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CHAPTER EIGHT

Liquid Methodologies: Researching the Ephemeral in Multilingual Street Performance

Jessica Bradley

Guiding questions

1. As you read, note what Jessica means by the concept of 'liquidity'. What did this idea mean for the development of her research processes?
2. What do you think are the main implications of the notion of a 'liquid methodology' for research design and methods? How relevant might it be for your own research?

Introduction

This chapter explores the liquid processes of conducting linguistic ethnographic research in multilingual street performance and visual arts settings with a grassroots community arts organization. Broadly, my research aims to develop understandings of how people communicate across languages and cultures. More specifically, I ask how street artists, visual artists and makers make meaning throughout the processes of putting

together a street theatre production and performance. I adopt an approach which draws from linguistic ethnography (for example, Blommaert 2007; Rampton 2007; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Maybin and Tusting 2011; Copland and Creese 2015a; Snell et al. 2015), henceforth abbreviated to LE, to consider how fluid languaging practices (Jørgensen 2003) are employed by creative practitioners during the stages of production. My research involved a longitudinal ethnographic study of a United Kingdom-based grassroots community arts organization with short, intensive bursts of overseas fieldwork which focused on the making of a piece of street theatre. Throughout the process I collected and analyzed multimodal data (video, audio interactional data, field notes, photographs, interviews). In this way I also engaged in what Sara Childers refers to as 'multiple practices' within an 'interactive, rhizomatic process' (2012: 752). The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight into the research process and how this evolved in line with the participants and contexts under investigation.

In the first part of this chapter I summarize the focus and setting for my research and the theoretical frameworks I am working within. I give a short introduction to translanguaging as a descriptive and analytical concept and to linguistic ethnography as an approach to understanding language in society. I briefly highlight the challenges in 'flattening' research relationships in the field. In the second part, I set out **'liquidity'** as a framework and give empirical examples from my research. This draws on Zygmunt Bauman's 'Liquid Modernity' (2000) as a tool for understanding the fluidity of multilingual practice. Finally, I conclude by considering how a framework of liquidity and an ethical commitment to 'generous attentiveness' (Ingold 2014: 384) afford opportunities for rich ethnographic insights and more empathic and engaged research relationships within the field in research into language and social life.

Part 1: Texts and trajectories

My fieldwork centred around a group of aspiring multilingual street artists in Ljubljana, Slovenia, whom I studied from March to July 2015. The group was working on a co-produced piece of street theatre with the United Kingdom-based community arts organization with whom I had set up a research collaboration. The resulting multilingual production was performed across the country at street arts festivals in July 2015. During my fieldwork I followed the group from the inception of the collaboration through to the final performances. I use the trajectory of a text (Kell 2009) – a traditional Slovenian folk story which was developed into a street theatre piece using puppets, promenade and song – as a heuristic to frame and to structure my research. The resultant street theatre piece moved from street to street and from city to city. The story shifted mode throughout the development of the production. And my research moved with it. Likewise,

my research methods shifted mode, and with them my analytical framework evolved.

My research project started life as a 2000-word research proposal, meticulously put together, clearly bounded and neatly annotated and referenced. The topic was concise, the setting was articulated and the timeline was fixed and structured. My research itself has emerged as something quite different to that which I set out to do. Yet, key building blocks remained almost unchanged. The settings changed, the location changed, the activity changed and the people changed. My own critical understanding of the three areas on which I was focusing – translation, translanguaging and superdiversity – developed. The methodology evolved throughout the research process, as did the methods employed. But my overarching research questions remained the same, almost unchanged. Likewise the ethnographic principles, including reflexivity and flexibility (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 1983), which underpinned my research remained, although my understandings of these became deeper and my critiques became more sophisticated. I posit that these uncertainties and the fluidity that characterized my research, in terms of both focus and in terms of methodology, enhanced my understanding of the field and enriched my experience of working in this context. I argue that ethnographic principles in research require the acceptance of a certain degree of uncertainty and fluidity. In working with liquidity as both a research framework and focus, I was able to explore the interplay between 'strangeness' and 'familiarity' which, as Rampton et al. (2014: 2) suggest, ethnography should enable.

Liquid languaging

Liquidity also frames the languaging practices I investigate, for which I use translanguaging as a lens. As Li Wei puts it (2011: 1223), translanguaging is

> both going *between* different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going *beyond* them (my italics).

