based training are unlikely to be sustained through one-off intensive delivery, however well designed. Every participant who reflected on this question identified sustained practice as the condition the workshop alone could not provide. For curriculum designers, this points toward integration rather than addition: rather than inserting a standalone workshop, embedding short embodied and storytelling exercises throughout the curriculum as regular, repeating practice would more likely produce the habitual orientation shifts that the deepest evidence of transfer in this study describes. Practically, this might mean opening studio sessions with a short improv warm-up, building persona work around character inhabitation rather than demographic profiling, or using structured story circles as a synthesis method during user research phases. The transfer typology developed in this study, distinguishing direct application, indirect orientation shift, and structural constraint, also offers a framework for thinking about what different modes of integration might produce and what forms of assessment would be needed to make that evaluation meaningful.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Returning to the Research Question

This study set out to answer a deceptively simple question: how do theatre and improvisation-inspired storytelling techniques contribute to the practice of service design, and what capacities do they develop in emerging practitioners? The question was deceptively simple because it contained within it a prior one — whether the connection between these two fields was more than structural analogy. The literature review

established the analogy clearly enough. What remained unresolved was whether the connection held in the lived experience of practitioners: whether service design students who encountered these techniques through an immersive two-day workshop actually experienced them as relevant, actually developed capacities through them, and actually carried something forward into their professional work in the months that followed.

The answer, taken in full, is yes — conditionally, differentially, and in ways that are more interesting than a simple confirmation of the literature's optimism would suggest.

6.2 What This Study Found

The findings tell a coherent story across six themes. Embodied activity was the primary entry point to learning the physical exercises of Day 2 were more durably recalled and more immediately impactful than the conceptual content of Day 1, for most participants. A single group storytelling exercise restructured the social conditions of the room and made everything that followed possible. Two narrative frameworks — CICARI and ethos-pathos-logos — transferred into professional practice with notable fidelity, and did so because they arrived as names for things already experienced rather than instructions about things yet to be done. Most significantly, several participants did not merely apply frameworks they had been taught but independently generated narrative tools from internalised storytelling principles, a form of cognitive transfer deeper than technique acquisition. Shared vulnerability was the mechanism of the workshop's most significant learning, not an obstacle to it. And transfer into practice, while real, was uneven, differentiated, and shaped by structural conditions primarily timing that lay outside the workshop's own design.

The divergent findings matter as much as the dominant patterns. The meditative visualisation exercises did not land. Inhibition persisted in some participants even within a broadly safe group environment. The Change game was compromised by a facilitation error. Day 1 ended without its planned closure, leaving at least one participant's learning loop incomplete. These are not marginal observations; they are part of the finding. The workshop worked powerfully for some participants in some registers while missing others — and that honest account is more useful for future practice than a uniformly positive one would be.

6.3 The Study's Contribution

This study makes three distinct contributions to the literature.

The first is empirical. The existing body of research on applied improvisation and theatre-based professional training has been conducted primarily in healthcare, business education, and management settings (Jouin

et al., 2026; Felsman et al., 2020; Nisula & Kianto, 2018). Service design practitioners have not previously been the study population of any published empirical study in this field. This study fills that gap — not conclusively, given its scope, but meaningfully, with practitioner accounts that are specific, sustained, and gathered at a sufficient temporal distance from the workshop to distinguish genuine integration from immediate enthusiasm.

The second is analytical. The most significant finding that participants independently constructed narrative tools from internalised storytelling principles rather than applying what they had been taught represents a form of transfer the improvisation literature tends not to document, because most studies rely on immediate post-training measurement and cannot capture the kind of slow cognitive reorientation that only becomes visible months later. The differentiated transfer typology developed in this study distinguishing direct application, indirect orientation shift, and structural constraint offers a more granular account of what transfer actually looks like than the binary present/absent framing that characterises much of the existing research. The honest application of three learning theory levels (Kolb, Schön, and Mezirow) to specific findings rather than claiming the highest level across the board adds theoretical precision that the field benefits from.

The third is practical. The practice-before-theory sequencing evidence, the register mismatch between energetic group exercises and meditative interiority, and the timing constraint identified across SQ3 are all actionable insights for anyone designing similar workshops. They do not require a large sample or a controlled experiment to be useful; they are the kind of situated, contextual knowledge that practitioners and educators can apply directly.

6.4 What This Study Cannot Claim

Being clear about the boundaries of the contribution is as important as stating it. This study cannot claim that theatre-based training reliably produces transformative learning in service design practitioners, it documents it in specific instances, for specific participants, under specific conditions. It cannot claim that the workshop's effects persist beyond three months, the follow-up interval was appropriate for this study's purposes but is not a long-term measure. It cannot claim that the findings generalise beyond this cohort, this programme, or this facilitator, the scope is deliberately bounded and the positionality is explicitly acknowledged. And it cannot resolve the causal attribution problem that qualitative case studies face: participants' professional development occurred in the context of many concurrent influences, and separating the workshop's specific contribution from everything else that was happening in their lives requires more than six interviews at three months.

These are not apologies. They are the honest shape of what a two-day workshop, studied once, with six interviews, can support.

6.5 What This Study Opens

The value of a study that maps new terrain is not only in what it finds but in the questions it makes it possible to ask more precisely. This study opens three.

The first is longitudinal: what happens when the practitioners documented here enter professional practice and encounter the full range of situations where these techniques would find their most natural application — complex stakeholder facilitation, high-stakes pitching, community co-design? A follow-up study at one or two years would test whether the orientation shifts documented here persist, deepen, or dissolve under the pressure of professional reality.

The second is comparative: would a second, better-designed iteration of this workshop placed earlier in the curriculum, with meditative exercises repositioned, with the Change game properly facilitated, with Day 1 given its closure produce a different and richer profile of transfer? The design insights generated by this study make it possible to run that comparison with purpose rather than guesswork.

The third is disciplinary: this study sits at an intersection that the service design field has not yet systematically mapped. The connection between theatrical training and service design competence development is theoretically coherent, empirically supported in adjacent fields, and on the evidence of this study, experienced as practically relevant by the practitioners who encounter it. Building that connection into service design education in a more systematic way, and researching what that integration produces, is a project that extends well beyond what one workshop and one researcher can achieve. This study is an argument for beginning.

6.6 Practical Takeaways for Service Design Programmes

For educators and programme designers who want to act on this study's findings without waiting for further research, the evidence points toward a small number of clear practical conclusions.

Place the workshop early, not late. The structural constraint that most limited transfer in this study was timing. Participants encountered these techniques at the end of their first semester, past the empathy, research, and facilitation phases where they would have been most immediately applicable. A similar workshop placed at the start of the programme, before students begin their first projects, would allow them

to bring narrative and embodied practices into their actual design work rather than only into end-of-semester presentations.

