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Belonging-in-interaction: Expressing and performing translocal belongings through language and arts practice

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Abstract

This paper explores belonging, in a context of mobility. For newcomers to a country, their belongings are multiple and uncertain, as they retain links with the place they have left while attempting to attain legitimacy as members of the new society. We ask how recent migrants to the UK who are adult migrant language learners express and perform their understandings of belonging in a participatory arts project. In so doing, we uncover how the participants' belongings, as they emerge in interaction, both shape and are shaped during the phases of co-production. We take into account the range of communicative resources including but also beyond language, deployed trans-semiotically in participatory arts practice. This trans-orientation allows insights into the interactive character of belonging in the process of preparing the arts performance that might otherwise go unnoticed. We conclude that our perspective on belonging-in-interaction presents a challenge to dominant discourses relating to social integration for new arrivals, where a narrow focus on the learning and use of the main societal language is a prerequisite for belonging.

Keywords

Belonging, migration, mobility, translanguaging, creative practice, ESOL

Introduction

This paper takes a fresh approach to the study of belonging, relevant for those on the move, and for times of change and uncertainty. Belonging has emerged as a major concern in recent years in public and political debate, associated as it is with arguments about citizenship, social integration and immigration policy. For newcomers to a country, their belonging, their non-belonging and their not-yet-belonging are prominent. They are at a point when they first attempt to navigate political, public, employment and education systems, trying to attain legitimacy as members of society. Such matters are well-rehearsed in applied linguistics research examining the discursive processes at play when language minoritised migrants steer a course through immigration and citizenship regimes (Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet 2009, Shohamy & McNamara 2009), employment structures (Gumperz 1982, Duchêne, Moyer & Roberts 2013) and the learning of the dominant societal language (Simpson & Whiteside 2015). However, the question of what it is to belong relates to more than political belonging in a new place, finding a job, and attending language classes. The study of belonging recognises it as translocal, complex and dynamic,

requiring a broad focus of attention. People also express, represent and enact their belongings interactionally. The multiple means through which this is done sometimes but not always include language. What is more, the salience of belonging is not restricted to new arrivals who might 'no longer' or 'not yet' belong – in an official sense – to a nation state. Belonging resonates as a metaphor with everyone who finds themselves in a new situation.

Here we consider how people involved in a participatory arts project linked to an English language course for new arrivals in the UK express and perform their belonging. The project is called *Migration & Settlement: Extending the Welcome*. This work was undertaken in the northern English city of Leeds, in collaboration with a community arts organisation and a refugee charity. We encompass the voices and perspectives of the participants, newly arrived migrants and refugees, and of those working with them, arts practitioners and researchers. This enables a focus on how translocal belongings emerge interactionally, and how they are shaped in the process of developing a creative performance. Our analysis is informed by linguistic and visual ethnography, and draws on trans-perspectives towards the notions of repertoire and communicative resources, and to recent theorisations of collaborative and co-produced research.

We first sketch out our understanding of belonging and explain its significance for public and policy debate surrounding human mobility. We then consider how communication involves a spectrum of modes, and how a focus on creative practice enables attention to this. Our analysis is of data from four phases of creative production from the *Migration & Settlement* project: conceptualisation, making, devising and performance. We trace the progress of a narrative of translocal belonging of one participant, Théo, through these phases. In the subsequent discussion we assess how the study of communicative practice extending beyond language, in the context of co-produced participatory arts practice, illuminates the transformative – not to say utopian – potential of our project. We conclude by explaining how our work informs a critique of policy on social integration for migrants. This typically equates political belonging for newcomers like Théo with competence in the dominant language.

Trans-orientations to belonging, language and arts practice

The fluidity of belonging

Belonging – simply speaking – is the inherently subjective experience of identity in social life, and of having an affinity for places or situations. It is also a political matter (Yuval-Davis 2011): the effects of migration and rapid population change are associated with sustained and dissonant commentary concerning who belongs and who does not, in political, media and public rhetoric. Persistent assumptions about political belonging in the public sphere rely on the notion of one settled, culturally and linguistically homogeneous community of 'insiders' to which an 'outsider' new arrival needs to adjust or 'fit in' (Angouri et al 2020) for the sake of social cohesion (Simpson 2019). In the UK, an ideology of homogeneity (Joseph 2006, Piller 2015) is evident in the hostility shown towards migrants in the media and in public discourse, coupled with an inhospitable official environment characterised by strident anti-immigration sentiment at the heart of government. A non-English-speaking, culturally different Other has consistently been, and continues to be, the object of concerns over social cohesion, integration and security in the UK (Blackledge 2006, Khan 2016). Othering, negative stereotyping most often linked to

race, ethnicity, foreigners or minority groups (Holliday et al. 2021), is strongly evident in policy discourse where a difference or shortcoming (often language-based) is identified in the Other. An othering discourse in policy incidentally or deliberately deflects attention from the role of policy itself in creating barriers and worsening inequalities (Bassell 2016, Simpson and Hunter 2023).

