

Research Article

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Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering: An Experiential Approach to Linguistic Hospitality

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Abstract: This essay outlines the potential of artistic research for engaging audiences in cultural literacy and linguistic hospitality, which according to Paul Ricœur occurs “where the pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home” (10). It builds upon Émile Benveniste’s (1969) and Jacques Derrida’s (1997, 2000) transcultural etymological investigation of hospitality which is central to Alison Phipps’ ethical, socially oriented ethnographic praxis. Focusing on the use of a sensory and reflexive methodology in *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering*, a participatory arts research project—developed during an Arts and Humanities Research Council Cultural Engagement Fellowship—this essay aims to extol the value of adopting an experimental approach to language, to embrace “not knowing” as a constructive methodological strategy and to extend the scope of research within this area to encompass other epistemological fields. The project is recontextualised in the aftermath of the United Kingdom’s EU referendum (2016) and looks towards the possibilities that the affective nature of art affords, considering how it could be used to encourage a critical debate about language and counteract the increasingly nationalist rhetoric and identity politics associated with being a native English speaker.

Keywords: art practice, linguistic hospitality, hospitality, participatory

Translation Zone(s)

In February 2016 ten strangers from different linguistic communities were invited to participate in a six-week research project *Translation Zones: A Stuttering* that culminated in a live performance at the Library of Birmingham; the project was produced during an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Cultural Engagement Fellowship at Birmingham City University. The participants were invited to explore their relationships with language through performance; to focus on its physical and sensory effect on their bodies and to consider how it shapes their own (and others’) attitudes. This crossing of thresholds entailed a coming-together of the self and Other and made the participants shift their perspective, use their emotional intelligence and enhance their cultural literacy.

Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering was the first work in long-term research project called *Translation Zones*, which aims to create conditions for artists, translators and translation “users” to work together and interrogate the different modalities of linguistic translation from a variety of perspectives. It seeks to engage “monolingual” (a problematic term that I will return to later) and multilingual speakers within the process of translation as a transformative, performative and embodied activity (Robinson, *Performative Linguistics & Feeling Extended*) to encourage transdisciplinary research and intercultural dialogue. The

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Figure 1. Video still from *Translation Zones: A Stuttering* which can be seen at: <https://vimeo.com/172641096>

creation of a series of “zones” builds on Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone,” which informed Emily Apter’s book *Translation Zone*, a term that Apter uses to designate “sites that are ‘in-translation,’” in motion, sites “that belong to no single, discrete language or single medium of communication” (6). “Zone” also implies the configuration of a collection of ideas, objects and activities that occur in a delimited area and connotes the project’s focus on language *as* and *in* a state of becoming, rather than a static carrier of meaning (cf. Deleuze and Guattari: “zones of indiscernibility”). These “Zones” create the conditions for diverse elements to form new relations. This results in a hospitable place (not necessarily a harmonious one) where cultural literacy thrives as differences are debated, and alternative perspectives emerge.

My role within these projects can be conceptualised as that of a host, who facilitates intercultural dialogue and thus hospitality has emerged as a central method within my own art and research. This essay explores Paul Ricœur’s concept of *linguistic hospitality* within the context of this project and current attitudes towards language in the United Kingdom (in May 2018), following the result of the 2016 UK European Union Referendum. It draws on Émile Benveniste’s and Jacques Derrida’s (*Hostipitality; Monolingualism of the Other, or, the Prosthesis of Origin*) etymological deconstruction of the term *hospitality*, its prevalence within Alison Phipps’ ethically and socially oriented ethnographic practice (*Voicing Solidarity; Linguistic Incompetence*), to consider how these practices provide new perspectives on the UK’s current linguistic predicament. This essay seeks to demonstrate how experiential, sensory and practice-oriented methods, can operate *in dialogue* with theoretical paradigms to establish new knowledge, and engage diverse audiences in cultural literacy, by extolling its virtues and tackling some of the difficult issues, and negative attitudes faced by migrants living in the UK today.