James Simpson (2016) describes translanguaging as a 'superdiverse practice' – a 'descriptive lens' (p. 2) for understanding multilingual interactions. Vallejo and Moore (2016, in press) argue that translanguaging is useful as an analytic lens when it explicitly seeks to challenge social structures reproducing language-based inequalities, therefore moving beyond documentation and description. A focus on translanguaging affords insights into what Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014: 43) explain as

> languaging actions that enact a political process of social and subjectivity transformation which resist the asymmetries of power that language and

> other meaning-making codes, associated with one or another nationalist ideology, produce.

Therefore, in offering more than a descriptive lens, translanguaging can be considered in terms of social justice and transformation. As Otheguy et al. (2015: 281) put it, translanguaging is

> the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of names (and usually national and state) languages.

Translanguaging thus can act as a disruptor to 'the norm', as transformation which 'resists the asymmetries of power' (García and Li Wei 2014: 43). Likewise, the movement of the street arts production and the actors through the streets, from city to city (and country to country) could be seen to transform socially and politically defined boundaries into a performative space. In researching multilingual *street arts*, I am investigating the role of flexible languaging practices in a performative practice which also aims to resist and disrupt.

Linguistic ethnography: Engagement and collaboration

Blommaert (2007: 682) argues that ethnography allows for the comprehensive description and analysis of 'the complexity of social events'. He underlines the 'chaos' of behaviour and interaction in which, he summarizes, ethnographers wish to do justice to three elements: 'the perspectives of participants' (Boas and Malinowski); 'the micro-events' as 'combinations of variation and stability' (citing the 'tension between phenomenology and structuralism'); and reflexivity. Ethnography, Blommaert states, centres on the 'nature of social knowledge', and as part of this, he sees language as 'social and cultural knowledge' (p. 683). He also stresses the importance of seeing ethnography, not as method but as 'general theoretical outlook' (p.684), an idea taken up by Rock (2015), who, following Blommaert (2009: 260–261), considers LE to go beyond methods, providing a space for 'being in and knowing through research' (Rock 2015: 149). As Creese and colleagues put it, LE is not the 'welding together of two separate disciplines'; instead, they reinforce the **ontological** stance that studying language and social life is a unitary endeavour (Creese et al. 2015: 268). This builds on Dell Hymes's 'Ethnography of Communication' (for example 1972, 1974), resonating with what Snell and colleagues call the 'slow and intensive analysis of language and communication' (2015: 8).

My research with the street artists and visual artists has been intensive. I posit that Ingold's exhortations to commit 'generous attentiveness' (2014:

384) to those with whom we work invoke a collaboration between the researcher and the researched. Luke Eric Lassiter states that 'ethnography is, by definition, collaborative' (2005: 16), in that, as researchers, we engage with those with whom we work within the context. For Lassiter, collaboration and engagement represent two underpinning values of work within the social sphere. Lassiter takes this notion further in describing collaborative ethnography as one in which the researcher and the researched *cowrite* the ethnographic texts. He also differentiates between *collaborative* ethnography and reciprocal ethnography, which entails an exchange – denoting a finite enterprise – rather than an ongoing dialogue – denoting engagement.

As Heidegger explains, 'short distance is not in itself nearness. Nor is great distance remoteness' (1971: 193) and 'being there', in Geertz's terms (1988), does not necessarily translate to the 'generous attentiveness' that Ingold asks us to commit to our research relationships. It was important, therefore, for me to establish, to critique and to unpick how my work was ethnographic, and if indeed it was, reflexively throughout the process.

Liquid collaborations: Flattening the research relationship

In committing to enabling the voices of participants to be heard, researchers in LE are committed to 'flattening the relationship between researcher and researched' (Copland and Creese 2015b: 162). Copland and Creese also articulate the ethical commitment of many scholars to bringing back their research, and the knowledge that has been developed, to the people with whom they have worked – making it 'useful'. Giving back denotes that something has been taken away, and in that sense it creates a problem when it comes to reducing the power inequalities inherent in research. Yet, this can seem to represent an 'impossible place'. Hal Foster (1996: 303), in his essay on the artist as ethnographer, states:

> Just as the productivist sought to stand in the reality of the proletariat only in part to sit in the place of the patron, so the quasi-anthropological artist today may seek to work with sited communities with the best motives of political engagement and institutional transgression, only in part to have this work recoded by its sponsors as social outreach, economic development, public relations ... or art.