This cemented and deficit perspective on belonging is disturbed and disrupted in a globalised and – notwithstanding the social lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic – a mobile world. This points to the appropriateness of a dynamic understanding of the concept, as emergent, coinciding, multiple, and, in contexts of contemporary mobility, *translocal*. Translocalism, a term originating in demography and current in geography, cultural anthropology and sociology, refers to the local-to-local connections across national boundaries that are created through everyday practices of transnational migrants (Brickell & Datta 2011; cf Appadurai 1995), including those sustained in virtual diasporic spaces (Retis & Tsagarousianou 2019). The narration and performance of translocal belonging, at a point when newcomers such as our research participants have only recently arrived and are still finding their place, is the focus of our analysis in this paper. We allow attention therefore on how belongings can be indeterminate and uncertain. As Roberts (2019) suggests, one can belong *here* and *there*, or indeed neither here nor there.

Understanding belonging as emergent in space and time, and as historically contingent, affords further insight into its complexity, as recognised across the humanities and social sciences. Probyn (1996) regards belonging as an orientation which can be brought into being collaboratively in social space. Likewise bringing together space and mobility, Aydemir & Rotas (2008) juxtapose *migratory* and *setting* to explore how the two concepts mutually inform one another. Moreover, belonging – as Smith et al. (2015) note – is an emotional need, and can be entirely symbolic, existing only in the imagination and in memory. In their overview, Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) propose a process orientation towards belonging as the formation of collective identities and emergent relationships. So – less simply speaking perhaps – belongings are social, political, material and virtual, diasporic and translocal, are emergent, multiple and imaginary, and are relative to time and space. Our analysis below casts a light on an understanding of belonging as simultaneously a connection with plural places or spaces, an affective experience of finding one's place, and a shifting, complex and interactional process that is negotiated with others.

Beyond language

The move towards a 'trans-' disposition in applied linguistics, say Hawkins and Mori,

> signals the need to transcend the named and bounded categories that have historically shaped our thinking about the world and its inhabitants, the nature of knowledge, and communicative resources. Thus, from a 'trans-' perspective, we must consider movement across nations and cultures, spaces and places, modes and semiotic resources, and autonomous named languages.
>
> (Hawkins & Mori 2018:1)

The traction gained by a trans-orientation is evident in the huge and diffuse interest in translanguaging, a sociolinguistic concept for understanding how people in linguistically and culturally diverse places use their verbal, visual, gestural and embodied repertoire, as

well as varied histories and biographies, as they attempt to make meaning (García & Li 2014, Bradley & Simpson 2020). An understanding of 'language(s)' as constructs pre-existing communicative use is challenged by translanguaging, building as it does on the concept of languaging (Becker 1995), i.e., practical social action where one draws on one's communicative resources (Gumperz 1964, Blommaert & Backus 2011). In translanguaging research, the focus of analysis is a process not an object. The concept is apposite when attention is upon the speaker and what the speaker is doing. Multilingual speakers deploy their communicative repertoire flexibly – in the words of Otheguy et al. (2015:283) – 'without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages.' Translanguaging practices are rarely unconstrained however. Notably, much workplace and bureaucratic interaction happens in monologic spaces (Blommaert et al 2005), involving an obligation to use the dominant language, a pervasive monolingualism which is reproduced in educational contexts. We return to this point in our conclusion.

Our own trans-orientation enables attention on communication beyond language and across modes used in acts of meaning-making (Rymes 2014). This is far from novel in applied linguistics: *viz*. interactional sociolinguistics (Goodwin 2003), discourse analysis (Cook 1992), literacy studies (Barton et al. 2000) and SFL-inspired multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), all of which encompass the para/non-linguistic within their scope of analysis. In our field, even where language is the original referent, it is by no means always the only one. A trans-orientation towards languaging, with its spotlight on the speaker, encourages the range of study to extend to the many ways humans interconnect. This forces attention on activity that applied linguists had perhaps considered beyond their concern, in our case the practices and processes of production in participatory arts. This is a domain where languaging might be present but is only sometimes paramount, and in our analysis we pay attention too to multimodal, affective, embodied and spatial ways of understanding. Language is not necessarily central to attempts to achieve understanding, and so in the practices we analyse, language – as Thurlow puts it – is 'decentred' (Thurlow 2016:503): 'The point is not to deny language but to provincialize it: to recognize its limits, to acknowledge its constructedness, and to open ourselves up to a world of communicating and knowing beyond – or beside/s – words' (see also Harvey & Bradley 2021, Harvey, Tordzro & Bradley 2022).

Arts practice and belonging for adult migrants

It can be difficult to express, perform and reflect upon one's belonging with referential language. *Where or how do you belong?* is a hard question for everyone, even when linguistic resources are shared and a response can be coherent. Arts practice is a site of creative encounter, where participants can come together and think together, where they might engage with belongings they already carry, and simultaneously make these anew. Participatory arts are not a safe alternative to a classroom, or simply an opportunity to explore non-linguistic communication. As with other types of creative practice, they provide an important space for critical reflection, 'offering a public site for the abstracted discussion of contentious issues' (Stupples & Teaiwa 2016:11), for example the issue of what it is to belong. Some arts practitioners would not regard language as integral to their practice, and indeed a purely linguistic approach to the analysis of participatory arts spaces would be reductive. So we view arts practice through a lens that recognises that language

alone cannot account for the complexity and fluidity of belonging. This enables us to incorporate attention on the material and the embodied (Barad 2003, MacLure 2013), while not losing the focus on language, which is itself always embodied and personal (see also Hiltunen et al. 2020).