Sequence practice before theory, always. No framework should be introduced before participants have done something that enacts its underlying logic. This is the single most consistent implication across the findings and the most actionable change any facilitator can make to an existing workshop design, even without changing any other element.

Protect the learning loop closure. A debrief or closing activity is not supplementary: it is the moment at which embodied experience is converted into something transferable and nameable. The one case in this study where a participant reported taking little from an exercise is directly traceable to an abrupt ending that left her story unfinished and unconnected to a framework. Time pressure should not be allowed to cut this phase.

Build follow-up practice into the curriculum. A single workshop generates real learning, but participants consistently identified the absence of ongoing practice as the primary constraint on how far that learning could develop. Short, regular storytelling and embodied exercises embedded across the curriculum, rather than concentrated in a single event, would more likely produce the durable orientation shifts this study's deepest evidence of transfer describes.

Treat the conditions of learning as part of the design. Psychological safety, collective making, and progressive vulnerability exposure are not byproducts of good facilitation; they are the preconditions for everything else. The circle format, the facilitator's own modelled imperfection in the opening exercise, the movement from paired work to group work before asking anyone to perform solo: these were deliberate design decisions, and they did the work that made the embodied exercises land. A facilitator who treats them as incidental rather than structural will produce a different and shallower experience.

6.7 A Final Word

Participant D offered what may be the most direct articulation of what this study, taken as a whole, argues for: "in human-centred design, we're designing for people, but theatre and storytelling are fundamentally about human expression. If we don't create space for that expression, how can we truly design for humans?" (INT-D). The argument is not that service designers should become performers. It is that the capacities service design demands, presence, narrative, empathy, comfort with uncertainty in the room are capacities

that theatrical and improvisational training has been developing systematically for over a century. The field has frameworks for everything. What this study suggests is that it might also benefit from a stage.

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Appendix:

StoryTelling Workshop SDSI 2025			
Day 1			
Break Theory Energizer/Icebreaker Exercise Discussion/Debriefing			
TIME			ADDITIONAL INFO
09:50 10m	Arrival & Mingle: Create Name Tags	A casual and welcoming start to the workshop. Participants create their own name tags and get to know each other in an informal networking setting before the main session begins.	1. Set up a station with name tag materials (tags, markers, etc.). 2. As participants arrive, greet them and guide them to the name tag station. 3. Encourage creativity: suggest adding a doodle of a hobby, their favorite food, or what they're excited about for the day. 4. Play some light background music to foster a relaxed atmosphere.
10:00 15m	Workshop Kick-off: Setting the Stage	A warm welcome to the workshop. We'll introduce the facilitation team, walk through the day's agenda, and agree on our shared ways of working to ensure a productive and collaborative session.	1. Welcome participants and thank them for coming. 2. Briefly introduce the facilitator(s). 3. Present the day's agenda, highlighting the key objectives and the overall flow. 4. Introduce the concept of 'Working Agreements' or 'Rules for the Day'. Propose a few starting points (e.g., 'Be present', 'Listen to understand', 'All ideas are welcome'). 5. Ask the group if they want to add or change any agreements to ensure a collaborative environment.
10:15 17m	Storytelling Circle	An intentional opening activity to build community and connection. We'll gather in a circle to share brief stories, setting a tone of trust and equal participation for our work together.	1. Frame the activity by sharing the 'Sacred Circle' quote. 2. Everyone shares their story of coming to SDSI in a single breath 3. They keep going till they run out of breath
10:32 7m	The Insight Sack: A Guided Visualization	A guided visualization to create a personal, metaphorical 'sack'. This will serve as a mental container to collect and hold key learnings, insights, and memories throughout our time together.	1. Ask participants to stay in the circle, close their eyes, and listen to the soft music. 2. Begin the guided visualization script in a calm, slow voice: 'Imagine an empty sack. What color is it? What material is it made of? Feel its texture. Is it old or new? How large is it? How do you close it? This sack is yours to carry with you over the next two days.' 3. Continue the script: 'As we move through our workshop, you can place anything you wish inside this sack—learnings, experiences, memories, thoughts, and insights. It will hold them for you.' 4. Conclude the visualization: 'Now, when you are ready, silently pick up your sack, open your eyes, and find your seat, keeping your sack with you.'

TIME	ADDITIONAL INFO		
10:39 20m	What role to stories play in the world?	Explore the fundamental role of storytelling in human history and connection. Get into the different ways stories are used to entertain, educate, persuade etc	1. EDUCATION Example: • Indigenous stories about forests = lessons about ecology • Aesop's Fables → behavior through narrative • Religious stories teaching values <i>Narration of Sohni Mahiwal</i> 2. ENTERTAINMENT Example: • Movies • Novels • Songs 3. PERSUASION Example: • Political speeches • Advertising • Brand storytelling • "Apple doesn't sell phones. They sell rebellion." Play the Thai Life Insurance Ad https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlC5QvdtTKY
10:59 7m	Connection	Introduce the idea of threads and connections and neural coupling	1. Introduce the idea of how human beings connect using stories 2. The more shared stories the stronger the connection 3. There is actual science behind it, introduce the concept of neural coupling
11:06 10m	Connect	Let the group connect by sharing stories among themselves	1. Find someone in the room who you feel do not have enough threads of connection 2. Share a story with one another
11:16 10m	Coffee Break		
11:26 8m	Elements of Stories	We start now by introducing different important elements of stories like context, characters, conflict, action, change	1. We start by explaining that stories are made up of different building blocks 2. We dive into the concept and importance of context
11:34 10m	Context	It is where people will start building their own stories starting with context	1. Everyone receives a sheet of paper with questions which will help them set up their context of the story
11:44 8m	Characters	Here we introduce another element which is the character and their emotions	1. We start by telling how important characters are 2. We introduce the idea of imperfect realistic characters 3. We go into discussing how characters are developed
11:52 8m	Creating a character	Now the people create their own characters	1. We ask them to imagine someone who would be relevant to your context 2. We give them prompts to start developing their own character
12:00 7m	Empathising with the character	Now the participants will feel what their character could feel	1. Soft music is played 2. Participants are invited to close their eyes 3. Prompts are said out loud by the facilitator to help them imagine the feelings of their character 4. after a round of prompts they are invited to open their eyes and carry those feelings with them and not let go of them yet
12:07 5m	Conflict	Here we introduce the concept of friction or tension caused by a conflict	1. Simply define the idea of a conflict 2. Now what the conflict will do
12:12 6m	Conflict writing	Here everyone thinks about their character and creates a conflict	1. On their sheets they write a conflict
12:18 7m	Action	They are introduced to the idea of action	Action is like a road map or a plan of action or a series of event that will now need to happen in order for your character to deal with this conflict