This essay attempts to make explicit some of the implicit theoretical concepts within *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* and to provide an insight into the constitutive, durational, participatory and affective nature of the project, which is difficult to comprehend and articulate through purely linguistic means and draws on different epistemological frameworks—ways of knowing, doing and making. It is important to note that the four adjectives used to describe the project above refer to particular concerns and practices within contemporary art practice, which emphasise the role that the audience and environment plays. “Constitutive” refers to the multiple elements, processes and conditions that come together as an assemblage to make the work; “durational” refers to practices that are designed to be experienced or have been “made” over a period of time; “participatory” refers to works that have been made with others (often members of the public), or work that relies upon the participation of others to “animate” or “complete”

it; and “affective” indicates the experiential nature of the work. Taking all of this into consideration, it is essential that this text is read in conjunction with the audio-visual material presented here and online. The research explores language, as a post-structural phenomenon, through art practice. The work uses deconstruction and multiple languages in order to emphasise its instability to amplify its plurality. The concluding remarks outline the potential of participatory and affective art practices for interdisciplinary research in cultural literacy and linguistic hospitality.

The Sounds of Others

In recent years, monolingualism has become an increasingly contentious term, condition and concept. Monolingualism is a term I use to refer to those who are competent or fluent in a single verbal language, and in this essay, it primarily refers to British nationals who do not speak a “second” language. It is a topic that is important to address following the UK’s EU referendum (Kelly) and is a particularly British (Anglophone) concern. Writing prior to the recent political turmoil, Thompson proposed that the renewed interest in the monolingual position signals “a new linguistic turn—or return” (1):

Monolingualism interrogates the values of heritage, ownership and origins inherent in the notion of the mother tongue ... Language is fundamental to the identity of the speaking subject, but, Derrida insists, it is not in any sense a natural attribute. There is no natural ownership of language. Language is, rather, inherited. But inheritance, in Derrida’s thought, is not a purely passive affair. Language must be adopted, colonized, naturalized. (Thompson 1)

This statement underlines the need to engender a critical debate about what it means to speak a language, to raise an awareness of the potent meanings and politics embodied in the languages we speak. Whilst multilingual speakers will be familiar with the provisionality and messiness of languages, and aware of the emotional attachment to the languages they speak and the socio-political connotations that they carry, I suspect that many monolingual English speakers have not considered the particular affordances of the English language, other than the obvious ability to converse with other people without the need to learn their language.

Most studies addressing issues pertaining to monolingualism are problematised from a bi- or multilingual perspective (Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, the Prosthesis of Origin*; Ellis; García *et al.*; Minnaard *et al.*), written from the point of view of “the Other” living within a predominantly “monolingual environment”—whereas my interest comes from my subjective position as a monolingual English speaker living in the UK. My research in this area is driven by my experience of language learning and a common belief (particularly among Britons, Gayton) in my ineptitude at acquiring another language: I understand that by relying upon translated texts—mediated and interpreted by another—that I am missing out on nuances that may exist in the “original” language, which I may read and interpret differently. This experience led me to create *translation zone(s)* that encourage intercultural dialogue and linguistic hospitality.

Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering

Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering can be described as a “choral” composition based on the exchange of alphabets, where language has been stripped back to its basic building-blocks—letters, symbols and sounds. In the performance English-met-Thai-met-Mandarin-met-Greek-met-Portuguese-met-Finnish-met-Taiwanese-met-Hindi-met-Arabic-met-Japanese-met-Shanghainese. The work began with a recital of the English alphabet in unison, which was directly followed by a rendition of the participants’ “own alphabets,” an instruction that proved difficult in reality. This instruction exposed my naive assumption that all languages work on a similar system of codification, that each language would have an equivalent set of graphic signs that corresponded to a set of oral sounds (*grapheme-phoneme correspondents*)—a dual system of named letters (a—“aay,” b—“bee”) with a phonic equivalent (a—aah, b—buh). In reality, however, the variations in number of letters, characters, tones, diacritical marks and accents exposed the complex

differences between languages, dispelling the widely held myth that language can be treated as a code of direct equivalents (where a linguistic unit in language A can simply be replaced with another in language B).

The initial activity of collecting and collating the alphabets from the participants led to lengthy discussions about what sounds should be articulated in order to represent the peculiarities of each language system. For example, should the Mandarin speaker articulate tonal variations of each letter, and how should Arabic and Hindi speakers enunciate the “letter forms” that have no individual meaning and are ordinarily used in conjunction with other letters? Japanese had the largest variety of sounds and prompted the question whether the Japanese speaker should focus on the phonetic alphabet, which contains 99 sounds, or its 48 syllables. The European languages (Finnish, Portuguese and Greek) practised linguistic hospitality by incorporating “loan sounds” and “extra” letters into their alphabets to accommodate commonly-used phrases that they had assimilated.