Our work with adult migrant language learners lies outside the mainstream of curriculum-driven language instruction. It aligns with emergent approaches in the field of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) across the UK which embrace creative practice of various kinds. In England the participatory projects *Whose Integration?* (Cooke, Winstanley & Bryers 2015) and *Our Languages* (Cooke, Bryers & Winstanley 2018), adopt a multilingual approach to ESOL pedagogy using the visual methods of Freirean emancipatory literacy, viewing a shared language as vital to social life in multilingual places and spaces, but recognising too that linguistic diversity is also central. *Beyond The Page* (beyondthepage.org.uk), based in Kent, brings women from different backgrounds together to break down the barriers of language and cultural difference. It provides a learning, creative and socialising space, with the aim of supporting migrant women to become active citizens (Macdonald & Watson 2022). In Scotland, Hirsu and colleagues' approach for teaching migrant language learners through arts practice draws explicitly on the creative potential of translanguaging (Li 2018, Jones 2019, Blackledge & Creese 2019): 'Our goal was to open up this concept and to make it relevant for teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences in ways that were engaging, relevant, and generative' (2021:23). Chick and colleagues in South Wales developed the *Speak to Me* project, a participatory action research project designed not by a language researcher but by a creative writing lecturer, bringing together refugees with local residents on an initiative to facilitate language learning through joint poetry writing. For them 'the venture became a multilingual vehicle to promote understanding and friendship between people and across cultures' (Simpson & Chick forthcoming). Our own work has similar motivations to these approaches, attending to questions not typically addressed in mainstream instruction, and through means not commonly encountered in adult migrant language pedagogy.

Given this background, we ask three questions in relation to the participants in our project: (1) How do people who are attempting to settle in a new country – and those working with them – express and perform their translocal belongings through arts practice and language? (2) What communicative resources do they draw upon as they do so? And (3) how do their belongings relate to wider political contexts and social structures?

The Migration & Settlement project

Migration & Settlement: Extending the Welcome was a participatory research and creative practice initiative running from October 2016 to July 2017. This paper's authors developed it with a West Yorkshire-based participatory arts organisation and a third sector charity, working with-English language learners who were migrants and refugees in Leeds. *Migration & Settlement* forms part of an ongoing research programme studying notions of migration, home, settlement and belonging through language and creative practice. Our aims were to explore these themes through visual arts, performance and ethnography, to strengthen our collaborations with our project partners, and to explore how our research on urban translanguaging (TLANG 2014-2018[1]) might inform both participatory arts practice and third sector practice with diverse groups. The key creative elements were visual artworks and a shadow puppetry production conceptualised, made, devised and

performed by a group of the third sector organisation's clients – English language learners – in collaboration with creative practitioners, and university-based researchers: the authors, and Sam McKay, then a Doctoral Researcher in applied theatre and a community theatre director. The participants were enrolled on a settlement course for newly-arrived refugees in Leeds, which aimed to support their orientation, integration and independent living in cities and towns in West Yorkshire, and which included classes of ESOL. The public performance itself would be filmed, and the film was intended to be shown to audiences in various sites around Leeds during Refugee Week 2017. Working in an exploratory and democratic way with the two organisations afforded a space in which our emergent findings from TLANG about language, languaging and translanguaging could be interwoven into practice. We also hoped to explore the tensions inherent in a co-produced project, at the boundaries of research and practice.

Research approach

Visual linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese 2015, Pink 2013) informs our inquiry into our participatory arts project for adult migrant language learners. Ethnographers study situated social and cultural practices from an insider perspective, and the relationships between these practices and broader contexts. In our case, ethnography allowed us to examine the whole process of creative production. Linguistic ethnography stems from seminal work in the ethnography of communication (e.g., Gumperz & Hymes 1986), offering us the possibility of micro-analyses of language use (Copland & Creese 2015) in the critical examination of interaction in the social and cultural world. The practice in our case was visual, and our ethnographic approach involved the generation of visual data as well as audio-recordings of interaction, and the participant observation, field notes and open-ended interviews that are defining features of ethnographic research.

Embedded within the project were elements of co-production, and it thus became a space for exploring its opportunities and limitations. Co-production, as Bell & Pahl (2018) maintain, has an important role to play in rethinking and remaking the world for the better. Citing Facer & Enright (2016) they suggest that the turn to co-production in UK academia 'offers possibilities to academics and communities interested in working together to further the aims of social justice' (2018:105). Although not co-produced at every level, the principles of co-production are relevant to our project, as the outcomes are inextricable from the collaborative processes and the relationships established, as we see in the analysis to follow.

The research process

Participant workshops took place in a community centre in Harehills, Leeds, an area characterised as superdiverse (Callaghan 2015, with reference to Vertovec 2006) and where most of the participants on the settlement course lived. Over ten weeks in early 2017, up to twelve participants and their teacher worked with four creative practitioners on a variety of arts activities including singing, performance and collaging. Every two-hour session was followed by a de-briefing where the creative practitioners and researchers would discuss the overall direction of the project and the focus of the next week's session. As the project progressed, so the focal activity became clear: participants and creative practitioners would develop a shadow puppet performance, using story and song, based on the participants' narratives as they made their homes in the city.