TIME			ADDITIONAL INFO
12:25 8m	Action	Everyone works on their action	Keeping their character and conflict in mind everyone crafts their action
12:33 4m	The Payoff: Result & Transformation	This block focuses on the crucial final element of a story: the result. We'll explore how the change or transformation that occurs after the story's climax provides the meaning and payoff for the audience.	1. Explain that every action must have a clear result or consequence. This is the "So what?" of the story. 2. Emphasize that this is what the audience has been waiting for. It can be a change in the character (they learned a lesson) or a change in the world (the problem is solved). 3. Use a simple example: "In The Three Little Pigs, the result of the pig building a house of bricks is that he is safe from the wolf. The transformation is his shift from being vulnerable to being secure."
12:37 5m	Crafting the Resolution	This is the moment to bring your story to a conclusion. Participants will individually write the ending of their stories, focusing on the result of the action and the transformation of their character.	1. Instruct participants to get their story notes ready. 2. Prompt them with guiding questions: "What is the direct result of the action your character took? How has your character or their world changed from the beginning of the story? What is the final feeling you want to leave with your audience?" 3. Also think of the impact of this change on the character and their surrounding in a larger context 4. Announce the 5-minute time limit for writing the conclusion.
12:42 5m	Discuss	Just a check in with everyone how they are feeling	1. Throw around the question of how you are feeling? 2. Is the story coming together? 3. What details are missing? 4. How connected do you feel to the story? 5. Any questions that you may have?
12:48 10m	Coffee		
12:58 10m	Collaborative Story Weaving	A quick and fun improvisational game to get our creative energy flowing. We'll work together as a group to build a story, one sentence at a time.	1. The facilitator will start the story with an opening line (e.g., "Once upon a time, in a land far away..."). 2. Going around the circle, each person adds the next sentence to the story. 3. Encourage participants to be spontaneous and build on the last person's contribution. The goal is to have fun, not to create a perfect narrative. 4. After everyone has contributed, the facilitator will add the final sentence to conclude the story.
13:08 15m	The Art of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos in Story	An introduction to the classical pillars of persuasion—Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. We will explore how these three appeals are masterfully woven into compelling stories to build trust, evoke emotion, and make a logical case.	1. **Theory (5 mins):** Briefly explain the concepts on a slide: - **Ethos:** Building trust and credibility (e.g., "Believe me because I am an expert/trustworthy"). - **Pathos:** Appealing to emotion (e.g., making the audience feel joy, anger, or empathy). - **Logos:** Appealing to logic (e.g., using facts, data, or a clear sequence of events). 2. **Practice (10 mins):** Play google-year in search 2020 https://youtu.be/rokGy0huYEA?si=gVLY6J6_04awuJP. 3. **Group Discussion:** After the video, ask the group: "Where did you see the presenter build Ethos? What moments created Pathos? How was Logos used to make Google-year in search 2020 case?"
13:23 10m	The Spectrum of Story: Beyond Epics	A fast-paced exploration of the many simple forms a story can take. We'll move beyond myths and epics to see how anecdotes, images, and even lists can be powerful narrative tools.	This is a rapid-fire activity. Spend 2-3 minutes on each point. 1. **Anecdote:** Start by telling a 30-second personal anecdote. Then, have pairs share a one-sentence story about their morning. 2. **Picture:** Show a compelling, ambiguous image. Ask everyone to write a six-word story about it (a microfiction). Have a few people read theirs aloud. 3. **List:** Display a simple list on a slide (e.g., "Keys, wallet, phone, mask, panic."). Explain how a list implies a sequence and can tell a story of a moment. 4. **Other Forms:** Briefly mention that more structured business tools like case studies, journey maps, and future-state scenarios are also forms of storytelling used to create shared understanding and persuade.

TIME			ADDITIONAL INFO
13:33 15m	Mapping Stories to Service Design	In small groups, participants will brainstorm and map out how different types of stories can be effectively used at various stages of the service design double diamond, from initial research to final implementation.	1. Divide participants into small groups of 3-5. 2. Provide each group with a flip chart and markers. Ask them to draw a simple service design double diamond (e.g., Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver). 3. Instruct groups to brainstorm and list specific story types (e.g., user anecdotes, journey maps, future-state scenarios, case studies) and place them in the stage where they are most impactful. 4. For each story type, they should note the reason or purpose it serves at that stage. 5. With 5 minutes remaining, facilitate a brief share-back where each group presents one key insight from their discussion.
13:48 15m	Closing Circle: Reflections & What's Next	A structured closing to wrap up our first day. We'll share key takeaways and look ahead to Day 2, ensuring everyone leaves aligned and prepared for our next session.	1. Gather everyone in a circle and thank them for their energy and participation. 2. Introduce a two-part reflection round. Ask each person to share: - "One key insight I'm placing in my sack from today is..." - "Looking ahead to tomorrow, I am..." 3. Go around the circle until everyone has shared. 4. After the reflections, share practical details for the next day: "Tomorrow will be more active with a focus on movement and embodying our stories. Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes, and don't forget to bring your imaginary sacks!" 5. Close with a final round of applause and thank you.
14:03	TOTAL LENGTH: 4h 13m Materials ☐ Name tags in Arrival & Mingle: Create Name Tags ☐ Markers x 6 in Arrival & Mingle: Create Name Tags Context Conflict writing Action Mapping Stories to Service Design ☐ Pens x 2 in Arrival & Mingle: Create Name Tags Crafting the Resolution ☐ Agenda Slide/Flipchart in Workshop Kick-off: Setting the Stage ☐ Working Agreements Poster in Workshop Kick-off: Setting the Stage ☐ Soft, ambient music in The Insight Sack: A Guided Visualization ☐ Screen x 13 in What role to stories play in the world? Connection Elements of Stories Context Characters Creating a character Conflict Action The Payoff: Result & Transformation Discuss Coffee Collaborative Story Weaving Closing Circle: Reflections & What's Next ☐ Ticker x 3 in What role to stories play in the world? Connection Elements of Stories ☐ Speakers in What role to stories play in the world? ☐ Printed questions in Context ☐ Extra paper in Context ☐ Flip chart in Context ☐ Sticky notes x 2 in Context Creating a character ☐ Paper with prompts in Creating a character ☐ markers in Creating a character ☐ Flip charts x 2 in Creating a character Mapping Stories to Service Design ☐ Music in Empathizing with the character ☐ Paper x 2 in Conflict writing Action ☐ Participants' story notes in Crafting the Resolution ☐ Short persuasive video clip in The Art of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos in Story ☐ Screen and speakers in The Art of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos in Story ☐ https://youtu.be/rokGy0huYEA?si=gVLY6IJ6_0HwwJP in The Art of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos in Story ☐ A compelling image in The Spectrum of Story: Beyond Epics ☐ Slide with a list example in The Spectrum of Story: Beyond Epics ☐ Double Diamond in Mapping Stories to Service Design		

