

Using researcher vignettes to explore co-production in a large diverse team

Implications for research in superdiverse contexts

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Introduction

This chapter responds to Vertovec and Wessendorf's (2010) call for new methodologies in exploring linguistic and cultural transformations in superdiverse settings by focusing on the potential insights generated by large diverse research teams. To explore the divergent perspectives which emerge from teamwork, we focus on vignettes produced as part of a large Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded project exploring multilingualism as a communicative resource across four UK cities (the Translation and Translanguaging [TLANG] project).¹ Vignettes have traditionally been used as a participant-orientated method to elicit reflections (Hughes 1998). In this case, the vignettes were significantly different: they represented researchers' own accounts of being involved in ethnographic fieldwork. This methodological shift in the application of vignettes was developed by members of TLANG on two earlier projects (e.g. Creese and Blackledge *et al.* 2015). On the current project, the team comprised a core group of linguists and other scholars at various career stages and with different project roles, as well as key participants (KPs) who were embedded in a range of community settings and who brought experience from various language, socio-cultural and educational backgrounds.

After reviewing the literature on reflexive research and researcher vignettes, we start our analysis by exploring the genres on which researchers drew when composing their vignettes and discussing what these reveal about researchers' orientation to the research site. We then look at how researchers at different career stages and with distinct roles in the project positioned themselves in relation to their KPs and other members of the team, and how they co-constructed their understanding of the research site. The analysis, which draws on the concept of social anchoring, sheds light on how the co-production of knowledge in superdiverse contexts is shaped by researchers' personal biographies and research roles, which in turn raises questions about how relationships of power play out in diverse research teams. The chapter reflects on the use of vignettes both as a research method within projects exploring superdiverse contexts and as a tool for exploring the process of team research.

Core issues and topics

Superdiversity and team research

Although the value of “superdiversity” as a concept is contested (Blommaert 2013), few would deny that superdiversity is a demographic reality in many places around the world. As a concept, it also offers a useful lens through which to explore multi-dimensional perspectives and how these converge to create highly differential experiences of the social world. Traditionally, diversity research originating from a range of disciplines has been dominated by a focus on differences between ethnically defined groupings within and across societies, and methods and concepts (such as ‘community’) which facilitate this (Phillimore 2015). Ideas around superdiversity call for researchers to move beyond an ethno-focal approach towards multi-dimensional methodologies, which acknowledge the myriad different factors that may come together to influence individuals’ lived experience and the levels of heterogeneity, complexity and fluidity evident in superdiverse contexts (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Nonetheless, although contributions in this handbook make some progress in this area, the theory and methods through which to advance such knowledge have yet to be sufficiently developed (Goodson and Grzymala-Kazłowska forthcoming). This chapter addresses this gap by exploring one way in which researchers of superdiversity can respond to these rapid societal changes in terms of the scope and design of their research.

Our approach is to focus on the process of team research itself. The co-production of knowledge within large diverse teams is shaped by the varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives that different team members bring to the research process (Eisenhart 2001: 19), and which have the potential to create “divergent and overlapping views of the social order” (Creese *et al.* 2009: 230). Through discussing, contesting and accommodating the various voices that members bring (Creese *et al.* 2009), a team can potentially co-produce new perspectives and insights into superdiverse contexts. However, although knowledge co-production encourages researchers to make explicit their values, stances and beliefs (Eisenhart 2001: 19), one important question is how to map the potential ways in which a team’s perspectives might shape the research process (McCorkell and Myers 2004). Challenges in capturing the experiences, insights and reflections of those involved in large teams can be addressed to some extent by the use of researcher vignettes as a reflexive tool, the focus of this chapter. We argue that, by making visible and building on the multiple perspectives within a team, analysis of researcher vignettes can constitute one step towards developing multi-dimensional methodologies which recognize and embody the heterogeneity, complexity and fluidity of superdiverse contexts.

Reflexivity in social research

Reflexivity in social research is based on notions of “openness” and intellectual honesty (Morris *et al.* 1998). Making the research process visible gives readers insights into how researchers shape, interpret and theorize research data (Harding 1993). Making explicit the opportunities and challenges encountered, and how these are tackled, enables greater “authenticity”, exposing researchers’ values and allowing audiences to better critique study findings and conclusions (Humphreys 2005).