This process was documented principally by project researcher Sam McKay and co-author Jessica Bradley, using audio-recording, field-notes and photography. Pink & Morgan (2013) describe how ethnographic research takes on characteristics of the people and places under investigation, following the rhythm of what is being observed. We recall our first two research questions, about how people express and perform their belongings through arts practice drawing upon a range of communicative resources. As the production process progressed, we recognised the same four overlapping phases identified by Bradley in her doctoral study of street theatre production and performance (2018, see also Bradley 2017, 2020). We follow those phases through the lens of the experience of one participant in the project, Théo. We have selected extracts of data from each phase in turn, enabling us to focus on moments of interaction as they punctuate the process. *Conceptualisation***:** Here we will meet Théo, and examine interaction in an early interview with Ruth, a musician and creative practitioner on the project, and Jessica. *Making***:** We then illustrate the process of making the puppets and the set for a performance based on three participants' narratives of settlement, including Théo's own story. *Devising***:** We focus on the process that ran alongside the making phase, the talk around the devising of the puppetry performance. *Performance***:** Finally, we consider the performance itself, where Théo's original narrative appears on stage. In our analysis of his expression and performance of belonging which is emergent in his interaction, we draw upon concepts familiar to research in narrative, the material and performance in applied linguistics: the sociolinguistic concepts of conversational floor development (Edelsky 1981), positioning (Davies & Harré 1999) and resemiotisation (Iedema 2001, see also Bradley & Moore 2018), as explained below.

Analysis

Phase 1 Conceptualisation

Extracts 1 and 2 are transcripts[2] from an audio-recorded interview with the research participant Théo, musician and singer Ruth, and the researcher Jessica. This is not a research interview however. Ruth has been employed to collaborate with the group to create a performance that will be the artistic outcome of the project, and she needs to elicit narratives from participants that she can use for this purpose. Théo has been invited to tell his story of settlement and belonging in Leeds. His concern to do this is balanced with Ruth's, who is developing participants' stories for the subsequent performance. Control of the direction of the talk is thus contested, evident in the competition for the conversational floor. The floor (Edelsky 1981) is the 'acknowledged what's-going-on within a psychological time/space.' As Edelsky puts it, 'What's going on can be the development of a topic or a function (teasing, soliciting a response, etc.) or an interaction of the two. It can be developed or controlled by one person at a time or by several simultaneously or in quick succession' (1981:405).

We join the interaction (Extract 1) at the beginning of the audio recording, as Théo responds to the question of how he felt when he first arrived in the UK from his home country, Guinea:

T: Théo; R: Ruth; J: Jessica

```
1.   T:    like this colour
2.   J:    ah:: ok like a red (.) a greyey red
3.   R:    clay
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4.   J:    clay clay
5.   T:    I think the: now my country is the first
6.         country have most (.) bauxite in the world
7.   R:    oh ↑really
8.   T:    yes mm we used to er firstly was mm Australia
9.   J:    ok
10.  T:    and then Australia sent off and then
11.        make them country (.) rich (.) now it's my country (.)
12.        the second one
13.  R:    so what do they do with bauxite then
14.  T:    they do with a lot of things you see (4.0)
15.        ((everyone looks at some information on a phone))
16.  R:    that's about mining it
17.  T:    yes like mining
18.  R:    so and er to use the minerals for
19.  T:    yes
20.  R:    I dunno ↑building ↑construction
21.  T:    nope no I think here what I (1.0) the first word
22.        when you was reading (1.0) ok
23.        it is a mixture of it was aluminium oxide
24.        aluminium (  ) clay (  )
25.  J:    oh so there's clay in it ok (.) quartz min- ok
26.  R:    lots of stuff in it then (.) I suppose
27.        you can like if you know how to (.) well
28.        obviously they would they can (.) separate
29.        all of the different metals (.) to do
30.        different things with it
31.  J:    mmm
32.  R:    the princ- principle ore of aluminium er:
33.        where does it um where's what is it again (3.0)
34.  J:    [that's so interesting
35.  R:    [wow (2.0) uses primary work yeah so it's
36.        just used for aluminium
37.  J:    ok
38.  R:    which is very obviously very needed very used isn't it (.)
39.        cool so that's what the country that your country (1.0)
40.        has this sort of orangey metal ground
```

Extract 1 Conceptualisation

Here, control of the floor shifts over the first few turns. Two singly developed floor types are evident, 'speaker-and-supporter' and 'collaborative' (Schultz 1982). In lines (1) to (4) Théo describes the colour of the ground in his home country, Guinea, and Jessica and Ruth elaborate on his description. From (5) to (14) Théo holds the floor. In the first turn in this speaker-and-supporter floor Théo shifts into a narrative frame, explaining that Guinea has the world's largest bauxite reserves. Support from Ruth and Jessica comes in the form of interjections in (7), the upward intonation of *really*, and in (9) (*ok*) which encourage Théo to continue.

At (13) Ruth asks *so what do they do with bauxite then*, to which Théo responds by taking his phone and googling 'bauxite' (14: *you see*). A collaborative floor develops, involving two exchanges, first between Ruth and Théo (16-24) and then Ruth and Jessica (25-40). Bauxite continues to be the topic, but now Ruth's commentary on bauxite and the

content of the text on Théo's phone dominates. The commentary concludes at (38) with a pause and Ruth's summary (39-40).