StoryTelling Workshop SDSI 2025 - Day 1 - block details

09:50
10m

Arrival & Mingle: Create Name Tags

A casual and welcoming start to the workshop. Participants create their own name tags and get to know each other in an informal networking setting before the main session begins.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Set up a station with name tag materials (tags, markers, etc.).
2. As participants arrive, greet them and guide them to the name tag station.
3. Encourage creativity: suggest adding a doodle of a hobby, their favorite food, or what they're excited about for the day.
4. Play some light background music to foster a relaxed atmosphere.

GOAL

To create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, facilitate initial introductions, and allow participants to get comfortable with each other before the formal workshop content begins.

SLIDE

1. Tooba and Margarita illustration

MATERIALS

- Name tags
- Markers
- Pens

10:00
15m

Workshop Kick-off: Setting the Stage

A warm welcome to the workshop. We'll introduce the facilitation team, walk through the day's agenda, and agree on our shared ways of working to ensure a productive and collaborative session.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Welcome participants and thank them for coming.
2. Briefly introduce the facilitator(s).
3. Present the day's agenda, highlighting the key objectives and the overall flow.
4. Introduce the concept of 'Working Agreements' or 'Rules for the Day'. Propose a few starting points (e.g., 'Be present', 'Listen to understand', 'All ideas are welcome').
5. Ask the group if they want to add or change any agreements to ensure a collaborative environment.

GOAL

To align all participants on the workshop's purpose and flow, establish a positive and productive environment, and clarify expectations for the day.

SLIDE

2. Tooba intro
3. Margarita intro
4. Agenda for the day
5. Rules

MATERIALS

- Agenda Slide/Flipchart
- Working Agreements Poster

10:15
17m

Storytelling Circle

An intentional opening activity to build community and connection. We'll gather in a circle to share brief stories, setting a tone of trust and equal participation for our work together.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Frame the activity by sharing the 'Sacred Circle' quote.
2. Everyone shares their story of coming to SDSI in a single breath.
3. They keep going till they run out of breath.

GOAL

To establish a safe and inclusive space, foster a sense of community and trust, and encourage authentic participation from the very beginning.

SLIDE

6. Circle

10:32
7m

The Insight Sack: A Guided Visualization

A guided visualization to create a personal, metaphorical 'sack'. This will serve as a mental container to collect and hold key learnings, insights, and memories throughout our time together.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Ask participants to stay in the circle, close their eyes, and listen to the soft music.
2. Begin the guided visualization script in a calm, slow voice: 'Imagine an empty sack. What color is it? What material is it made of? Feel its texture. Is it old or new? How large is it? How do you close it? This sack is yours to carry with you over the next two days.'
3. Continue the script: 'As we move through our workshop, you can place anything you wish inside this sack—learnings, experiences, memories, thoughts, and insights. It will hold them for you.'

MATERIALS

- Soft, ambient music

4. Conclude the visualization: 'Now, when you are ready, silently pick up your sack, open your eyes, and find your seat, keeping your sack with you.' GOAL To create a powerful metaphor for learning and retention, encourage active reflection throughout the workshop, and provide participants with a mental tool to capture personal insights.	
10:39 20m What role do stories play in the world? Explore the fundamental role of storytelling in human history and connection. Get into the different ways stories are used to entertain, educate, persuade etc ADDITIONAL INFO 1. EDUCATION Example: • Indigenous stories about forests = lessons about ecology • Aesop's Fables → behavior through narrative • Religious stories teaching values <i>Narration of Sohni Mahiwal</i> 2. ENTERTAINMENT Example: • Movies • Novels • Songs 3. PERSUASION Example: • Political speeches • Advertising • Brand storytelling • "Apple doesn't sell phones. They sell rebellion." <i>Play the Thai Life Insurance Ad</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5C5QutITKY GOAL To understand the historical and psychological importance of storytelling and to learn a simple, powerful framework for structuring a narrative. SLIDE 7. Educate 8. Sohni Mahiwal Illustration 9. Entertain 10. Persuade 11. Thai Life Ad MATERIALS • Screen • Ticker • Speakers	
10:59 7m Connection Introduce the idea of threads and connections and neural coupling ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Introduce the idea of how human beings connect using stories 2. The more shared stories the stronger the connection 3. There is actual science behind it, introduce the concept of neural coupling SLIDE 12. Threads between two people 13. Threads in a society 14. Neural Coupling MATERIALS • Screen • Ticker	
11:06 10m Connect Let the group connect by sharing stories among themselves ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Find someone in the room who you feel do not have enough threads of connection	

2. Share a story with one another SLIDE 15. Copy of 12	
11:16 10m	Coffee Break
SLIDE 16. Coffee	
11:26 8m	Elements of Stories
We start now by introducing different important elements of stories like context, characters, conflict, action, change ADDITIONAL INFO 1. We start by explaining that stories are made up of different building blocks 2. We dive into the concept and importance of context SLIDE 17. Building blocks 18. Context	MATERIALS • Screen • Ticker
11:34 10m	Context
It is where people will start building their own stories starting with context ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Everyone receives a sheet of paper with questions which will help them set up their context of the story SLIDE 18. Context	MATERIALS • Screen • Printed questions • Markers • Extra paper • Flip chart • Sticky notes
11:44 8m	Characters
Here we introduce another element which is the character and their emotions ADDITIONAL INFO 1. We start by telling how important characters are 2. We introduce the idea of imperfect realistic characters 3. We go into discussing how characters are developed SLIDE 19. Character	MATERIALS • Screen
11:52 8m	Creating a character
Now the people create their own characters ADDITIONAL INFO 1. We ask them to imagine someone who would be relevant to your context 2. We give them prompts to start developing their own character SLIDE 20. Character?	MATERIALS • Screen • Paper with prompts • markers • Flip charts • Sticky notes
12:00 7m	Empathising with the character
Now the participants will feel what their character could feel ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Soft music is played 2. Participants are invited to close their eyes 3. Prompts are said out loud by the facilitator to help them imagine the feelings of their character	MATERIALS • Music

