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**Translanguaging space and creative activity: Theorising collaborative arts-based learning**

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## **Disclosure statement**

The authors hereby declare that they have no conflicts of interest in relation to the submitted manuscript.

## **Biographical notes**

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**James Simpson** is a Senior Lecturer in Language Education at the University of Leeds, and is a co-investigator on the TLANG project. As well as his work on TLANG his research interests are the teaching and learning of English for multilingual students in migration contexts, and language learning with new

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**Louise Atkinson** is a visual artist, curator, and researcher who completed a practice-based PhD in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds in 2016. Her work is based on ideas of appropriation as interpretation and how these relate to collecting in museum and art practice. She is also interested in exploring co-production and cross-cultural understanding in and through material culture.

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# **Translanguaging space and creative activity: theorising collaborative arts-based learning**

## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on an innovative transdisciplinary educational arts-based learning project, LangScape Curators (LS-C), which links to and leads from research conducted for the AHRC-funded ‘Translation and Translanguaging’ (TLANG) project. Here we describe how we work collaboratively with creative practitioners to use a variety of creative arts methods with young people to explore the linguistic landscapes of Leeds. We propose a theoretical framework for collaborative research activity of this nature, and we use one of the creative arts activities – collage – to exemplify visual understandings of how communicative repertoires and linguistic landscapes are explored through co-produced pedagogical workshops. The programme and its associated research make an original contribution to linguistic landscape-based collaborative ethnography. We conclude by setting out directions for the future of these activities and their application in applied linguistics research and practice.

**Key words:** linguistic landscape, collaborative ethnography, arts based methods, translanguaging, superdiversity

## **1. Introduction**

In this paper we focus on a transdisciplinary educational arts project linked to and leading from the AHRC-funded project, Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities (TLANG)<sup>i</sup>, a large-scale multi-site linguistic ethnographic study of urban multilingualism. LangScape Curators (LS-C) is a programme aimed at young people which uses creative practice and arts based methods to develop critical thinking and analytical skills across a range of core curriculum areas (Literacy, Geography, Modern Languages, History, Art and Design) through encouraging young people to become ethnographic researchers in the streets of their communities. It builds on and develops linguistic ethnographic research methodologies (Copland & Creese, 2015; Blackledge & Creese et al., 2017) used within the TLANG project (for example, observation, interviews, photography, linguistic landscape-based research). Taking research into the multilingual linguistic landscape (for example, Blommaert, 2013) as its starting point, the LS-C programme invites young people to explore and analyse their own spaces and places in non-formal workshop settings. Here we propose and exemplify a theoretical framework and methodological approach for this collaborative

research activity, focusing on one of the creative arts workshop activities – collage – to highlight the role of the creative arts in building spaces for dynamic communicative practices.

Our description of the creative arts collage activity enables us to explain how the concept of translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2011), in combination with collaging practices that we draw upon in the workshops, converge and inform our work. Towards the end of the paper we provide a pathway for developing the project further, suggesting that LS-C enables new innovative ways to consider the affordances of arts-based methods and practice in language pedagogy and in collaborative research practice with young people (Hackett, Pahl & Pool, 2017).

## **2. Background: LangScape Curators**

LS-C is an ongoing, transdisciplinary, collaborative engagement project using arts-based methods to engage young people in thinking about research and in becoming ethnographic researchers (Atkinson & Bradley, 2017; Simpson & Bradley, 2017; Bradley, Moore & Atkinson, 2016; Bradley, Moore & Simpson, 2016; Bradley, 2016; Bradley, 2017). The activities are carried out in two neighbourhoods in one of the UK's largest cities, Leeds, working with a third sector organisation, IntoUniversity<sup>ii</sup>, and through the educational engagement team for social sciences at the University of Leeds. IntoUniversity provides learning centres for children and young people of primary age (7-11 years old) and secondary school age (11-18 years old) in areas of lower progression to university, aiming to raise educational achievement and aspirations towards higher education through working in partnership with Russell Group universities<sup>iii</sup>. The two Leeds-based centres, in the neighbourhoods of Harehills (Leeds-East) and Beeston (Leeds-South), work with the University of Leeds to develop and run multidisciplinary programmes of activities in addition to providing homework support. The LS-C project stems from TLANG, a large-scale multi-site linguistic ethnographic study of urban multilingualism. Within the Leeds-based team there was strong interest in exploring ways of engaging young people through educational workshops, leading on from the emergent research findings of TLANG and of the linguistic ethnographic methodologies (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts,