Théo continues his story, until this exchange (Extract 2), a few turns later:

```
83.  T:    I I left my [country
84.  R:                [can I get a pe- have you got a pen on you
85.        so it would be good to like make some [notes
86.  J:                                          [yeah
87.  R:    so we've got like we'd if we just talk and then
88.        we can talk about
89.  T:    ok
90.  R:    what we might record for your story
```

Extract 2 Conceptualisation

Ruth interrupts Théo by asking for a pen to make notes (lines 84-85), *then we can talk about what we might record for your story* (87-90). This, though, is a story that is needed for the creative production. It is Ruth's task to gather the threads of stories and then weave them together for the performance. The bauxite example of difference, as explained by Théo, is one of these stories. Ruth's own aim mirrors the wider aim and purpose of the creative team, mindful of the project's timeframe and team members' commitments as they appear in the project plan. The project was quite small-scale, with a specific number of days allocated to the team. Ruth is therefore aware that she needs to identify stories quickly and while participants are together. She also needs something that will work visually within the final production. So the focus of the creative work is conceived. The qualities of bauxite are visually appealing, and reference to the mineral enables the representation of a contrast between Théo's previous life and his current one, using colour and material, in this case clay and metal oxide. The interaction happens where Théo's life trajectory and Ruth's professional and short-term concerns meet, in the context of an arts project with its own imperatives.

Phase 2 Making: Creating the shadow puppets

In the making phase of the project, elements from three stories (including Théo's) which have been shared during the first phase are developed into a short shadow puppet play. The stories are thus resemiotised (Iedema 2001): the stream of events in the creative process entails a movement from one mode to others, as the key visual aspects of the stories are brought to the fore by Di, the creative director of the arts organisation. Ruth's shaping of the telling of Théo's story, to focus on a particular detail, is echoed and amplified during the making. Shadow puppets and backgrounds are created, and choices are made about music and lighting, for the elements of the story that will be the focus of the performance.

In the collaborative construction of the set, under Di's direction, participants work together to create a colourful and multi-layered image of Roundhay Road in the centre of Harehills, where the participants' English classes take place. This is to become the backdrop for the production. The original image was created by one of the artists who used google maps to generate images of each shop, which were printed and enlarged to create a

streetscape, to depict the whole row. As participants arrived each week at the workshops they worked with the larger image (Figure 1), adding their own cut-out sticky backed plastic to add colour to the original black and white image.

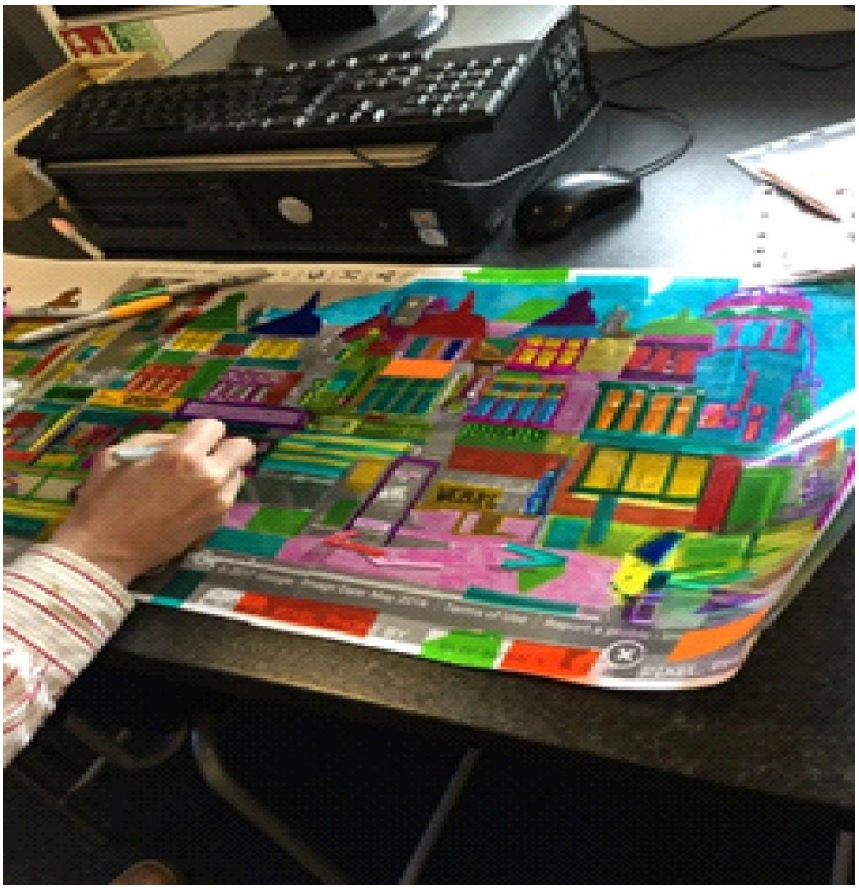

Figure 1 Making

Following Balfour (2009), this phase exists at the intersection of the participants' and artists' aesthetic imperatives – where something of quality can be made – and the possibilities of social engagement. The collaborative creation of the set, ongoing from the start of the project workshops, and an associated mapping activity, led by project researcher Sam, serve to create a communicative space. Here the participants can talk about their own personal geographies, the spaces in Leeds that they inhabit and which they identify as belonging to. These, for the participants and prompted by the activity, were the English classes they attend, the gym, and the football pitch *inter alia*. The puppets, the sets and the music are not relegated in this process: the aesthetic remains important, not least because the talk would not have happened without it.