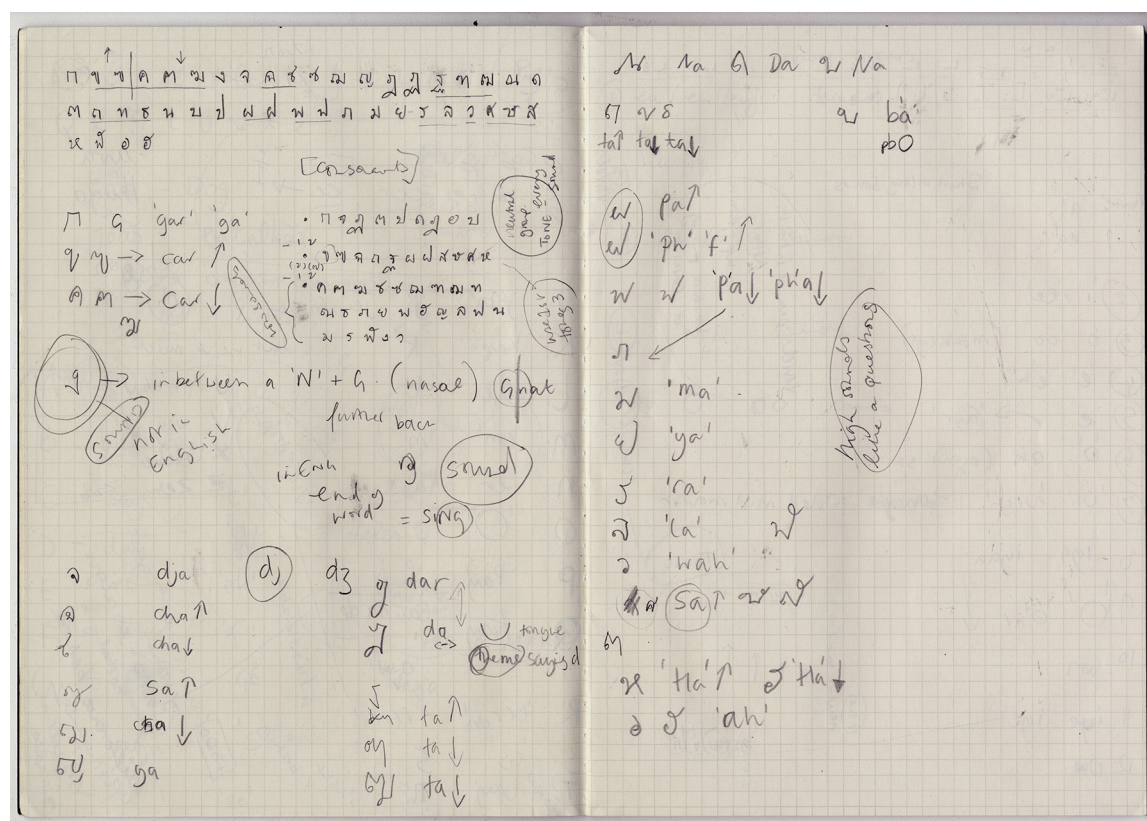


Figure 2. Example of the notes taken during initial discussions with Thai and Finnish participants.

Most participants explored the sounds of their native language, whilst others chose to explore languages that they had a “special relationship” with or which were not represented by others in the group. For example, Taiwanese national Chen opted to explore the sounds of the traditional Taiwanese language, which she spoke with her grandmother but had not been taught at school. Chen used her mobile phone during the project to assist her in pronouncing this language, which she had acquired through conversation, and seized on the opportunity to become more familiar with it herself and to promote it. Her response to the brief focused our attention on our emotional connection with the languages that we speak, the underlying social capital that is inherent in all verbal languages and the need to be sensitive to any underlying tensions that may exist in multilingual groupings. Literary scholar and cultural historian of modern China Jing Tsu discusses the complexities of the Taiwanese language and its uneasy relationship with Mandarin and provides an insight into the sociopolitical issues that make a standardised “national” language in this polylingual nation particularly problematic.