In this sense, the 'impossible place' is one which is occupied by researchers who, like the artists Foster writes about, can never not involve patronage of some degree in seeking to realign power imbalances. Childers draws from Derrida's 'deconstruction' to draw together theory and method in research which does not seek to simplify but instead to foreground messiness, complexity and intertextuality (2012: 752). From Childers' point of view,

this 'impossibility' is 'what cannot be foreseen as a possibility', or, 'an affirmation of who or what is Other' (p. 754). The discomfort in reflecting on this as researchers is explained by Copland and Creese, who state that we often 'feel uneasy with our ethical decisions and remain unsure about our representations' (2015b: 1166), which serve to affirm the 'Other'. Yet these representations (and the decisions which lead to them) are entirely subjective. Their acceptance or rejection lies in the eye of the beholder (as with the artistic products which form the focus of this study).

Part 2: Liquidity as a framework

In my work, mobility and fluidity have particularly characterized the research process, the site, the creative practitioners and the communicative practices. I therefore developed an emergent framework which draws from Bauman's theories of liquid modernity. Bauman describes the world in 'liquid modern life' (2000, 2004), as 'sliced into poorly coordinated fragments while our individual lives are cut into a succession of ill-connected episodes' (2004: 12–13). This notion can help to explain the position of the ethnographer, who can quite easily feel 'wholly or in part "out of place" everywhere, not to be completely anywhere' (p.13). He describes 'floating' identities and this, as a metaphor, rings true for researchers. But how do we navigate these liquid sites and our own shifting, fluid identity? For Bauman there is a 'trick' to this – a trick developed through practice. Instead of seeking 'belonging' he exhorts that we should consider the benefits of being on the periphery, of 'continuous boundary-transgression' (p. 14). Bauman states:

> it is not true ... that great art has no homeland – on the contrary, art, like the artists, may have many homelands, and most certainly has more than one'. (2000: 207)

In describing the exiled artist, Bauman explains that for an exile (he uses the example of Goytisolo), language can become less an everyday 'tool' for general **communication**, and instead become a talisman, an 'authentic homeland' (2000: 205). Bauman discusses Derrida and his obsession with 'being away' (p. 206). Derrida strongly endorsed the idea of to 'think travel'. To do so, in Derrida's mind, was

> to think that unique activity of departing, going away from chez soi, going far, towards the unknown, risking all the risks, pleasures and dangers that the 'unknown' has in store (even the risk of not returning).

This notion of 'travel' is not necessarily a literal one, and neither does exile have to mean a change of country. In my case, some of my fieldwork did

take place overseas (following Pink and Morgan 2013) but the ethnographic research with the arts group was consolidated in the United Kingdom through prolonged engagement with their work. A framework of liquidity denotes that to conduct ethnographic research, the researcher must to some extent take on the role of an exile, 'departing' and going into the 'unknown', accepting the resulting unsettledness. I therefore use the concept of liquidity not solely to provide a useful analytical framework for the street artists and their work, but also to provide a methodological framework for ethnographic research into street arts.

Street arts performances occupy an ephemeral and transient space. The resultant 'product' – the performance itself – is a 'momentary outcome' (Ingold 2008: 80). It is iconically liquid, and packed up into a suitcase after the crowd has dispersed. Over the course of the production of the street performance, the group developed the traditional Slovenian folk story of the 'Zlatorog', or 'golden horned goat' for production. The following example is taken from the workshop in which the folk tale was introduced to the group.

Example 1: the telling of the tale

The story was first told within a workshop setting in a former church in the centre of Ljubljana.

Setting: Tabor, Ljubljana, Slovenia

We are sitting on chairs in a circle and about to break for lunch. One of the actors, Lyder, had chosen it as its provenance was his home region – the villages around Lake Bohinj which is surrounded by the Julian Alps. The mentor leading the workshop, Bea, is from the UK and she begins the session:

So this might be quite hard actually, I hadn't considered the fact that you would know these stories in your language and would have to TRANSLATE them for ME [.] I'm sorry, but yes (...)