Phase 3 Devising

The devising process which runs alongside the physical making involves discussion of choices about the production in terms of the most appropriate mode of expression, the media to be used, and crucially the specific aspects of the stories to highlight, and how. An affordance of an ethnographic approach is to make visible some of the complexity of cross-

sector interdisciplinary research and practice. Here, Sam reports on the devising process in his fieldnotes (see also McKay 2019).

> *Ruth talks about her editing process of the voice recordings of the group. She has made conscious decisions to edit out some of the natural pauses, umm and ahhhs to make it feel more like a streamlined performance. Taking out imperfections, but thinking about how those imperfections actually make the spoken word more beautiful, it is an indicator of the process of navigating a new language. Jess takes this a step further by describing how these "imperfections" are actually a part of the spoken repertoire - they are a useful part of language and not imperfections at all.*

Extract 3 Sam's fieldnotes, 5 April 2017

Sam observes that Ruth wants to produce a recording that is polished for the production, but which nonetheless retains the quality of talk. Jessica, a researcher in language and creative practice, notes that pauses, fillers and repetitions are not shortcomings.

Around this time there is further negotiation between Ruth and Théo about his story. They debate which parts Théo will re-tell during the performance, which aspects he will highlight (Extract 4). In accord with the earlier interaction, Ruth's attention to similarities and differences between the old home and the new orients towards colour and changes in colour, representing and emphasising contrast. Jessica is also present, and is audio-recording the interaction. She contributes orally towards the end of the exchange, which begins two minutes into the recorded talk.

```
1.   R:    the similarities and differences so shall I just
2.         um what I'll put is ((writing)) similarities (.)
3.         versus differences (.) and then we'll put so first
4.         one so a is the oh what was it the houses
5.   T:    yes the houses
6.   R:    b weather
7.   T:    yes weather (.) the weather is different
8.   R:    and c the lands land we call it like landscape
9.         do you un- look the land
10.  T:    or we can just leave land
11.  R:    you don't want to talk about bauxite
12.  T:    hh-hh er bauxite I just know how to talk about
13.        bauxite in French not really not really in English
14.        because you don't ever you don't never you never
15.        hear that you said
16.  J:    I think that's why it's interesting
17.  R:    yeah
18.  T:    OK let's go bauxite
```

Extract 4 Negotiation in devising

Earlier in the discussion, Ruth and Théo already agreed that the parts of the story to narrate for the performance should include some of the differences that Théo noticed on his arrival, in the houses, the weather and the colours in the landscape. In the extract, Ruth

makes summary notes on these aspects (lines 1-9). This is done cooperatively, with Théo's agreement at (5) *yes the houses* and (7) *yes weather*.

A shift to negotiation happens at (10), when Théo reverses his earlier agreement to include attention to the land(scape) in the telling for the performance (*or we can just leave land*). Ruth, rather than repeating *land* in her question (11), brings in explicit reference to *bauxite*, the crucial, colourful mineral upon which she focused during the first conceptualisation discussion. Théo's quiet unvoiced laughter (12), comprising two short breathy particles, precedes his response. This type of 'muted delivery', suggest Hepburn and Varney (2013:32), 'seems more appropriate when mitigating actions that have the potential for being in some way interactionally troublesome.' This appears to be the case here, as Théo hesitantly explains first that he does not know how to talk about bauxite in English (12-13) and then *you never hear that you said* (14-15). He does not elaborate upon this comment, but we might infer that he is cautious about describing and explaining in English, anxious that he does not have the necessary fluency or lexical knowledge. At this point (16) Jessica contributes for the first time in this exchange, *I think that's why it's interesting*. At (17) Ruth supports Jessica's interjection (*yeah*). Théo acquiesces (18), though for reasons he has attempted to explain, he would not have selected this as the focus for himself.

The need to communicate in English, therefore, on a topic that Théo feels unsure about because of his perceived lack of competence, creates something of a tension. Ruth has identified the visual potential of bauxite during the conceptualisation phase, and Théo is reluctant to speak about bauxite in English. The story is contested, as it is shaped through interaction prior to its public telling.

Phase 4 performance

Théo's story, having undergone this negotiation and resemiotisation, becomes one of three in the eventual production. Shortly after the devising phase, it is recorded and then edited, to be played as part of the performance. While it is not scripted, the participants have agreed in outline what Théo will say. As Théo speaks for the recording, Ruth and Jessica continue to prompt him, helping him find the words and sometimes the longer utterances.

```
1.   R:    do you want to say about that
2.   T:    ((whispers)) yeah ok (1.0) ((speaks aloud)) mm
3.         this the er the ground is different to mine in
4.         here because my country the ground is is er is
5.         like the ground the colour is like
6.         ((whispers)) what is this colour
7.   R:    like er a
8.   T:    ((whispers) like this
9.   R:    rusty (.) orange
10.  J:    mm it's clay erm:
11.  R:    cl- like a I would s- we would know w- what you
12.        meant by a clay [clay a red clay
13.  J:                    [clay a red clay
14.  R:    (.) do you want to start that saying that the ground
15.        in my country is a red clay colour
16.  T:    ok my ground er the ground of my country is the
17.        red cl- colour but here the co- is like (.) black
18.        a little bit black
```