2015) that the larger project followed. We developed LS-C in dialogue with the centre managers and the educational engagement clusters for arts and social sciences at the University of Leeds as a way to extend the TLANG research and work with people across the city. It is designed to bring together different practitioners and researchers into a community of experts, following the structure of the TLANG project itself (Blackledge & Creese et al., 2017).

One research area of focus for TLANG is the study of the linguistic landscape of the four cities which are the case study sites (Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds and London) (Callaghan, 2015, 2016). For LS-C we worked in collaboration with artist-researchers to develop a programme of arts-based activities which enabled young people to explore their local communities in the same ways that ethnographic linguistic landscape researchers might, but extending that approach by using creative inquiry to synthesise, analyse, and create artefacts which were then used to present their findings.

The three central TLANG project research themes were woven into LS-C as epistemological touchstones. Our notion of translation considers the translating of research for young people and its retranslation back into research. Translanguaging is a sociolinguistic concept referring to the dynamic multilingualism characteristic of contemporary life in linguistically and culturally diverse environments. It was included because it sheds light on how the project values and promotes the young people's deployment of the full range of their linguistic and communicative repertoires and those encountered in the immediate surroundings of the IntoUniversity centres. It also takes a multimodal approach to translanguaging (Kusters et al., 2017; Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Bradley & Moore, 2018), extending beyond 'language' towards the multimodal (Pennycook, 2017). LS-C engages with the notion of trans-space (García & Li Wei, 2014) through the design of a programme of workshops which move between and beyond bounded structures, disciplines and practices. Finally, superdiversity, following Steven Vertovec (2007), was introduced to draw the focus of the project and young people's attention to the increasing diversity of societies brought about by demographic and technological changes. Participants were encouraged to analyse the changing semiotic environments and consider the reasons for these visual shifts and evolutions, in relation to superdiversity.

### **3. Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approaches**

Here we set out the broad theoretical framework and methodological approaches underpinning the rationale and methodology for LS-C: linguistic landscapes, ethnographic approaches to the linguistic landscape, translanguaging space, collage, collaborative ethnography and co-production and interdisciplinarity.

#### **3.1. Linguistic landscape**

Our starting point for LS-C is the linguistic, or, following Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow (2010, p. 1), semiotic landscape as a site for the “interplay between language, visual discourse, and the spatial practices and dimensions of culture”. Building on the idea that ‘landscape’ is a “way of seeing the external world” (Berger, 1972 in Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 3), the LS-C project has, as with the research area in general, the broad aim of developing deeper understanding of “how we view and interpret space in ways that are contingent on geographical, social, economic, legal, cultural and emotional circumstances” (ibid). Alastair Pennycook suggests that current translanguaging approaches to the linguistic landscape (e.g. Gorter & Cenoz, 2015) have mainly sought to consider linguistic landscapes through a translanguaging lens, in contrast to drawing complex semiotic landscapes into translanguaging (2017, p.270). The choice of activities within the LS-C programme (see section four) seek to consider communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2014) as internal and external, therefore bridging the border between the individual idiolect and the ‘multilingual and multimodal repertoire’ of the linguistic landscape itself (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015, p.71, in Pennycook, 2017, p.270).

Working with young people in the neighbourhoods in which they live, which are also the neighbourhoods in which we carry out our research or ones with similar characteristics, we focused on the idea of ‘home’. Home is, as Jaworski and Thurlow explain, drawing from Entrikin (1991) and Johnstone (2004), ‘inevitably bound up with specific geographical locations which we come to know and experience both sensually and intellectually’ (2010, p.7). The programme responds to researcher interests in exploring ways of engaging young people through educational workshops, leading on from the emergent research findings of TLANG and of the linguistic

ethnographic methodologies (Copland & Creese, 2015; Rampton, Maybin & Roberts, 2015) that the larger project followed.