At a basic level, the lack of direct alphabetic equivalences points towards some of the fundamental linguistic challenges that face translators, in addition to the cultural anomalies that affect intercultural communication. Figure 2 illustrates how the graphic representation of each alphabet emphasises the gap between languages and the difficulties I faced in producing a singular multilingual score that could be read by all—as neither I nor the performers could read music or the various graphemic identifiers. Alongside the responsive nature of the “score,” this led to the creation of multiple “versions” of the score, according to each individual’s needs.

The sound work was devised through a series of stages. Firstly, I divided the audio recording of each alphabet into individual units and grouped similar sounds together, for example, many languages share “a, ah, aaa” sounds; secondly, I experimented with these groups digitally, exploring different rhythms, harmonies and sounds I wanted to put together; thirdly, I worked with the composer and conductor to devise exercises to test these out within the workshops; fourthly, I observed how the sounds worked when performed by the participants, noting what was difficult to perform and so forth; finally I reviewed the video footage and my notes following each workshop and proceeded to select and refine the “score.” This process was repeated week after week. During the workshops the participants became familiar with the conductor’s gestures, learned how to use their bodies to perform (see Figure 3), to inhale and exhale consciously, to use their voices effectively, to feel the sounds as they rose up from and resound in their torso, to pay attention to each other, to work with one another—in harmony and discord, to interpret and follow each other’s leads. As they played host and guest to each other’s languages, their mother-tongue became increasingly estranged, as it collided and morphed into abstract sounds and material to play with. Their mother-tongue became an Other tongue—in an act of alterity.



Figure 3. Video still of rehearsal (breathing exercises) at the Library of Birmingham

These initial experiments were developed into five discrete acts—i) *the alphabet*, ii) *stutter*, iii) *the whisper*, iv) *call and response*, v) *duos and trios*—each requiring a different formation, depending on the amount of direction and instruction required from the conductor. The performance took place in the Library of Birmingham on a Saturday morning between 11 am and midday, beginning in the basement and moving up through the space until we reached the fourth floor, the last that was publicly accessible. Like most elements of this project, the location and structure of the performance evolved responsively through a consideration of the practical and conceptual aspects of the project. For example, *the alphabet* was spoken out to the city from the third floor terrace (see Figure 1), *the call and response* in the basement courtyard

(see Figure 4), *the duos and trios* on the travelator (see Figure 5) and *stutter* on the top floor at the base of a cylindrical tower which can be seen as a reference to the tower of Babel (see fig. 6 and see video 2.24-2.37 mins.). Each site provided a structure and backdrop to the work which expanded its Textuality (cf. Barthes *From Work to Text*) and contributed to the effect on the audiences who experienced the live work as well as on those who watch the video.



Figure 4. *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* (2016). Digital video still of participants performing in the rotunda, the basement of the Library of Birmingham



Figure 5. *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* (2016). Digital video still of participants performing on the travelator in the Library of Birmingham



Figure 6. *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* (2016). Digital video still of participants performing on level 4 at the entrance to the cylindrical tower that ascends to the top of the Library of Birmingham.

While the English alphabet operated as a point of reference for the audience, the work sought to negate the dominance of the English language by giving prominence to the other languages and making the differences tangible. This was done by inviting the participants to enunciate their alphabets in both their named and phonetic forms: those without named letters remained silent during that section, and all the participants fell silent as soon as they had exhausted the letters in their “alphabet.” Thus the audience could hear and see the differences, as they listened to the familiar and unfamiliar sounds and observed the varying lengths of time the participants took to enunciate (for example see video 1.00-1.13 mins). The staggered finishing times of each alphabet drew attention to the lack of any overarching standard and the inadequacy of conceptualising language as a code of equivalents (a common misconception amongst monolingual speakers). English was used sparingly in the performance itself, ‘in order to focus on the sounds of language, “the grain of the voice” (cf. Barthes) and to indicate the genesis of the work to the audience. In fact, it was only in the latter stages of the project that I realised that I did not have a native English performer and I had inadvertently omitted English from the score. In my desire to make the other languages more visible and audible, I had unwittingly silenced my own.