In saying this, Bea is drawing attention to the fact that she is from the United Kingdom and does not speak Slovene. She is also recognizing that the stories will come from the actors' own country and background and that they would be known in Slovene rather than English. She apologizes for this. Lyder begins his story:

ok, so I'm originally from Bohinj (.) for several generations you probably know the place (...) (gestures to the group with his hand) and you probably don't (...) (looks at Bea)

Lyder places himself immediately as being from Bohinj, with generations of his family before him. He positions the majority of the group as 'insiders'

to this place-related knowledge – to the story being told – and Bea as an outsider. One of the 'promises' of storytelling, according to Amy Shuman, is that stories are 'both ordinary and larger than life' which, in order to have meaning, must be 'tellable' and 'offer a shared experience' (2005: 27). In telling the story, Lyder is placing it as a possible starting point for the production. He is instigating a claim to ownership of the production. He was also telling something of his own story in selecting this particular tale. He was unable to perform in the final production as he was due to become a father for the first time during the same month. But he came to the performance, took photos and assisted the performers. He expressed his pleasure in the fact that his story had been chosen and that a story from his region of Slovenia should form the basis for the piece. The story moved seventy-six kilometres to the workshop space in Ljubljana, one cold morning in early March. But for Lyder it was talismanic. He was about to move back to his home town with his growing family, back into the family home after having been based in the city for a number of years. Travel – or homecoming – becomes a central consideration in the telling of the tale.

Multimodality: Liquid methods

Within the multilingual street arts activities I observed, the communicative practices not only coincide with but are also entangled with the diverse creative practices within the production process.

Example 2: photographs as analytical tools

The group engaged in making the puppets and the props for the performances themselves, and I was a participant-observer during this process. The making took place in the theatre studio on the outskirts of Ljubljana, and was seen by Bea as an integral part of the development of the piece. The room was a light and airy white space on the first floor of a municipal building. It was the end of May and the windows were wide open, the curtains blowing in the breeze. We had the radio on and we could hear the muffled sounds of live music coming from the arts venue below. There was a festival going on over the weekend and there was talk of us going to it later on. A blackboard was placed to the back of the room and Kaja and Sabina, two of the performers, wrote on it. The board became at times the place that the performers would congregate in to have a break from the making of the puppets. Kaja, an aspiring actress, was quoting Hamlet. Sabina was drawing chickens. There would be chickens in the production and chickens are also a symbol of Slovenia: the country itself is thought to look like a chicken. Veca, another performer, had said she was from the 'chicken's neck' when describing the location of her home town. I took photos of the board (Figures 8.1a–c):

FIGURE 8.1 *(a–c) Images on the blackboard in the theatre studio*

FIGURE 8.1 (*continued*)