### **3.2. Ethnographic approaches to linguistic landscape**

Jan Blommaert maintains that an ethnographic approach to the linguistic landscape entails observing ‘signs as traces of multimodal communicative practices within a socio-politically structured field which is historically configured’ (2016, para. 4). Further to Blommaert’s critiques of certain areas of linguistic landscape research, and as explained by Callaghan (2016), researching the visual can risk a slip into superficiality. However, when combined with ethnographic enquiry, significant social trends may be illuminated. Ethnographic approaches to linguistic landscaping, we argue, allow for hidden and perhaps stigmatised communicative repertoires, often those of linguistic minority groups, to be foregrounded. They allow everyday semiotic practices of diverse individuals to become “‘real’, more credible, more viable as objects of policy and activism, more present as everyday realities that touch our lives and dynamically shape our futures” (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p.9). We see ethnographic linguistic landscaping work as potentially being strongly connected to what feminist economic geographers Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham (2008) refer to as a performative ontological project (Moore, Bradley & Simpson, 2018 forthcoming). This means seeing knowledge as always in a process of being and becoming, and of considering scholars as privileged actors in this process of (re)inscribing meanings onto the world (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p.25). Such re-inscription is what we believe creative practices, such as collage, have enabled in the LS-C workshops.

### **3.3. Translanguaging space**

In planning the workshops and considering the communicative repertoires students encounter within and beyond educational spaces, the notion of translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2011; García & Li Wei, 2014; Zhu Hua, Li Wei & Lyons, 2017) offers a conceptual lens. Li Wei (2011, p. 1223) describes translanguaging spaces as spaces not only built up and created for translanguaging, but also by translanguaging.

Through engaging with different artistic practices and through this paper, we explore mechanisms for the creation of these spaces.

Using the concept of translanguaging space, we demonstrate how collage works as a creative activity to create and build a fluid multilingual space, as a methodological tool for synthesis of research findings, as a lens for visualising creativity and criticality (Li Wei, 2011, p.1222), and as a potential shared means of communication. Through analysis of the collaging process and resultant collage products, we focus firstly on the methods and processes involved, and secondly on the creation and building of a creative positive translanguaging space (Bradley & Simpson, 2018). We consider this work in terms of a dialogic process (Bakhtin, 1981) of engagement with and through transdisciplinary research. This dialogic process takes place both between the multidisciplinary research team and the project participants themselves, and between the artistic practice and ethnography, which are brought into contact.

Translanguaging space is a useful starting point for interdisciplinary investigations around communicative repertoire in creative arts settings. If translanguaging space allows for criticality and creativity by using linguistic difference as a resource, our focus here is also on the development of a 'shared language' (see for example, Sandrine Eschanauer and Joelle Aden's research into translanguaging and theatre, e.g. Eschanauer, 2014; Aden, 2014). This moves the focus away from the individual idiolect (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015) and towards the development of a shared means of communication, such as collage.

### 3.4. Collage

Collage, from the French 'coller' (to stick), has been considered 'art' since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.102) and was embedded into the programme design as a method of inquiry (Yuen, 2016) which enabled 'simultaneous analysis, synthesis and representation' (p.338). In recent years, as Lynn Butler-Kisber explains, collage has been developed in qualitative research as an experimental way to integrate visual approaches (2010, p.102). In Felice Yuen's participatory action research project with aboriginal women in Canada, collage was demonstrated to have 'the potential to communicate a poignant and evocative message, thereby contributing to creating a strong platform for social justice' (2016, p.338). In Yuen's findings from creating collage in health research, the collage process and the resultant artefacts elicited a 'sensory response' for those creating the works and for the viewers of the collages. Kate Pahl describes collage in her research in literacies with communities as working to 'build up a picture that was alive with experiences' (2014, p.59). Collage as method enables participants to draw together whatever is to hand, creating visual 'texts'. The process itself, as a 'process of engagement' is as Pahl describes, 'a gathering together of modes in an ensemble of meaning making' (p.59). This complements Butler-Kisber's understandings of collage in qualitative inquiry:

collage clusters can help to conceptualize dimensions of understanding that were previously unconscious, and how collage creation can be a way of making thoughts concrete, facilitating the thinking, writing and talking about the inquiry.