19. J: uhuh
20. T: it's not really black
21. J: uhuh
22. T: the er the country have a most er bau- bauxite
23. in this world is my country
24. R: mhm
25. T: he used to be mm Australia but now it's my country

Extract 5 Recording for performance

In line (1) Ruth prompts Théo to begin speaking for the recording (2-5). At (6) and (8), whispering, he asks Ruth to help him describe a colour. In so doing, he positions himself in a certain way. Positioning is a discursive process whereby 'people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines' (Davies and Harré 1999:37). We might add that the locally-contingent conditions of the interaction, in this case its visual aspects, prompt and shape the emergence of the narrative and the positions taken. Théo here positions himself (reflexively, in Davies and Harré's terms) as the person who needs support, and Ruth is thus positioned interactively as the person who can give that help. Ruth and Jessica offer *a red clay*, bringing in mention of *clay* from the first interview in the conceptualisation phase. Ruth then provides Théo with the entire utterance with which to begin his story (14-15). Théo repeats this (16-17), continuing to describe the ground *here* as *a little bit black* (18) and *not really black* (20), all the while supported with affirming interjections by Jessica (19, 21). Then at (22-25) Théo makes his statement about bauxite.

Ruth edited the recording, removing all talk apart from Théo's. The edited recording was included in the filming of the play during a public performance at the partner third sector organisation in Leeds. This film was shown at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (now Leeds Playhouse) in Leeds, among other settings, during Refugee Week. It can be viewed online – https://vimeo.com/221776776 – as in Figure 2.

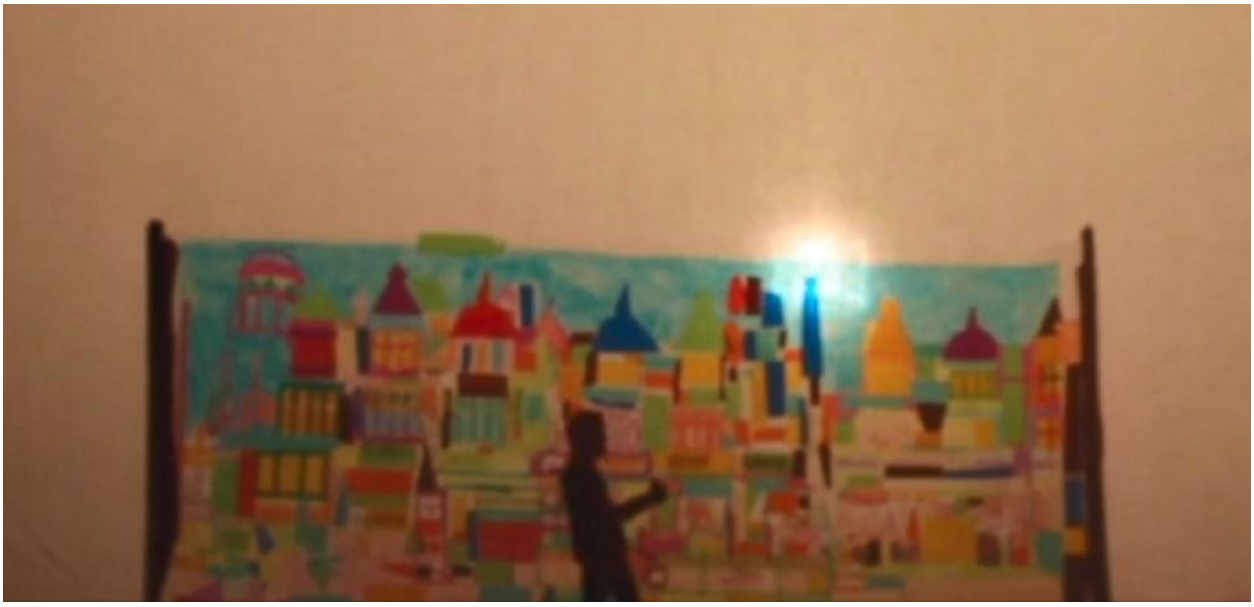

Figure 2 The Production

Extract 5 above, edited for the production, comes at 4:33-4:52 (Extract 6):

> *the ground of my country is the red cl- clay colour*
> *but here the co- is like (.) black*
> *a little bit black*
> *the country have a most er bau- bauxite in this world is my country*
> *he used to be mm Australia*
> *but now it's my country*

Extract 6 Théo's story in the production

Following the editing it appears streamlined, as it homes in on the detail identified by Ruth in the conceptualisation stage, the mineral bauxite. In some ways, Théo has been a less powerful social actor than Ruth over the course of the process, due to her need to combine multiple and compatible stories into a visually-oriented production, aimed at public audiences. The story is co-constructed, and all its details originate from Théo's narrative of his experience. It contains elements that he first noted, but were then emphasised by Ruth, with support from Jessica, to become crucial aspects of the ensuing performance. The representation of the land was negotiated, not necessarily to everyone's satisfaction but well enough to be included in the shadow puppet play.

Discussion

Our first two research questions asked how those attempting to settle in a new country express and perform their translocal belongings, and what communicative resources they draw upon as they do so. To address these questions we followed a story of arrival from its initial telling, through its resemiotisation, to its representation in a performance.