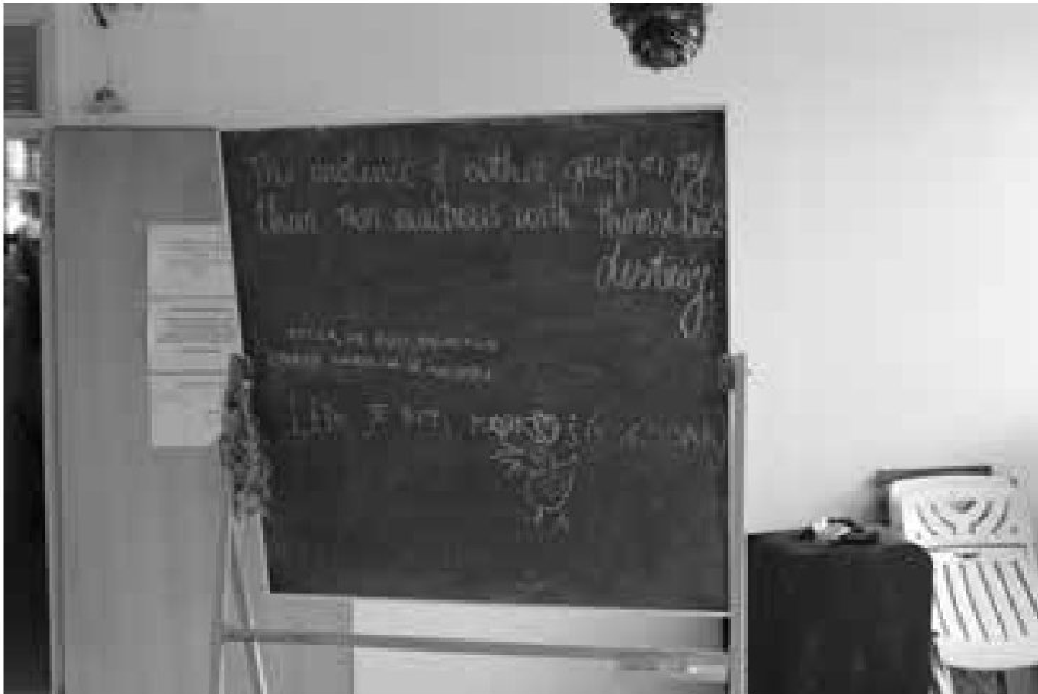

FIGURE 8.1 (*continued*)

In my data analysis therefore, I started to move beyond linguistic communication and towards an analytical framework that encompasses the visual, the arts practices and the artistic products. For this I draw on and critique the conceptualization of translanguaging space (Li Wei 2011; García and Li Wei 2014), as being space that is coproduced by translanguaging, as well as produced 'for' translanguaging. García and Li Wei describe these spaces as enabling criticality and creativity (p. 74) and allowing 'linguistically diverse students to co-construct their language expertise, recognize each other as resources, and act on their knowing and doing' (p. 75). My investigation focuses on how these spaces are co-constructed by translanguaging, and how the arts practices intersect to enable 'critical and creative spaces' for production and performance in street arts. Visual ethnography therefore (for example, Pink 2014) became woven into my research design, as broadening the analytical framework to incorporate multimodality in translanguaging. The photographs become more than simply an aide-memoire for me when writing about the workshops and conducting linguistic analyzes of the interactions. They become a form of data in themselves, to be analyzed using a framework of translanguaging space.

For García (2016), translanguaging pedagogy requires a different type of teacher, a 'co-learner', and this aligns with the epistemological underpinnings

of ethnographic research, which positions the researcher as engaged in 'educational correspondence' (Ingold 2014: 93). As Ingold puts it (p. 392):

> Knowledge is knowledge, wherever it is grown, and just as our purpose in acquiring it within the academy is (or should be) educational rather than ethnographic, so it should be beyond the academy as well.

Ingold is clear: less description and *more* education is needed when researching social life. As an approach, this leads organically to something more coproduced, more collaborative and a positioning of researcher as learner (or co-learner) rather than reporter, a shift in approach, which carries over to the analysis.

Liquid spaces: Unexpected fieldwork

Bourdieu challenges the scholar to make visible the messiness of the research process, and in presenting work to 'take risks' and to 'expose ourselves' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 219). There is an inherent risk when presenting methodological messiness. Bourdieu describes work at this stage as being 'in a state that one may call "becoming", that is muddled, cloudy, works that you usually see only in their *finished* state' (p. 219). The threads holding the work together are often invisible by the time a piece of work is published. Yet, it is these threads that demonstrate what Bourdieu calls *fermenting confusion*. Without making these processes visible, it could be said that we deny others the opportunity to learn from mistakes made throughout the research process, and we also sanitize the process, thus creating the impression that we leap seamlessly from data to polished scholarly publication.

Rebecca Coles and Pat Thomson (2016) call for more scholarship that reveals the behind the scenes, backstage writing that takes place in ethnographic research. They call this 'inbetween writing', and it happens between field notes and published work. The authors have started to categorize the different purposes that these kinds of *writings* have. Here my task is to make visible the inbetween and to attempt to describe and convey the liminality of linguistic ethnographic research, as well as the chaos of the lived experience of work in progress (Blommaert and Jie 2010).

This focus on the 'inbetween' and the messiness that lies in the space between what Geertz (1988) calls 'being there' and 'being here' is also inherent within the arts contexts I was investigating and in the area of coproduced research. My research focuses on the process of a production, on the 'inbetween', and in the same way that the elements within the conceptualization, making, devising and performance processes are crucial to the final production, so these elements of researching are also

crucial to the final doctoral project. It is, in part, this focus on production processes in my research that has led me to focus on research processes in my writing.