(2010, p.102)

Collage was developed within the programme design to draw from artistic practice, to develop a process of engagement with the linguistic landscape and to facilitate the process of making thoughts and ideas concrete. The collaging process involves the young people using whichever resources they have to hand to synthesise, analyse and present their research findings, in this way connecting with the concept of a translanguaging space in which people can draw from their full communicative repertoire.

### **3.5. Collaborative ethnography and co-production**

The methodology for LS-C is developed from Luke Eric Lassiter's (2005) scholarship in 'collaborative ethnography'. In our work on the TLANG project, we seek to conduct ethnographic research that, as Lassiter (2005, p. 3) states, involves "collaborative reading and interpretation, between the ethnographer and his or her interlocutors, of the very ethnographic text itself". In becoming ethnographers, the young people are developing research skills across the programme which enables them to develop their critical reading and analysis of the communities in which they live and study. Likewise, as workshop facilitators and researchers we are also 'co-learners' (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 112), and as such we make deliberate steps to disrupt and challenge the hierarchies of research and of the workshop space – for example, through developing creative activities which are led by the young people and through the design of the fieldwork which aims to draw out the participants' own observations rather than a prescribed set of features. Collage here works as a collaborative process of engagement with the linguistic landscapes of the surrounding area, enabling a space to develop an artefact together, sharing responses.

Positioning this work as a performative ontological project means that we consider the processes of 'knowledging' and focus on these as theoretically grounded and also as inductive. The kinds of research epistemologies embedded throughout LS-C are developed through co-production (Facer & Enright, 2016; Graham 2016; McKay & Bradley, 2016) and collaborative, cross-sector work within the broad paradigm of action research (Facer & Pahl, 2017). In the context of museum studies, Helen Graham (2016) fuses together two 'genealogies' of the concept of co-production to develop a concept that encompasses 'community participation' and 'more-than-human participation'. Here we consider this 'hybrid' definition as one that enables us to develop understandings of the collaging process and translanguaging spaces within the project space.

### **3.6. Interdisciplinarity**

Our collage data, in terms of process and the artefacts produced, explores and challenges the concept of translanguaging space, and how creative practice, co-

production and working across disciplines can foster these multilingual spaces of criticality and creativity. In an edited volume entitled, *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity* (1998), art historian Hal Foster describes the danger of not being rooted or grounded within one (or two) disciplines: there is the risk of being without a discipline. Gayatri Spivak also refers to this interdisciplinary anxiety: “the anxiety of so-called interdisciplinary work is that one computes with the methodological training of one discipline, however transformed” (1999, p. 213). In working together, and in recognising and starting from our own varied disciplinary backgrounds, both academic and practitioner, we aimed to develop a project in which we could all continue to draw from each other’s experiences and methodological training. In doing so, we would work across and beyond our disciplines, and in this sense create and foster a transdisciplinary approach.

#### 4. Workshop Structure

This section sets out the methodology for LS-C. The LS-C workshop programme from which this paper draws took place at the two IntoUniversity sites over three days as part of the centre’s ‘Holiday Focus’ activities during the school half-term holidays in October 2016 and February 2017. The workshop structure is described below, with each day starting at 10.30am and finishing at 3pm:

Day	AM	PM
One	Introductions, warm up activities; <b>Creative arts activity 1:</b> <b>Group ‘language portraits’</b> (following Busch, 2016)	Linguistic landscapes: street and community ethnographic research, interviews in groups.
Two	Synthesis, analysis and communication of findings. <b>Creative arts activity 2:</b> <b>collage as method.</b>	Continuation of synthesis, analysis and communication of findings <b>Creative arts activity 3:</b> <b>creation of ‘zines’ (hand-made magazines) as</b>

		<b>method.</b>
Three	<b>Creative arts activity 4: creative writing.</b> <b>Creative arts activity 5: performance of spoken words poems and texts.</b>	<b>Exhibition of art works</b> Communication, dissemination and exhibition of findings to the visitors from the public.