4.	after a round of prompts they are invited to open their eyes and carry those feelings with them and not let go of them yet	
SLIDE	20. Character	
12:07	5m	Conflict
	Here we introduce the concept of friction or tension caused by a conflict	MATERIALS
	ADDITIONAL INFO	• Screen
	1. Simply define the idea of a conflict	
	2. Now what the conflict will do	
SLIDE	21. Conflict	
12:12	6m	Conflict writing
	Here everyone thinks about their character and creates a conflict	MATERIALS
	ADDITIONAL INFO	• Paper
	1. On their sheets they write a conflict	• Markers
SLIDE	21. Conflict	
12:18	7m	Action
	They are introduced to the idea of action	MATERIALS
	ADDITIONAL INFO	• Screen
	Action is like a road map or a plan of action or a series of event that will now need to happen in order for your character to deal with this conflict	
SLIDE	22. Action	
12:25	8m	Action
	Everyone works on their action	MATERIALS
	ADDITIONAL INFO	• Paper
	Keeping their character and conflict in mind everyone crafts their action	• Markers
SLIDE	22. Action	
12:33	4m	The Payoff: Result & Transformation
	This block focuses on the crucial final element of a story; the result. We'll explore how the change or transformation that occurs after the story's climax provides the meaning and payoff for the audience.	MATERIALS
	ADDITIONAL INFO	• Screen
	1. Explain that every action must have a clear result or consequence. This is the "So what?" of the story.	
	2. Emphasize that this is what the audience has been waiting for. It can be a change in the character (they learned a lesson) or a change in the world (the problem is solved).	
	3. Use a simple example: "In The Three Little Pigs, the result of the pig building a house of bricks is that he is safe from the wolf. The transformation is his shift from being vulnerable to being secure."	
GOAL		
	To understand that the result or change is the essential payoff in a story, providing resolution and meaning for the audience.	
SLIDE	23. Result	

12:37 5m	Crafting the Resolution	This is the moment to bring your story to a conclusion. Participants will individually write the ending of their stories, focusing on the result of the action and the transformation of their character. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Instruct participants to get their story notes ready. 2. Prompt them with guiding questions: 'What is the direct result of the action your character took? How has your character or their world changed from the beginning of the story? What is the final feeling you want to leave with your audience?' 3. Also think of the impact of this change on the character and their surrounding in a larger context 4. Announce the 5-minute time limit for writing the conclusion. GOAL To apply the concept of "Results/Change" by crafting a satisfying and meaningful conclusion to the stories developed throughout the workshop. SLIDE 23. Result	MATERIALS • Participants' story notes • Pens
12:42 6m	Discuss	Just a check in with everyone how they are feeling ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Throw around the question of how you are feeling? 2. Is the story coming together? 3. What details are missing? 4. How connected do you feel to the story? 5. Any questions that you may have? SLIDE 24. Questions	MATERIALS • Screen
12:48 10m	Coffee	SLIDE 25. Coffee	MATERIALS • Screen
12:58 10m	Collaborative Story Weaving	A quick and fun improvisational game to get our creative energy flowing. We'll work together as a group to build a story, one sentence at a time. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. The facilitator will start the story with an opening line (e.g., 'Once upon a time, in a land far away...'). 2. Going around the circle, each person adds the next sentence to the story. 3. Encourage participants to be spontaneous and build on the last person's contribution. The goal is to have fun, not to create a perfect narrative. 4. After everyone has contributed, the facilitator will add the final sentence to conclude the story. GOAL To boost group energy, encourage active listening and creativity, and playfully reconnect the team through collaborative storytelling. SLIDE 26. Circle	MATERIALS • Screen
13:08 15m	The Art of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos in Story	An introduction to the classical pillars of persuasion—Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. We will explore how these three appeals are masterfully woven into compelling stories to build trust, evoke emotion, and make a logical case. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Theory (5 mins): Briefly explain the concepts on a slide: - Ethos: Building trust and credibility (e.g., 'Believe me because I am an expert/trustworthy'). - Pathos: Appealing to emotion (e.g., making the audience feel joy, anger, or empathy). - Logos: Appealing to logic (e.g., using facts, data, or a clear sequence of events). 2. Practice (10 mins): Play google-year in search 2020 https://youtu.be/rokGy0huYEA?si=gVLY6U6_04wwJP. 3. Group Discussion: After the video, ask the group: 'Where did you see the presenter build Ethos? What moments created Pathos? How was Logos used to make Google-year in search 2020 case?' GOAL	MATERIALS • Short persuasive video clip • Screen and speakers • https://youtu.be/rokGy0huYEA?si=gVLY6U6_04wwJP

To understand the three modes of persuasion (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and be able to identify how they are used in storytelling to influence an audience.

SLIDE

27. Ethos

28. Logos

29. Pathos

30. Pie chart with percentages

13:23
10m

The Spectrum of Story: Beyond Epics

A fast-paced exploration of the many simple forms a story can take. We'll move beyond myths and epics to see how anecdotes, images, and even lists can be powerful narrative tools.

ADDITIONAL INFO

This is a rapid-fire activity. Spend 2-3 minutes on each point.

1. **"Anecdote:"** Start by telling a 30-second personal anecdote. Then, have pairs share a one-sentence story about their morning.
2. **"Picture:"** Show a compelling, ambiguous image. Ask everyone to write a six-word story about it (a microfiction). Have a few people read theirs aloud.
3. **"List:"** Display a simple list on a slide (e.g., "Keys, wallet, phone, mask, panic."). Explain how a list implies a sequence and can tell a story of a moment.
4. **"Other Forms:"** Briefly mention that more structured business tools like case studies, journey maps, and future-state scenarios are also forms of storytelling used to create shared understanding and persuade.

GOAL

To expand the group's understanding of what constitutes a "story" and to demonstrate how simple, everyday formats can be used for effective narrative communication.

SLIDE

31. What can qualify as a story?

32. Emotion/thought/memory

33. Strong image

34. List of examples

MATERIALS

- A compelling image
- Slide with a list example

13:33
15m

Mapping Stories to Service Design

In small groups, participants will brainstorm and map out how different types of stories can be effectively used at various stages of the service design double diamond, from initial research to final implementation.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Divide participants into small groups of 3-5.
2. Provide each group with a flip chart and markers. Ask them to draw a simple service design double diamond (e.g., Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver).
3. Instruct groups to brainstorm and list specific story types (e.g., user anecdotes, journey maps, future-state scenarios, case studies) and place them in the stage where they are most impactful.
4. For each story type, they should note the reason or purpose it serves at that stage.
5. With 5 minutes remaining, facilitate a brief share-back where each group presents one key insight from their discussion.