Example 3: reporting as data

During my overseas fieldwork visits I would communicate via email and blog posts. These writings represented different kinds of 'inbetween writing' and became a form of data in themselves. In December, I went back to the theatre in Ljubljana to observe an education and training workshop that was being organized as part of a large European funding bid involving multiple countries, universities and practitioners. While I was there, I posted this on the TLANG project blog:

> Thomson and Gunter (2011) write about the fluidity of researcher identity when conducting ethnographic fieldwork in schools. For me, although my work is in the street and in the theatre – not in a school – this seems to be particularly apposite. As I arrived at the studio, the group were waiting for me, and my role had been assigned: I was an observer. Officially. Of course, as a researcher drawing from ethnography, I'm used to this role. Observing. But generally I am an observer for my own research project. My observations are jotted down in notebooks, interactions are recorded onto my iPhone, my videos and photographs are stored into my own folders. But in this case, my 'outsider' status (I'm not a street artist, I have no practical experience in this area) was one that positioned me as someone who could document the workshops and produce a factual account of what was happening.
>
> *TLANG blog post, January 21, 2016*

Here I am attempting to make visible the interwoven stories, or, following Bruno Latour, the 'delicate networks traced by Ariadne's little hand thread' (1993: 4). These interwoven stories also include decisions as to the paths not taken. In one sense these can be understood by what Tim Ingold refers to as 'the ethnographer's sideways glance' (2008: 84). My doctoral research project, or indeed any research project, is one that is limited both by time and funding. It falls upon the doctoral researcher, therefore, to make decisions throughout the process about the research focus, the research detail and final thesis. Sometimes, however, these decisions fall outside the researcher's hands, as was my experience. As a researcher working with, and 'attending to', community artists and street performers, key factors were austerity and funding regimes. One project I had anticipated using as a case study changed its form and focus. It disappeared from my research design. Another project that I had integrated into my research design received a number of funding rejections. However these factors also created opportunities, not solely in terms of my doctoral research, but also in terms of developing what Ingold refers

to as 'educational correspondence' (2014: 390). Ingold describes the act of participant observation (as distinct from ethnography, which he sees as a 'practice of description') as being correspondence:

> to practice participant observation, then, is to join in correspondence with those with whom we learn or among whom we study, in a movement that goes forward rather than back in time.

Example 4: theorizing shifts in fieldwork focus

Entering into 'educational correspondence' required me to make a series of decisions about how I would 'follow' those with whom I was working and where I would go. In my research blog entry from December 2015, I wrote down a quotation from Zygmunt Bauman's 'The Art of Life' (2008: 53):

> *Between them, the stars might mitigate the darkness enough to allow the wanderers to trace a path in the wilderness – some sort of path; but which star should orient one's steps? And at what point should one decide whether selecting this star for a guide from among the multitude has been a felicitous or an unlucky decision? When should one conclude that the chosen path leads nowhere, and that the time has arrived to abandon it, turn back and make another, hopefully better choice? Notwithstanding the discomforts already brought by walking the previously selected road, such a resolution may be an unwise step: abandoning a hitherto followed star may prove to be an even graver and in the end more regrettable error, and you may find that the alternative path leads to even greater hardships; you don't know, nor are you likely to know all that for sure. Heads or tails, your chances of winning or losing look even.*

I was assessing whether the decisions to follow the arts group to Slovenia had been the right ones, and whether the final field trip I took in December during which I observed the beginnings of an education and training in street arts network had been a wise decision. I wrote in my research blog:

> *There's something that Zygmunt Bauman says in his book, 'The Art of Life'. Something about choices and decisions. A PhD seems to me to be a series of decisions. A series of decisions that you have to make as an 'apprentice independent researcher' who is on the path to becoming an 'independent researcher'. So does making these decisions, theorizing them, backing up your decisions and explaining why you didn't choose the different path – does all this mean that at the end of the three years you are suddenly 'independent'? When I've finished this process, will I have a new-found sense of clarity and faith in my decisions?*

Back to Bauman:

All that, however, only soon to find out that our choice of guiding star was in the last account our choice, pregnant with risks as all our choices have been and are bound to be – and our choice, made on our responsibility, it will remain to the end.

It's a weird dynamic with a PhD. I find myself questioning my every move. In contrast, I find myself with a new sense of confidence in what I used to do, coupled with a growing sense of confidence in what I am doing.

But I still make decisions that I don't feel completely sure about.