Figure 1: workshop structure

We start the workshops with an introduction to the concept of repertoire, using a creative method drawing from Brigitta Busch's (2016) biographical approaches to the linguistic repertoire. The young people work collaboratively to create life-sized portraits which represent their shared communicative repertoires. This enables use to consider multimodality, communication across different media and points of commonality and sharedness.





Figure two: group language portraits

We then conduct ethnographic explorations of the street and surrounding area in small groups using photography, video and interviewing of community members (e.g. shopkeepers), to develop understandings of the local semiotic landscapes and the meanings behind signs. This is based on the TLANG linguistic landscape research

methodologies and the research conducted by project researchers (e.g. Callaghan, 2015). During the second and third days we work with creative practitioners to synthesise, analyse and communicate the research findings using visual methods including collage, zineing, creative writing and performance. At the end of the three-day workshop, the participants exhibit and talk about their work at a celebration and sharing event to which parents/carers, other community members and university teachers and researchers are invited. This is followed by a short presentation session in which certificates and ‘LangScape Curators’ medals are distributed.

Broadly, the creative arts activities aim to create a space for participants to continue to investigate and explore their research findings from their own neighbourhoods. The collage activity is one of five arts-based activities which, in the example given in this paper, took place during the second day of the three-day workshops, after the young people had explored the semiotic landscape of the streets in the surrounding area to the centre (and in which many of the young people live). This data collection activity involved photography, film and interviews with community members about the neighbourhood and about their languages. Conducting the ethnographic research developed the participants’ understanding of and familiarity with their neighbourhoods. However, the research skills that were being taught and tested out across this process enabled them to consider how they might make the ‘familiar strange’ and the ‘strange familiar’ (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts, 2015, following Todorov 1988) as novice ethnographers. In this sense, they became ethnographers themselves, taking on the role of researchers and developing their critical analytical skills (for a similar collaborative linguistic landscaping project, see Unamuno & Patiño, 2017). The exercises that we undertook over the three days were also intended to open up the participants to new ways of seeing and thinking about these areas. Therefore, we chose creative methods that would disrupt the ways in which they would usually inhabit the spaces around them. We encouraged them to see things differently through using space differently. Considering this through the lens of translanguaging space allowed us to develop understandings of how the arts methods would build and enable positive translanguaging spaces of criticality and creativity.

#### **4.1. The collages: description and analysis of process and product**

In this section we describe and analyse the collaging process and the artistic products created through this activity, using a case study from one of the workshops.

In exploring the results of the collage activity in this workshop, we ask:

- How we can consider our perspectives of ‘home’ through using collage as mode, as medium, and linguistic/semiotic landscapes as a prism?
- How does this creative practice facilitate activation of and reflexion on individual and shared communicative repertoires?
- How can we develop deeper and richer understandings of the spaces in which we research through engaged practices such as collage, around our research themes of translation, translanguaging and superdiversity?
- And do activities such as collage enable the voices of young people within and around our research, in terms of extending and developing our ethnographic methods collaboratively?

These questions inform and frame our work.

#### **4.2. Practice-led research**

The collage workshop was devised and led by artist-researcher Louise Atkinson and came from her own creative practice, in which she uses collage to create images which are reminiscent of a place.



Figure 3: an example of Louise's collages

In this way the creation of imagery of 'place' aligns with Jaworski and Thurlow's (2010, p. 9) description of place as collective memory:

Imagery of place is, of course, an important resource for diasporic communities in maintaining their sense of national or ethnic identity and through which to express their longing and nostalgia for the 'lost' homeland.

Louise's own collage works are created using shapes cut from coloured pieces of paper, interspersed with pictures from travel brochures, to produce images that were reminiscent of a place. Due to the lack of landmarks or distinguishing features within the collage pieces, the images cannot (and are not intended to) be identifiable as a specific location, in this sense producing a 'web of connections instead of linear ones' (Butler-Kisber, 2010:105). However, through questioning the young people as to the nature of the images, they identify a particular type of place, such as countryside, desert, mountain, etc. This creates a nearness – and a distance – simultaneously.