GOAL

To apply storytelling concepts directly to the service design process, identifying practical uses for narrative techniques in their work.

SLIDE

35. Double diamond

MATERIALS

- Flip charts
- Markers
- Double Diamond

13:48
15m

Closing Circle: Reflections & What's Next

A structured closing to wrap up our first day. We'll share key takeaways and look ahead to Day 2, ensuring everyone leaves aligned and prepared for our next session.

ADDITIONAL INFO

1. Gather everyone in a circle and thank them for their energy and participation.
2. Introduce a two-part reflection round. Ask each person to share:
 - "One key insight I'm placing in my sack from today is..."
 - "Looking ahead to tomorrow, I am..."
3. Go around the circle until everyone has shared.
4. After the reflections, share practical details for the next day: "Tomorrow will be more active with a focus on movement and embodying our stories. Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes, and don't forget to bring your imaginary sacks!"
5. Close with a final round of applause and thank you.

GOAL

To consolidate learning from Day 1, create a moment for shared reflection, and clearly communicate the plan and expectations for Day 2.

SLIDE

36. Circle

MATERIALS

- Screen

StoryTelling Workshop SDSI 2025 - Day 2			
 Break  Warm Up  Exercise  Discussion/Debriefing  Energizer/Icebreaker			
TIME			ADDITIONAL INFO
09:50 10m	Pre Session	People are coming	
10:00 15m	Embodied Arrival: A Morning Body Scan	A gentle, guided movement sequence to start our day. This activity will help us wake up our bodies, release tension, and connect with our physical presence as storytellers.	1. Gather participants in a circle with space to move. 2. Guide them through a body scan, starting from the extremities: 'Let's wake up our fingers, then our hands, wrists, elbows, and arms.' 3. Continue to the lower body: 'Now let's move to our toes, ankles, knees, and legs.' 4. Guide the visualization: 'Imagine a string gently pulling you up from the crown of your head, lengthening your spine.' 5. Lead the release: 'Now, slowly fold over, and then rise back up, stacking one vertebra at a time.' 6. Take a big morning stretch and yawn loudly 7. Conclude with facial warm-ups: 'Gently massage your face with your palms, relax your jaw, make a big lion face, then a tiny mouse face, and finally blow the air out through your lips and sigh loudly and hmmm.'
10:15 10m	Finding Your Voice: A Breath & Vocal Warm-up	A guided exercise to connect your breath to your voice. We will practice deep diaphragmatic breathing and gradually add sound, warming up our voices to speak with power and presence.	1. Explain the goal: to connect our breath to our voice. Ask participants to stand comfortably and place one hand on their stomach. 2. Guide them through diaphragmatic breathing: 'Breathe in deeply through your nose, feeling your stomach expand like a balloon. Exhale slowly through your mouth.' 3. After a few breaths, add sound: 'On your next exhale, release a gentle 'huh' sound. Feel the vibration from your diaphragm where your hand is.' 4. Progress the sound: 'Now, let's change that sound to a 'hi'. Same deep breath, same feeling from the diaphragm.' 5. Conclude with names: 'Finally, on your next exhale, project your own name into the room with that same breath support.' Repeat a few times.
10:25 5m	The Vocal Orchestra: Exploring Dynamics	An interactive group exercise to explore our vocal range and dynamics. With the facilitator as our conductor, we will use our voices to create a 'vocal orchestra,' learning to control our volume from a whisper to a full-voiced projection.	1. Introduce the concept: 'We are now a vocal orchestra, and I am your conductor.' 2. Remind everyone to use the 'huh' sound, powered by their diaphragm, as their instrument. 3. Explain and demonstrate the hand signals: Your hand low means a very quiet sound, and as your hand rises, the volume should increase. Your hand high is the loudest, full-voiced sound. 4. Begin conducting the group, smoothly moving your hand up and down to create swells and fades in volume. 5. Once the group is responsive, you can try variations like sudden jumps in volume or splitting the group into two sections and conducting them at different levels.
10:30 8m	The Vocal Ladder: Mastering Projection & Intensity	A practical exercise in vocal control. Participants will practice delivering a single sentence across a 'ladder' of seven different levels of volume and intensity, from a whisper to a full-voiced command, to explore their expressive range.	1. Introduce the concept of the Vocal Ladder. Write a simple, neutral sentence on a flipchart for everyone to use (e.g., 'The sky is blue today'). 2. As a group, guide everyone up the ladder, saying the sentence at each level: Whisper, Soft, Conversational, Clear, Commanding. 3. For the 'Commanding' level, emphasize using breath from the diaphragm for authority. 4. For the 'Screaming' level, have them notice the tension and lack of control compared to commanding. 5. Guide them back down: end with 'Silent', having them think the sentence. This highlights internal intention. 6. Debrief on the difference felt between 'Commanding' and 'Screaming'.

TIME			ADDITIONAL INFO
10:38 15m	Vocal Spectrum: One Line, Many Feelings	A vocal warm-up where participants practice delivering a single, neutral sentence with a wide range of emotions. This exercise builds vocal flexibility and the ability to convey subtext.	1. Establish the Sentence: Ask the group to give you a sentence, any sentence 2. 3. Circle Work: Standing in a circle, the first person says the line with a specific emotion (e.g., Joy). The next person says the same line but with a contrasting emotion (e.g., Sadness). 4. Intensity Ladder: The facilitator can call out an emotion and an intensity level from 1 (subtle) to 5 (extreme), and a participant must deliver the line accordingly. 5. Debrief: Discuss how the same words can have vastly different meanings based on emotional delivery. Ask participants which emotions were easier or harder to convey.
10:53 5m	Articulation Tune-up: Tongue Twisters & Team Tales	A fun and lively warm-up to get our mouths, minds, and voices ready for a day of storytelling. We'll start with some classic tongue twisters to improve clarity and then jump into a collaborative story-building game.	**Part 1: Tongue Twisters (5 mins)** 1. Start by explaining that clear articulation requires warm muscles, just like athletics. 2. Lead the group in saying a few classic tongue twisters together. Start slow, then speed up. - Example 1: "Red lorry, yellow lorry." - Example 2: "She sells seashells by the seashore." - Example 3: "Unique New York, Unique New York."
10:58 10m	Coffee		
11:08 18m	Yesterday's Presentation		
11:26 10m	Stage Presence: Mastering Your Movement	A guided movement exercise to develop awareness of a speaker's physical presence and use of space. Participants will explore how moving with intention can command attention and support their message.	1. Neutral Walk: Ask participants to begin walking around the room, filling the empty spaces. Encourage them to be aware of their posture, pace, and the space around them. 2. Exploring Qualities: Prompt them with different scenarios: "Walk as if you are the CEO entering a boardroom." "Walk as if you are a nervous intern about to give your first presentation." "Walk as if you are a passionate activist marching for a cause." 3. Exploring Space Constraints: Now, guide them to explore different stage sizes. "Imagine you are on a huge, empty TED stage. Use the entire space." Then, "Now, imagine you are confined to a small, 2x2 foot podium. How does that change your movement?" 4. Debrief: Briefly discuss how the different ways of moving and the amount of space available felt, and how it affected their feeling of confidence or presence.
11:36 15m	Pacing the Stage: A Movement Scale Exercise	An exercise in group awareness and physical control. Participants will explore different speeds of movement, from a slow walk to a run, learning to adjust their pace based on a shared, non-verbal understanding.	1. Establish the Scale: Explain that you will guide them through a pacing scale from 1 to 10. '1' is an extremely slow walk, '5' is a normal walking pace, and '10' is a light run or jog. 2. Guided Practice: Ask everyone to begin walking around the space at a '5'. After a minute, call out a new number (e.g., '2') and have everyone adjust their speed to match. Continue calling out different numbers, including faster paces like '8' or '9', allowing the group to find a collective rhythm for each level. 3. Debrief: Briefly discuss what it felt like to control their pace and to synchronize with the group. How does a speaker's physical pacing affect an audience?
11:51 10m	Gesture Examples		1. Three volunteers would be invited on the stage 2. They will be prompted to give gestures for: 3. To welcome 4. To List 5. To reiterate 6. To unveil 7. To challenge 8. To be surprised 9. To praise 10. To Thank 11. Then we compare what we liked about what gesture