Research blog entry, 2 December 2015

Liquid roles: Researcher positioning

For the novice researcher, the unsteadiness caused by the fluid and shifting landscape I was catapulted into was not without its challenges. As Amy Shuman (2011: 149) writes:

> Ethnographic work is unsettling. Doing ethnography places us on the verge, whether on the verge of knowing, on the verge of exploitation, on the verge of discovery, on the verge of desire, or on the verge of going native. For me, as for many others, ethnography is always a meeting place of the personal, the methodological, and the theoretical.

When we, as researchers, are placed on the 'verge', we are also positioned in a 'meeting place' – both in the ways that Shuman describes here and in terms of our status as insider or outsider. The binary division between these two 'positions' is problematic. Ethnographic research entangles and complicates the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and researched, making the divisions between insider and outsider unclear. Not simply unclear, these roles shift and mutate throughout the process. They are not, in Pat Thomson and Helen Gunter's words, 'singular, fixed and stable' (2011:17). Drawing from Bauman's theories of fluid identities, the authors argue that research which concentrates on the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider' restricts understanding of the messiness of the lived experience of research in schools, creating an 'illusion of stability' (p. 27).

Conclusions

If we are placed on the verge, we have the opportunity to move inwards and outwards, and to gain a broader perspective. But it means that we

relinquish some control of what we observe and the direction of our work. Likewise, Ingold, in his strong critique of ethnography, in which he argues that 'ethnographic methods' 'reproduce a pernicious distinction between those with whom we study and learn, respectively within and beyond the academy' (2014: 383), describes the 'existential risk' involved in 'attending to' those with whom researchers are working. This risk is foregrounded when researching in mobile and fluid contexts. It means we may not arrive at the destination we may have pictured when designing our research. It is this 'risk' which led me to shift the focus of my research to multilingual street artists, and undertaking my research overseas. Ingold states (2014: 389) (my italics):

> It is one that calls upon the novice anthropologist to attend: to attend to what others are doing or saying and to what is going on around and about; *to follow along where others go and to do their bidding*, whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you. This can be unnerving, and entail considerable existential risk.

Ingold warns against the overuse of 'ethnographic methods' or 'ethnography'. His argument is that in positioning our research as 'ethnographic', 'the priority shifts from engagement to reportage, from correspondence to description, from the co-imagining of possible futures to the characterization of what is already past'. Yet, Snell et al. (2015: 5), in summarizing the five characteristics of interdisciplinary scholarship in linguistic ethnography, underline the aspiration to 'improve social life' as one of the aims of LE research. Could research which simply 'reports', 'describes' and 'characterizes what is already past' also claim a commitment to creating a better world? It is not within the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive critique of either ethnography or of Ingold's critical call to arms. However, this chapter does take a critical stance on ethnographic approaches in research.

What does understanding more about the liquidity of research and generous attentiveness bring to the field? What does making visible the threads and the messiness mean for future research into translanguaging and community arts? For researchers to commit to what Lassiter describes as 'ethnography that is grounded in the ongoing ethical and moral co-commitment' (2005: 133), 'generous attentiveness' shifts towards a coproduced, collaborative framework. This framework allows for the liquidity and chaos of research into social and cultural knowledge. It also affords a space in which the messiness and liquidity of research can be accepted as fundamental and in which a commitment is made to keeping the threads visible.

I started this chapter with three lines from a poem by C.P. Cavafy, Ithaka. In the second verse of the poem, Cavafy writes:

> Hope the voyage is a long one.
> May there be many a summer morning when,
> with what pleasure, what joy,
> you come into harbors seen for the first time;

The poem itself was introduced to me by one of my PhD supervisors, and I remember thinking what an apt metaphor for the doctoral process it was – a voyage. I reproduce it here for three reasons: one, to provide a metaphor for research and as an exhortation to consider the process itself as important, as a site itself to be theorized and critiqued; two, to conceptualize this process as being one of *becoming* (in Bakhtinian terms); and three, to demonstrate the ways in which the community of scholars – also familiar with the fluidity, liquidity and chaos of research which takes an ethnographic approach – provides support and mentorship for the novice researcher. It is not a journey that is undertaken alone.

Transcription conventions
(adapted from Georgakopoulou 2007)
(0.03) time from beginning of extract
Overlapping utterances []
Intervals (.) less than 0.1 seconds; (..) between 0.1 and 0.5 seconds; (…) greater than 0.5 seconds
(italics) a gesture to the group or laugh from the group
CAPITALS speech louder than surrounding talk

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