Through ongoing discussion around Louise's collages, the young people also determined that their readings of the images were supported by ideas of hot and cold

temperatures, suggested by the particular colour palette shown in the image. This allowed them to consider how they might use different colours in their own collages. Although the examples shown did not include any text, we encouraged the young people to think about how they might incorporate texts and photographs, including those from the linguistic landscaping of the community that they had engaged in, into their own work.

### **4.3. Process and products**

The students worked in three larger groups for the workshops, which were split into smaller groups of two or three for the collage activity. The groups were single sex, but not by project design. On the first day we had put them into mixed groups, but the centre coordinator had allowed them to change into their chosen groups due to the workshops taking place as a holiday activity, outside formal school. The participants split themselves into groups of their own volition, with one group of boys and two groups of girls.

Each group was given a sheet of A1 cartridge paper and a number of photographic prints of images and text taken from their earlier investigations around their neighbourhood. They were then encouraged to cut out and collage these images to create an alternative ‘landscape’, to represent aspects of their neighbourhood, considering the idea of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). Each group responded differently, some focusing on building up blocks of photographic imagery, while others created textures with the photographs by tearing the edges and overlaying different images on top of each other. The transmodality enabled a space in which new ways of thinking about ‘place’ could be developed, through a process of engagement with a new method and collaborative collaging. It also enabled a space in which the broader semiotic landscape could be unpacked and reassembled.

In addition to this, some participants chose to use the photographs as reference material, meticulously drawing out signs for fast food onto their pages. They also used their phones as a way of gathering more images related to their interests in the topic, as sources of additional data, demonstrating the digital literacy practices within the workshop context, despite the activity being primarily arts based (Pahl, 2007).





Figure 4: collage in progress

As a way of introducing colour to their work, participants applied cut out shapes from coloured paper and tissue paper which they also screwed up and glued to the surface to recreate the greenery of the park which they had seen and worked in earlier in the programme. Halfway through the session the groups were given paints to introduce



another layer of colour into their work. As well as a practical measure, this also allowed them to develop themes from the text and imagery before deciding how the colour might affect their collages.



Figure 5: collage in progress

The boys' groups tended towards covering their sheets with colour, creating a rich imagery of the park and houses surrounded by shops and signs. These works also mixed ideas of day and night in the city, showing bright sections next to dark ones.

Conversely, the girls' works appeared more analytical, incorporating more handwritten text and quotes that they had heard and produced throughout the ethnographic linguistic landscape research period. These works also contained elements of the multilingualism within the neighbourhood as well as references to their personal interests, such as fashion.



Figure 6: collage in progress

Although this section focuses specifically on the collage element of the workshops, the previous exercises throughout the programme were clearly evident within the visual art produced by the participants. This process was facilitated to some extent by the materials provided, such as the printouts of photographs to be used for collaging. However, it was also initiated by the participants, who freely included quotes from



interviews they had undertaken and images from the language portrait activity that they had produced on the previous day, without prompting. The process of collaging therefore enabled participants to synthesise their previous experiences into single images, allowing them to see the relationship between these elements more easily.

The collage products, once completed, then provided a visual space for communicating the participants' findings to a wider audience. The visitors to the celebration and exhibition which concluded the programme were invited to explore the findings with the young people and to develop their own understandings of the semiotic landscapes of the neighbourhoods in which we are working.

## **5. Discussion: Creative Translanguaging Space**

So far in this paper we have considered LS-C, an engagement project grounded in linguistic landscape research and linked to the TLANG research project. We have also explored ways in which this work connects elements of creative arts practice to the broad research themes of translanguaging in superdiverse contexts. Our focus here has been on collage, one of five creative arts workshops within the LS-C programme. The collage workshops, as we have described above, serves to synthesise the young people's own emergent research findings during the process of learning how to be researchers. The collage activity opened up a creative space within which they could generate ideas and thoughts around their experiences with their semiotic surroundings, through the collaborative construction of the pieces. It also served to provide a space of analysis, opening up opportunities for critical engagement with the semiotic landscapes of the surrounding area.