Something of the fullness of communication is visible in the multimodal spatial activity of the production process. Arts practice (language, music, the making of objects, and the participants' spatial positioning) depends upon the successful deployment of the spectrum of the communicative semiotic repertoire, what Deleuze & Guattari (1987) call the *assemblage*, the non-hierarchical constellation of bodies, materials, actions, enunciations, signs, and the dynamic relationships between them that exists at any point during a practice (see also Bennett 2001). Within that activity, our specific concern has been a story of emergent translocal belonging, of finding one's place in relation to the place one has left, and how it is expressed, re-presented and performed across modes and through time. We might characterise this as belonging-in-interaction, a dynamic process of negotiation and, to an extent, of contest. Examining the trajectory of the story from its original expression through to its performance draws our attention to Susanne Langer's (1948) distinction between discursive and presentational forms of symbolization, and indeed to the inherently dialogic nature of discourse. The time-space of the performance itself (and its subsequent viewings) is where the discursive and the presentational combine (cf. Busch 2018). We have uncovered the trace of the negotiation – which is usually masked – that enables the performance. The four phases of the creative process that we identified and utilised as an organising principle, from conceptualisation to performance, have epistemological value too, reflecting as they do the sense of departure, arrival and

eventually a tentative settlement. In the *Migration & Settlement* project Théo and his fellow participants made public their stories of movement through time and space, of belonging *there*, of transition and difference, and of belonging and not yet belonging *here*.

We do not wish to overstate the transformative potential of the production. As researchers and practitioners, we might ask too if the process served to flatten or in fact to reproduce, or at least mirror, the entrenched hierarchies experienced by the participants in other domains of practice such as education or immigration bureaucracy. Moreover, highlighting the contrasts between the home and the new place, in a performance that emphasised the visual, perhaps did less than it might have done to construct diversity as the norm. The production nonetheless responds well to Angela Creese's question of whether the arts, in partnership with applied linguistics and educational studies, 'can portray the translanguaging realities of people's lives.' Creese continues: 'The collaborative practice such a union demands seeks a discursive space for dialogism and polyphony' (2020:252). Such a space enables the raising of shared questions, ones that might challenge educators in language and the arts. In its messy and tentative complexity (Balfour 2009) our project perhaps provided that space (cf. Li 2011, Bradley & Simpson 2020).

Conclusion

In following Théo's story we have posed questions of its ownership, and have thus recognised that belongings are not simply expressed or performed, but negotiated in interaction, contested and debated. We have seen how the *Migration & Settlement* project encompassed attention on the multimodal and the material, as observable in arts practice. In our analysis we then refocused on language, but as a means of meaning-making that is no longer so central, one which – to use Thurlow's term again – is provincialised. To conclude, we note that this perspective stands in contrast to established and politicised understandings of the role of language for belonging. At the outset we posed a third research question: How then do our participants' belongings relate to wider political contexts and social structures? To consider this, we recall the situation in which Théo and his classmates found themselves, as new migrants and English language students on a resettlement programme, soon after their arrival in the UK.

Belonging is a prominent concern for new arrivals attempting to find a foothold in society. It is, as noted earlier, implicit in the veiled demands for assimilation that characterise political debate, and policy itself, around social cohesion, immigration and citizenship, employment and employability, and mainstream education. In these domains competence in the main language is typically viewed as a proxy for belonging and integration. We can juxtapose this with our understanding of belonging as fluid, negotiable in interaction, translocal, and not bound by the word, as demonstrated in our participatory, arts-based project. Our analysis therefore contests homogenising political discourses of belonging. Théo's narrative, comparing as it does the red of the earth in his west African homeland with the darkness of the new northern Europe locality, introduces the visual into the expression and performance of belonging, and thus opens a window on other ways of seeing belonging. The contrast is with the othering inherent, for example, in requirements to show a particular level of ability in the dominant language for citizenship, residence and even actual entry to the country, in the language classrooms where only English is permitted to be spoken, in the job-seeking interviews where employment prospects are shaped and constrained by advisors' perceptions about clients' language competence, and

in the rhetoric and policy that pervade the contexts which migrants must navigate. These are the monologic negative translanguaging spaces of non-belonging (Bradley & Simpson 2019), the sites of unsuccessful struggle which emerge at the nexus of geographical and socioeconomic mobility, spaces where creativity, audibility and resistance to social inequalities are restricted. The contribution of our paper therefore is to offer a means of showing how debates on integration can be refocused towards a dynamic account of settlement and belonging, towards decentring the word and towards meaning-making beyond language. Thus we present a more inclusive, holistic approach to understanding and addressing dislocation and relocation.

Notes

1. 'Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities (TLANG)' (AH/L007096/1). The project was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, funded with a Large Grant in the Translating Cultures theme. It was led by Angela Creese, and the Leeds-based team comprised Mike Baynham, Jessica Bradley, John Callaghan, Jolana Hanušová, Emilee Moore and James Simpson.

2. Transcription conventions used in this paper (Holt & Clift 2007):

(2.0)	timed pause in seconds
(.)	short un-timed pause
(( ))	description and translated text
( )	indecipherable talk
[	overlapping turns
hh	breathy unvoiced laughter
↑	marked rise in intonation immediately before the shift
↓	marked fall in intonation immediately before the shift
:	stretched sound
-	cut-off

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