At an individual level, reflexivity refers to a type of self-consciousness whereby “the conscious use of the self is a resource for making sense of others” (Galani-Moutafi 2000: 294). Reflecting on the similarities and differences between researcher and researched enables greater understanding of the complexities of research relationships (Olesen 2013), thus making visible

the ways in which researchers influence and are influenced by others. Bourdieu (1992) sees reflexivity as an epistemological addition that can also uncover the nature of existing power relations. Despite efforts to reduce power dynamics between researcher and researched, it is doubtful they can be totally eliminated (Maynard 1994), and so form an important part of any research project. The invitation for reflexivity through the use of researcher vignettes on the TLANG project is a particularly interesting method, given the size and diversity of the team and the involvement of KPs. By its very nature, the TLANG project exhibits a multiplicity of relationships; how these relationships play out forms part of the analysis for this chapter.

In the chapter, “researcher vignettes” refers to short written accounts in which members of a research team reflect on their role in a project, one aim of which is to understand how researchers’ backgrounds, assumptions, views and experiences might shape the team’s knowledge construction (Copland and Creese 2015: 69–70). This generally involves focusing on two main areas, the researcher’s relationships within the research site and within the research team:

The first area is about our experience in the field: the relations we build, our negotiations around access and exiting, how we are positioned and position ourselves. The second area is a discussion about what it means to move between research site and university site during the duration of the research project, and about how we view our positionality in the team.

(Creese and Blackledge et al. 2015: 128)

As Creese and Blackledge *et al.* (2015) explain, vignettes constitute one way of making the research process visible and reflecting on how it shapes knowledge co-production. Vignettes ensure that “researchers themselves become a source of data” (Copland and Creese 2015: 69) which can be analysed alongside other datasets. Thus reflexivity is not only made visible, but gains a status potentially equal to that of other datasets.

The use of researcher vignettes in linguistic ethnography was pioneered by Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge as part of two previous projects researching multilingualism in educational settings.² The vignettes written during these earlier projects are discussed in a number of published papers (e.g. Creese *et al.* 2009; Creese and Blackledge *et al.* 2015). Analysis of two researchers’ vignettes in Creese and Blackledge *et al.* (2015) – from one who spoke the language of the research site and one that did not – suggests that bilingualism was central to how they constructed and negotiated their identities as researchers, their relationships with participants and their sense of belonging. Importantly, the authors point out that these identity positionings are not static but are used in dynamic ways to manage research relationships and understand the research site (Creese *et al.* 2009: 230).

In this chapter, we use vignettes to explore the various personal backgrounds, academic roles, life experiences and expectations among researchers within the TLANG project. We focus on factors significant for the research process and outcomes, as construed by the vignette writers: researchers’ position within the team and their academic status, their role and relations within the field and how these change over time. Unlike the earlier projects (where each researcher wrote one vignette midway through the project), we draw on two sets of vignettes written at different points in the research process, and are therefore able to track shifts over time.

To help analyse these written accounts, we adopt the concept of social anchoring as developed by Alexandra Grzymala-Kasłowska (2015). Social anchoring has been described as a process whereby individuals search for reference points in order to function effectively in a given situation. Social anchoring has been used sporadically in migration research to help describe immigrant identities (Park 2007) and geographical locations that migrants relate to (Vertovec 2010). However, despite its potential practical application, social anchoring has yet to be developed

as an analytical concept within migration-related fields, including superdiversity (Grzymala-Kaslovska 2015). Our research constitutes an important step in that direction.

Vignette analysis: Context, data and analytical methods

The TLANG project explores the multilingual communicative practices of individuals working in Birmingham, Leeds, London and Cardiff. Each city case-study is researched with a local team comprising one or two co-investigators (CIs) (normally senior researchers in a local university) and one or two research fellows (RFs). The research is divided into four phases: business, heritage, sports and law. For each phase, each city team identifies a KP working in that area (e.g. business). The KP is observed and recorded at work, and is also asked to record at home as well as submitting social media interactions. Although both the CIs and RFs collect data, the RFs in most cases take on the bulk of the data collection and tend to form closer relationships with the KPs.