Linguistic Hospitality

The workshops and public performance of *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* created an environment that was both hospitable and disorienting. I was rendered vulnerable by my reliance on the participants’ generosity and their hospitality enabled me to produce the artistic output. My linguistic incompetency, however, enabled me to address and subsequently shift the power dynamic between myself as the researcher and the student/participants, who were the experts in the languages they spoke; without the performers, there was no work, no project, no research output. As the project unfolded, the role and practice of hospitality, emerged as a constituent part of my arts practice.

Hospitality is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the “friendly and generous reception of guests or strangers or (*fig.*) of new ideas etc.” The word comes from “the French ‘*hospitalité*’ and the Latin root *hospitalitas*” (Phipps and Barnett 237-238, italics in original). According to Emile Benveniste, the genesis of the Latin term, is *hospes*, a compound of the word *hostis* (hosti-pet-s), meaning guest, and “*pot-*, which

signifies master,” which therefore literally means “the guest-master” (62). *Hostis* also denotes a *known* stranger or enemy, a particular type of stranger (or enemy), one who lives among us. It specifically refers to someone who resides in a particular area and who enjoys the same rights as national citizens (of the Roman Empire), which therefore “implies a certain relation of reciprocity” (Benveniste 67) and invites us to consider what it means to play host to a “favourable” invited (Benveniste 67) or “hostile” uninvited guest (65)—a known or unexpected stranger.

Derrida builds upon Benveniste’s cross-cultural etymological analysis, further complicating the concept and highlighting its “troubling origin” through its deconstruction (*Hostipitality* 3; *Of Hospitality*; Derrida & Dufourmantelle; Still). Derrida asserts that German word *Hospitalität*, of Latin origin, “carries its own contradiction incorporated into it,” and consequently “allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, ‘hostility’, the undesirable guest [*hôte*] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body” (*Hostipitality* 3). This contradiction is epitomised in the wordplay of the title of Derrida’s paper *Hostipitality*, a neologism that embodies the act of deconstruction whilst exposing the multicultural heritage that has shaped its meaning, and culturally specific practices that it entails. It also demonstrates how these newly acquired meanings can be used to challenge our worldviews, affect our approach to hospitality and enhance our cultural literacy—making manifest the inferences that are gained and lost in translation. Effective intercultural communication requires one to act as both host and guest, to be willing to address issues of identity, home, nation, politics and power, to cross thresholds and move towards the other.

This expanded understanding of hospitality can be used to extend Paul Ricoeur’s concept of *linguistic hospitality*, which emerged out of an interest in translation, a practice which he conceived as inherently hermeneutic and ethical. Translation, according to Ricoeur, is both a *linguistic paradigm*—“how words relate to meanings within language or between languages”—and an *ontological paradigm*—“how translation occurs between one human self and another” (xii). Ricoeur’s theoretical concerns and practices became embodied in his concept of *linguistic hospitality*, which he describes as a state “where the pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one’s welcoming house” (10). *Linguistic hospitality* can, therefore, be described as a reciprocal dialogue between the self and Other—an ethical and mutually beneficial act that makes us “attend to stories other than our own” (Kearney 155) and opens us up to the Other.

As already discussed, the participants in *Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering* were required to play host to the sounds of Other—to enter into a state of deep listening and attempt to reproduce unfamiliar sounds. They had to pay close attention to the shape of other people’s mouths and lips, an intimate practice that is usually the preserve of lovers or close family, rather than strangers. As the score fluctuated in pace, rhythm, volume, harmony and discord, the participants shifted between the roles of guest and host. This ongoing act epitomises Ricoeur’s reciprocal vision of linguistic hospitality—a risky practice that requires both parties to move towards an Other, leaving themselves vulnerable and exposed. In other words, to be truly hospitable each person must be willing to leave the safety and certainty of what they know in order to become open to the other—to be altered in this encounter.

Ethnographer and linguist Alison Phipps demonstrates how *vulnerability* lies at the “heart of linguistic hospitality” (*Linguistic Incompetence* 330) within her “relational mode of multilingual research” (*Linguistic Incompetence* 335). Her scholarly texts often draw on her experience of working with different linguistic communities, her own and other people’s relationship to language. *Voicing Solidarity: Linguistic Hospitality and Poststructuralism in the Real World* is a “performative discussion” of an auto-ethnographic case study of the UK Border agency’s intention to deport Phipps’ adopted Eritrean daughter, Rima (582). The essay is an assemblage of different forms of writing, including official letters between correspondents, personal reflections, poetry and scholarly analysis—its heteroglossic “messiness” (*Linguistic Incompetence* 337) reflects the toing and froing of multilingual research and its viscosity exerts an affective force that is rare within academic writing.