By working with young people to explore and respond to the linguistic landscape, developing their ideas through creative arts, this work contributes to:

- linguistic landscape research, which should, “bring something unique and valuable [e.g. young people's voices and visions] to higher levels of generalization about societies, their histories, dynamics and structures” (Blommaert, 2016, para. 9);

- the performative ontological project (Gibson-Graham, 2008) of bringing everyday communicative repertoires in superdiversity, in particular those emerging in and from the semiotic landscape, to the forefront of theory (Blackledge & Creese et al., 2017);
- a developing understanding of translanguaging research as an epistemological project (Moore, Bradley & Simpson, 2018, forthcoming), strongly committed to new forms of knowledge production and to the transformation of subjectivities, requiring novel processes, such as transdisciplinary work and creative co-production with young people;
- ethical, methodological practices allowing collaborative spaces for re-imagining and re-constructing the semiotic landscapes inhabited by young people.

Multimodal translanguaging (Lee, 2015; Kusters et al., 2017) is observed visually within the collages. We can observe how the different words, different languages and different visuals combine to construct and produce the pieces, which can be considered as ‘multimodal artefacts, which carry traces of their making within them’ (Pahl, 2007, p.87). The collage itself, and the act of collaging, enables creative and critical spaces for mobilising repertoires around the activities, as the participants developed their ethnographic research into creative arts pieces. Following Tong King Lee (2015, p. 463), these spaces “constitute a ‘third narrative’ whose existence as a pristine site of in-betweenness signals the presence of other relatively well-formed spaces”. The collaging process therefore acts as an example of a site of in-betweenness, opening up translanguaging spaces through the collaborative creation of pieces of creative work.

The collages also acted as media to develop a shared ‘language’ within each group as the participants worked collaboratively on their pieces of work. We see the collages themselves as spaces which represent fluid multimodality and are iconic of fluid multilingualism. The collages are spaces which open up for the exploration of language and of the semiotic landscape. They are vehicles of metacommentary but they also become objects of metacommentary (Rymes, 2014; Creese, Kaur Takhi & Blackledge, 2015) on language, repertoire, space and the semiotic landscape.

We now return to the concept of translanguaging spaces and how they can open up, and be enabled. One of the participants had asked, earlier in the project, whether it was ok to use her home language, Tigrinya, in the workshop during the periods of discussion and exploration of individual and shared linguistic repertoires. For us, as researchers of multilingualism, this question was an important one, as well as a surprising one, raising further questions about what is perceived and expected in terms of educational spaces and spaces of multilingualism. Our data, in terms of the collages represented and discussed in this article, demonstrate the development and emergence of space during creative workshops – space in which the young people could consider their languaging practices within the context of their research into the broader superdiverse communities in which they live and attend school.