TIME		ADDITIONAL INFO
12:01 20m	No hands game To control and sync gestures	1. Two volunteers are invited on stage 2. One person hands their hands behind their back while the second person stands at the back and laces their hands through the other persons arms and becomes their arms. 3. One reads the script the other is the hands 4. They will perform three times 5. There will be 3 prompts for the hands: you have to give as many gestures as possible 6. Give no gestures 7. Repeat the same gestures over and over and do not add any variety 8. Ask the audience about reflection on the different gesture styles
12:21 10m	Coffee	
12:31 10m	Word Association	1. Rapid fire circle of word association 2. Everyone stands in a circle and there is a ball they need to throw around to create word associations
12:41 20m	Change	1. One volunteer is invited 2. They are asked to start a story 3. the facilitator gives signals to change the direction of the story they are telling 4. This is to help develop improvisation in the content while storytelling on stage
13:01 20m	Debriefing and discussion and tips	1. Crisis Management 2. Stage fright 3. Vocal smile 4. Your audience knows as much as you tell them 5. Over production 6. Memorising the script
13:21 10m	Story Performance	1. 4-5 volunteers to tell their stories
13:31 15m	Final circle	1. Debrief 2. Sack 3. Pulse 4. Thankyou
13:46 10m	Feedback Form	Feedback form qr is displayed on the screen and they can give their anonymous feedback there
13:56		
TOTAL LENGTH: 4h 06m		
🔗 Materials ☐ Optional: Soft background music in Embodied Arrival: A Moving Body Soan ☐ A simple sentence on a flip chart or slide in The Vocal Ladder: Mastering Projection & Intensity ☐ A simple, neutral sentence written on a board in Vocal Spectrum: One Line, Many Feelings ☐ List of tongue twisters for the facilitator in Articulation Tune-up: Tongue Twisters & Team Tales ☐ An open space for movement x 2 in Stage Presence: Mastering Your Movement Pacing the Stage: A Movement Scale Exercise		

StoryTelling Workshop SDSI 2025 - Day 2 - block details		
09:50 10m	Pre Session	
	People are coming	
10:00 15m	Embodied Arrival: A Morning Body Scan	
	A gentle, guided movement sequence to start our day. This activity will help us wake up our bodies, release tension, and connect with our physical presence as storytellers. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Gather participants in a circle with space to move. 2. Guide them through a body scan, starting from the extremities: 'Let's wake up our fingers, then our hands, wrists, elbows, and arms.' 3. Continue to the lower body: 'Now let's move to our toes, ankles, knees, and legs.' 4. Guide the visualization: 'Imagine a string gently pulling you up from the crown of your head, lengthening your spine.' 5. Lead the release: 'Now, slowly fold over, and then rise back up, stacking one vertebra at a time.' 6. Take a big morning stretch and yawn loudly 7. Conclude with facial warm-ups: 'Gently massage your face with your palms, relax your jaw, make a big lion face, then a tiny mouse face, and finally blow the air out through your lips and sigh loudly and hmmm.' GOAL To physically warm up the body, increase body awareness, release morning tension, and prepare participants for a day of active and embodied storytelling.	MATERIALS • Optional: Soft background music
10:15 10m	Finding Your Voice: A Breath & Vocal Warm-up	
	A guided exercise to connect your breath to your voice. We will practice deep diaphragmatic breathing and gradually add sound, warming up our voices to speak with power and presence. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Explain the goal: to connect our breath to our voice. Ask participants to stand comfortably and place one hand on their stomach. 2. Guide them through diaphragmatic breathing: 'Breathe in deeply through your nose, feeling your stomach expand like a balloon. Exhale slowly through your mouth.' 3. After a few breaths, add sound: 'On your next exhale, release a gentle 'huh' sound. Feel the vibration from your diaphragm where your hand is.' 4. Progress the sound: 'Now, let's change that sound to a 'hf'. Same deep breath, same feeling from the diaphragm.' 5. Conclude with names: 'Finally, on your next exhale, project your own name into the room with that same breath support.' Repeat a few times. GOAL To warm up the voice, teach the fundamentals of diaphragmatic breath support, and build confidence in vocal projection.	
10:25 5m	The Vocal Orchestra: Exploring Dynamics	
	An interactive group exercise to explore our vocal range and dynamics. With the facilitator as our conductor, we will use our voices to create a 'vocal orchestra,' learning to control our volume from a whisper to a full-voiced projection. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Introduce the concept: 'We are now a vocal orchestra, and I am your conductor.' 2. Remind everyone to use the 'huh' sound, powered by their diaphragm, as their instrument. 3. Explain and demonstrate the hand signals: 'Your hand low means a very quiet sound, and as your hand rises, the volume should increase. Your hand high is the loudest, full-voiced sound.' 4. Begin conducting the group, smoothly moving your hand up and down to create swells and fades in volume. 5. Once the group is responsive, you can try variations like sudden jumps in volume or splitting the group into two sections and conducting them at different levels. GOAL To develop control over vocal volume and dynamics, to practice sustaining sound with breath support, and to build group listening skills and responsiveness.	
10:30 8m	The Vocal Ladder: Mastering Projection & Intensity	
	A practical exercise in vocal control. Participants will practice delivering a single sentence across a 'ladder' of seven different levels of volume and intensity, from a whisper to a full-voiced command, to explore their expressive range. ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Introduce the concept of the Vocal Ladder. Write a simple, neutral sentence on a flipchart for everyone to use (e.g., 'The sky is blue today'). 2. As a group, guide everyone up the ladder, saying the sentence at each level: Whisper, Soft, Conversational, Clear, Commanding. 3. For the 'Commanding' level, emphasize using breath from the diaphragm for authority.	MATERIALS • A simple sentence on a flip chart or slide