Phipps’ ethnographic and educational praxis invites researchers to consider the ethical valence of researching multilingualism and multilingual subjects from a monolingual perspective and the affordances that this offers. She proposes that this “lack” of language can be used to foster a “capability of attentiveness” to non-verbal communication and to “decentre” the Major language (*Linguistic Incompetence* 338). Judith

Butler proposes that this state of vulnerability and *unknowingness* provides us (the researcher) with the opportunity “to become undone in relation to others” and “to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me ... to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient ‘I’ as a kind of possession” (136 qtd. in *Linguistic Incompetence* 340). This approach is borne out in Phipps’ auto-ethnographic account of her linguistic limitations (2013) and her intimate account of teaching Rima English (Phipps’ mother-tongue) and Rima teaching her foster mother “her mother’s tongue,” Eritrean (*Voicing Solidarity* 592). This act of fostering her “daughter’s tongue” draws our attention to the process of language acquisition through immersion (as a child) or instruction (in a formal learning environment), out of desire (to communicate with another without mediation) or necessity (a requirement of gaining the right to remain in a country) and thus politicises and complicates received notions of “mother tongue” (associated with birthright and nationhood)—disrupting any certainties about received notions of a “mother tongue” being passed down through maternal lineage.

The adoption of a reflexive (Etherington) and sensory (Pink) methodology, encourages researchers to transform their “lack of language” into a benefit, which enables them to “bracket out” the semantic content of the utterance and focus on the non-verbal aspects of communication and habitual practices. This amplifies the sensory, relational and affective nature of the encounters, and draws the researcher’s attention to tacit, embodied knowledge and other epistemological frameworks. In the absence of a shared verbal language, the researcher has to rely on other forms of knowledge, and this lack of familiarity can lead them to reflect upon their own cultural habitus, and how that influences their ethnographic praxis—“to speak of what [they] have become *through not knowing*, or not being able to speak the language” (Phipps, *Linguistic Incompetence* 337 emphasis my own), which demonstrates cultural literacy in action. Knowing, thus, becomes understood as a “situated practice” and knowledge production as a dialogical and participatory activity (Pink 40). In order to “‘know’ as others do, it is therefore imperative to engage in practices together and ‘make[ing] participation central to the task’” (ibid.).

Not knowing provides us with the impetus to search out new knowledge and it is something that emerges as an important method of inquiry within the arts (cf. Fisher and Fortnum). In fact, Henk Borgdorff, professor of the theory of research in the arts at Leiden University, proposes that “the primary importance of artistic research” lies “not in explicating the implicit or non-implicit knowledge enclosed in art. It is more directed at a *not-knowing*, or a *not-yet-knowing*. It creates room for that which is unthought, that which is unexpected—the idea that all things could be different” (Borgdorff 173, my emphasis). This statement reflects some of the challenges that the ontological and affective dimension of art practice and arts research poses for the academy, and how linguistic articulations of artistic research fail to capture the “non-conceptual, non-discursive” (Borgdorff 148) knowledge that is situated, experienced and ineffable.

The adoption of the qualifier *not-yet* (known) draws our attention to the knowledge one can sense but not-yet grasp—which is on the cusp of being known yet resists being articulated through linguistic representation. Artist-researcher and writer Emma Cocker describes this self-conscious and systematic mode of inquiry as a mode of practice that “involves a shift in attention” from a deliberate act to the *process* of deliberation. It challenges the traditional notion of knowledge as an “acquisition” and moves towards “a way of knowing that understands by way of a ‘letting slip through the fingers,’” offering “a different way of existing” (Lomax 6). Arguably, most research is driven by “unknowing” or the “not-yet-known,” but most scientific projects and methodologies are oriented towards finding an answer and pinning down a singular contribution to knowledge, whereas artistic research aims to produce meaning through “multiplicity” (Butt 78).