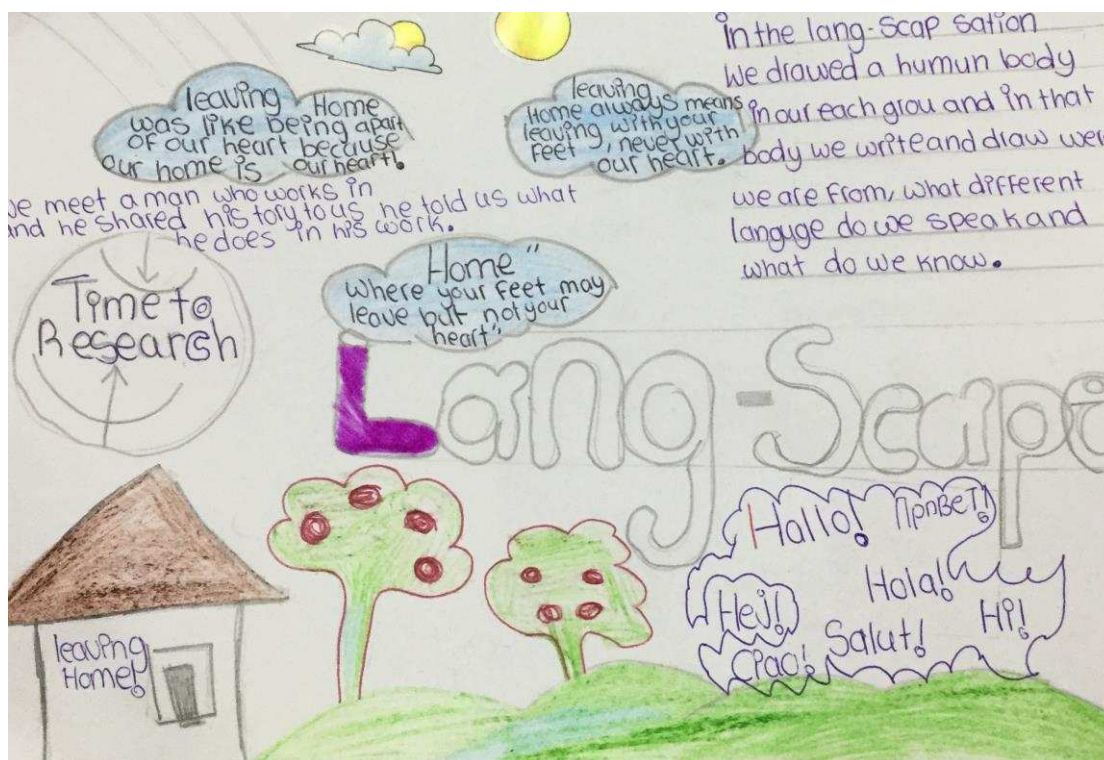


Figure 7: M's collage

The final image shows a piece of work created by one of the participants during the evening after the second workshops and brought to the final session. As a multimodal artefact (Pahl, 2014:59), it demonstrates her learning, her synthesis of her learning and her analysis of the project themes and processes. It demonstrates what was taken from the programme by one of the young people, and the generative processes of the arts-based methods, including the collage. As a literacy artefact, it is more

conventional than those previously created within the workshops, showing a more schooled literacy practice. In a small way it is a multilingual piece, recognising and exemplifying the process as building positive translanguaging spaces (Bradley & Simpson, 2018) for creativity and criticality. Here we return to the questions which underpin this work and consider this in terms of voice, and how voice can be enabled through developing spaces for criticality and creativity. Collage here, and the synthesis of the workshops became a stimulus for the participant, and a mode through which she could express her own voice, making it both audible and visible.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper described the LS-C research-based arts-based learning programme through which young people become ethnographic researchers of areas of multilingual inner-city Leeds. The programme takes the linguistic landscape as its starting point to develop collaborative ways of conducting research into multilingualism in the street. We focused on one of the arts-based activities, collage, and considered the concept of translanguaging space through analysis of the collage process and the resultant artefacts. In doing so we developed the case for methodologies of this kind as extending the scope of research into urban multilingualism. Yuen suggests that in using arts-based methods such as collage in research, in this case collaborative research with young people, enables us to ‘move beyond the margins’ (2016, p.344). In the case of LS-C, we move beyond the margins in developing ways of working which enable voices to be made audible and visible, and sketch out the possibilities for collaborative arts-based research into language and communication which extends beyond bounded languages and modalities. The collage process and the collages themselves demonstrate the new meanings and understandings (Norris, 2008, in Butler-Kisber, 2004, p.104) that develop through collaborative research with young people in which ‘the research becomes a co-creator and sharer of stories, provocations and ideas, a facilitator and collaborator’ (Parry, 2015, p.96). This has significant theoretical, epistemological and methodological implications for research of this kind.

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<sup>i</sup> For more information, please refer to: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/tlang](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/tlang)

<sup>ii</sup> For more information, please refer to: <http://intouniversity.org>. We have permission from the organisation to use their name, although all pupils' names have been altered to protect their identity.

<sup>iii</sup> A group of twenty-four research-intensive universities in the UK. See: <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>