	4. For the "Screaming" level, have them notice the tension and lack of control compared to commanding. 5. Guide them back down: end with "Silent", having them think the sentence. This highlights internal intention. 6. Debrief on the difference felt between "Commanding" and "Screaming". GOAL To develop conscious control over vocal projection and intensity, to distinguish between a commanding voice and shouting, and to expand one's dynamic range as a speaker.
10:38 15m	Vocal Spectrum: One Line, Many Feelings
	A vocal warm-up where participants practice delivering a single, neutral sentence with a wide range of emotions. This exercise builds vocal flexibility and the ability to convey subtext. ADDITIONAL INFO Establish the Sentence: Ask the group to give you a sentence, any sentence. Circle Work: Standing in a circle, the first person says the line with a specific emotion (e.g., Joy). The next person says the same line but with a contrasting emotion (e.g., Sadness). Intensity Ladder: The facilitator can call out an emotion and an intensity level from 1 (subtle) to 5 (extreme), and a participant must deliver the line accordingly. Debrief: Discuss how the same words can have vastly different meanings based on emotional delivery. Ask participants which emotions were easier or harder to convey. GOAL To explore the relationship between emotion and vocal delivery, to warm up the voice, and to enhance expressive capabilities. MATERIALS - A simple, neutral sentence written on a board
10:53 5m	Articulation Tune-up: Tongue Twisters & Team Tales
	A fun and lively warm-up to get our mouths, minds, and voices ready for a day of storytelling. We'll start with some classic tongue twisters to improve clarity and then jump into a collaborative story-building game. ADDITIONAL INFO **Part 1: Tongue Twisters (5 mins)** - Start by explaining that clear articulation requires warm muscles, just like athletics. - Lead the group in saying a few classic tongue twisters together. Start slow, then speed up. - Example 1: "Red lorry, yellow lorry." - Example 2: "She sells seashells by the seashore." - Example 3: "Unique New York, Unique New York." GOAL To warm up the vocal cords and muscles required for clear speech, practice precise articulation in a fun setting, and enhance group listening and collaboration. MATERIALS - List of tongue twisters for the facilitator
10:58 10m	Coffee
11:08 18m	Yesterday's Presentation
11:26 10m	Stage Presence: Mastering Your Movement
	A guided movement exercise to develop awareness of a speaker's physical presence and use of space. Participants will explore how moving with intention can command attention and support their message. ADDITIONAL INFO Neutral Walk: Ask participants to begin walking around the room, filling the empty spaces. Encourage them to be aware of their posture, pace, and the space around them. Exploring Qualities: Prompt them with different scenarios: "Walk as if you are the CEO entering a boardroom." "Walk as if you are a nervous intern about to give your first presentation." "Walk as if you are a passionate activist marching for a cause." Exploring Space Constraints: Now, guide them to explore different stage sizes. "Imagine you are on a huge, empty TED stage. Use the entire space." Then, "Now, imagine you are confined to a small, 2x2 foot podium. How does that change your movement?" Debrief: Briefly discuss how the different ways of moving and the amount of space available felt, and how it affected their feeling of confidence or presence. GOAL To build awareness of body language and movement, to understand how to use physical space to enhance presence, and to practice moving with intention as a speaker. MATERIALS - An open space for movement

11:36 15m	Pacing the Stage: A Movement Scale Exercise	An exercise in group awareness and physical control. Participants will explore different speeds of movement, from a slow walk to a run, learning to adjust their pace based on a shared, non-verbal understanding. ADDITIONAL INFO Establish the Scale: Explain that you will guide them through a pacing scale from 1 to 10. '1' is an extremely slow walk, '5' is a normal walking pace, and '10' is a light run or jog. Guided Practice: Ask everyone to begin walking around the space at a '5'. After a minute, call out a new number (e.g., '2') and have everyone adjust their speed to match. Continue calling out different numbers, including faster paces like '8' or '9', allowing the group to find a collective rhythm for each level. Debrief: Briefly discuss what it felt like to control their pace and to synchronize with the group. How does a speaker's physical pacing affect an audience? GOAL To develop control over physical pacing, to build group awareness and non-verbal communication, and to understand the impact of a speaker's movement speed on energy and delivery. MATERIALS - An open space for movement
11:51 10m	Gesture Examples	ADDITIONAL INFO - Three volunteers would be invited on the stage - They will be prompted to give gestures for: - To welcome - To List - To reiterate - To unveil - To challenge - To be surprised - To praise - To Thank - Then we compare what we liked about what gesture
12:01 20m	No hands game	To control and sync gestures ADDITIONAL INFO - Two volunteers are invited on stage - One person hands their hands behind their back while the second person stands at the back and laces their hands through the other person's arms and becomes their arms. - One reads the script the other is the hands - They will perform three times - There will be 3 prompts for the hands: you have to give as many gestures as possible - Give no gestures - Repeat the same gestures over and over and do not add any variety - Ask the audience about reflection on the different gesture styles
12:21 10m	Coffee	
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12:41 20m	Change	

	ADDITIONAL INFO 1. One volunteer is invited 2. They are asked to start a story 3. the facilitator gives signals to change the direction of the story they are telling 4. This is to help develop improvisation in the content while storytelling on stage
13:01 20m	Debriefing and discussion and tips
	ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Crisis Management 2. Stage fright 3. Vocal smile 4. Your audience knows as much as you tell them 5. Over production 6. Memorising the script
13:21 10m	Story Performance
	ADDITIONAL INFO 1. 4-5 volunteers to tell their stories
13:31 15m	Final circle
	ADDITIONAL INFO 1. Debrief 2. Sack 3. Pulse 4. Thankyou
13:46 10m	Feedback Form
	ADDITIONAL INFO Feedback form qr is displayed on the screen and they can give their anonymous feedback there