Linguistic Hospitality and the UK

The EU referendum put the thresholds of British hospitality to the test and exposed a sliding scale of (in)tolerance and conditionality. The perceived threat of the *hostis*, European citizens along with other migrant groups, became palpable during the referendum and played a dominant role in the Leave [the EU] Campaign. National newspapers included incendiary headlines such as “REVEALED: Migrants in race to

get to Britain to avoid post-Brexit visa restrictions” (Culbertson) and “Brits just not fair: 4 in 5 British jobs went to foreign nationals” (Hawkes), and “Now EU wants asylum control—Madness as Brussels plots to tell us who can come and stay in our country” (Hall)—a topic that Martin Moore and Gordon Ramsey analyse in depth in their 2017 report. This focus on the Other led to language (spoken by designated others) becoming a key battleground for politicians, individuals and the press and provided the impetus for scholars and parliamentarians to call for an urgent rethink of language education in the UK (Kelly). One of the dominant voices of the Leave campaign was Nigel Farage, the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), whose 2014 remarks that “parts of the country had been ‘taken over’ by foreigners” and “in many parts of England you don’t hear English spoken any more” (Hope), resulting in the country becoming “unrecognisable” and like “a foreign land” (Sparrow) brought the issues of *linguistic hospitality* to the forefront of British politics. This statement and ongoing discussions exposed an underlying fear of the Other, a mistrust of those who speak in a language that monolingual Anglophones cannot understand, and the supposed challenge that it poses to the sovereignty of the English language. This drew our attention to the connection between language and nationhood and the role it plays in fostering cultural attachment and a sense of belonging.

Migration proved to be one of the most divisive and acrimonious issues covered, with specific nationalities (Turks, Albanians, Romanians and Poles) bearing the brunt of the negative coverage (see Moore and Ramsey 8, 103–111). Writing for *The Independent* in September 2015, Hannah Fearn reported that foreigners were being turned away by landlords because of their accents and remarked on the increase in hate crime reported by the police (that continued to rise in 2016–17—O’Neill, A.), which denoted a shift from racial discrimination based on visual cues such as skin colour, for example. There was also an increase in verbal abuse, with people speaking English with a foreign accent or speaking alternative Englishes (hybrids or pidgin English such as Chinglish—Chinese English, Ponglish—Polish English) being told to go home (BBC). This attitude surprised many victims who had resided in the UK for many years. One of the most memorable case was that of Arek Jozwik, a Polish man, whom Culliford (a journalist for the Sun newspaper) reported as being “killed by a single punch from a 15-year-old who laughed at his lack of English”—a claim that the Crown Prosecution Service subsequently overruled (O’Neill, B.). These assaults and the nationalistic undertone that pervaded the media meant that many immigrants no longer felt welcome in the place they now called home (Moore and Ramsey 94–111).

Accents reveal what Bourdieu refers to as our “embodied cultural capital,” something that is acquired consciously (economically, educationally and socially) and/or unconsciously (by inheritance) and accumulated over time. Accents “stain” our voice and expose our cultural roots and affiliation to a particular nation or class; they are difficult to shift. This focus on the physicality of language and *embodied capital* in our voice draws attention to the extra-linguistic aspects of speech, to the judgements that we make of others as they speak and reveals a hidden hierarchy that is embedded in particular societies (especially in the UK). Like translation, the different “Englishes” and accents draw attention to the instability of language; they make *me* conscious of *my own* use of language as a communicative tool and a cultural marker. By creating the conditions for linguistic hospitality and treating language(s) as material and equal to one another, participatory art practices such as *Translation Zone(s)* act as a leveller and can be used to draw attention to linguistic discrimination and to advocate change (cf. Cockburn-Wootton, McIntosh and Phipps). Such works draw attention to how an encounter with an Other’s language makes my language stutter.

A Stuttering

Translation Zone(s): A Stuttering was designed to destabilise the dominant English language, to provide a space for other languages to be heard—to disrupt the norm. The isolation of the phonemic units of the alphabet, the multilingual mix and the (largely) absent semantic content enabled the participants and audience to concentrate on and immerse themselves in the experience of the material and sensuous qualities of the sounds. These abstract parts of the score or “acts” were interrupted by a collective utterance of the English onomatopoeic word “stutter,” which became stretched and contorted,

compartmentalised and separated into syllables to become “S-t-U-tt---e----R, STTT....STTTT...U...TTER...., S..t..u...TTTt....ER,” enunciated at different volumes and paces stutterstutterstutterstutterstutterstutter and STutterSTutterSTutterSTutterSTutterSTutter’ (see video at 0.37-51, 1.06-57 & 2.24-2.37 mins). This activity was repeated with the participants manipulating the translation of the term in their “home” language – 口吃 [Kǒuchī] in Mandarin, τραύλισμα [trávlisma] in Greek, *gaguejar* in Portuguese, *äkyttää* in Finnish and हकलाना [hakalaana] in Hindi and so forth. As in English, many of these words were performative and made the participants stumble and trip over their own tongues.

The enunciation and manipulation of the English word, the bending and blending of sounds and the fusion and confusion of tongues spoken through ten accented voices served to destabilise and deterritorialise the English language. This created what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the “minor” of a specific language, a glitch or alternative to the *major* dominant and formal language determined by the state or a particular socio-economic group. In other words, “minor” signifies any language or dialect that deviates from this “regulated” norm. According to Simon O’Sullivan these minor practices—linguistic (dialect, accent, alternative use of grammar), artistic or otherwise—create “glitches” that “operate as point[s] of indeterminacy, and, as such open up the possibility of subsequent pathways and thus a multiplicity of possible worlds” (251) which lead to alternative modes of thinking and being. This “stammering” and “stuttering” of language, as O’Sullivan explains,

counteract[s] the operation of order-words and the exercise of power this involves by breaking language open to a howling outside/inside. It is these moments of noise—or glitches as we might call them—that free language from itself, at least, from its signifying self, by putting it into contact with other forces. This is an experimentation with, and from within, language. A rupturing of representation. A breaking of the habit of “making sense.” (248)

The Othering of English, the movement between languages, of rearticulation and mispronunciation, make language stutter: they open it up and create new possibilities. The reduction of language(s) to a collection of sounds draws our attention to the grain of the voice, to the one who speaks.

Concluding Remarks

This essay has demonstrated the potential that art practice offers cultural literacy and other language-oriented research projects, which is acknowledged in their presence within the AHRC *Translating Cultures* and the *Open World Research Initiative* (OWRI). However, most projects fail to explore the full potential of art due to artists or artist-researchers not being involved in the inception and design of the project, which means that the scope and outcome of the artistic contribution is delimited by Others’ understanding and expectations of what art can do—rather than inquiring what could art be, and what it might bring to the table. Social scientist Maggie O’Neill has worked closely with artists (and theatre-makers) on her research projects since the 1980s, to devise alternative methodologies for engaging specific groups in difficult topics that impact policy within the UK. Along with Phipps, she proposes that the potential of art-as-research lies in its constituent nature and its ability to bring together complex and divergent interdisciplinary perspectives and incorporate the “messiness of ‘real world’ problems” that are often bracketed out from scholarly research (Phipps, *Linguistic Incompetence* 600). My own research examines linguistic hospitality and cultural literacy *through* art practice; it asks my research questions affectively— *through* the material, form, format (of the event and activities), project structure (temporally and spatially) and its conceptual content.

Responsive, multimodal and socially-engaged practices are ideally suited to expanding interdisciplinary knowledge in this area, which can be seen in the ambitious *Who Are We?* arts-research event commissioned by the Tate Exchange (Tate Modern, London 2017 & 2018) and smaller exhibitions and projects outlined by Koszerek. Art projects “combined with cultural and critical theory can facilitate a radical and democratic imaginary ... that not only facilitates new knowledge and counter-hegemonic imaginings but also counters exclusionary processes and practices” (O’Neill, M. *Women, Well Being and Community*): it has the potential to have an impact on those it encounters and provides the space for groups to “imagine” and begin to work

towards social change. This is something that will be much more evident in future iterations of this project. Art practice offers ways to “document the subjective effects of language on the embodied perceptions, memories and emotions of speakers” (Kramsch in Phipps, *Voicing Solidarity* 583) and to lead towards “a more sensuous understanding” of the public’s perception of cultural literacy that takes into account “feelings as well as cognitive reflection” (O’Neill, M. *Transnational Refugees*). Co-designed projects that incorporate creative, emic methodologies have the potential to increase interest in this topic and lead to new knowledge within this field. To yield the rewards of the affective dimension of art (in interdisciplinary research) requires an act of hospitality, for those unfamiliar with and outside the arts to move towards this Other and to embrace the “not-yet” known (Derrida, *Hostipitality* 10).

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