Vignettes are typically produced midway through a project (Copland and Creese 2015: 70). In the case of the TLANG project, they are written during each phase of the research, which provides longitudinal insights into researchers' experiences and enables an analysis of changes occurring over the life of the project. This chapter looks at the vignettes written during the first two phases (business and heritage). Early in the project, the vignettes were discussed among the team and it was made clear that these would be public documents which might be used in research publications and would not be anonymized. Researchers were invited to write one page (800 words) discussing their relationships with KPs and their reflections on working with the research team. They were given examples of vignettes from previous research projects, and told that vignettes typically constitute accounts "taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic" (Miles and Huberman 1994: 81). Consent to use the vignettes was negotiated, and team members were told they would be able to review how their vignettes were being used before publication.

The team members who submitted vignettes included four RFs and six CIs. Over the first two phases, a total of 18 vignettes were produced which formed the basis of the analysis for this chapter (see Table 8.1 for details of researchers and sites). Throughout the chapter, we reference quotations from the vignettes with surname and phase (e.g. Blackledge-business).

The data were analysed independently by both chapter authors, using thematic analysis (Guest 2012) to identify themes across the data and record them in a matrix table, alongside supporting quotations. Although we approached the vignettes with the intention of exploring team "diversity", we were mindful not to impose our ideas about its likely sources, allowing other themes to emerge. We also used the data to identify the prominence of each theme – its frequency within and across the vignettes and its apparent importance to the writer. Given the researchers' freedom in writing their vignettes, we assumed all issues raised had some importance, but we also drew on the ways in which writers discursively constructed a particular issue as personally or academically significant. Both authors identified key themes which were then compared, interpreted and discussed through a cyclical process of induction and deduction. This thematic analysis approach enabled us to represent the vignette writers' voices as accurately as possible while working within the parameters of our own objectives.

In the following sections, we discuss key themes emerging from our analysis: the genres on which researchers drew in writing their vignettes, their relationships with KPs and in the research site and the way that team members positioned themselves within the wider team.

Table 8.1 Overview of the first two project phases

<i>City case-study</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>RF</i>	<i>Research sites: Business/heritage KPs</i>
Birmingham	Adrian Blackledge	Rachel Hu	Birmingham Bullring market stallholders
Customer relations assistant at Library of Birmingham	Cardiff	Frances Rock	Amal Hallak
Arabic mini market shopkeeper	Librarian at university biomedical library	Leeds	James Simpson
Jolana Hanušová	Translator, Advocacy Support Centre and Community hub	Event organiser for Roma Community Advocacy Support Group	London
Li Wei and Zhu Hua	Agnieszka Lyons	Polish mini market shopkeeper	Actor/artist, Polish Community Arts Group

Genre

The vignette writers draw on various genres which appear to reflect their ideas about the purpose of the vignettes as well as their orientation towards the research and their position within the team. In this section, we focus on charting differences in the vignettes, both over time and between RFs and CIs.

Most vignettes are written as personal narratives: first-person accounts of events and reflections on them. The narratives generally cover the team member's personal journey during the first two phases of the project, along with accounts of identifying KPs and establishing relationships. The writers document challenges encountered and how they were addressed. They also talk about other team members in generally positive accounts of working together. For RFs in particular, the personal journey extends across the two vignettes. Growth in each RF's confidence and ability is noticeable (although less so for Lyons, who was already an established academic). In her business vignette, for example, Hallak documents her move from novice ethnographer to one who has experienced the actual challenges of her research site:

When I first joined the TLANG team I did not know much about ethnographic research ... Even though I spent all last summer reading and learning about conducting ethnographic research and about the ethical issues involved, I could not anticipate the extent to which ethical issues would colour my fieldwork experience including establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with our KPs.

(Hallak-business)

Hallak goes on to detail how she handled a difficult relationship with her first KPs, and ends by wondering "what our fieldwork experience in the next site is going to be like and what kind of relationships we are going to have with our next KP, a librarian" (Hallak-business). Her heritage vignette then charts her transformation from a position of insecurity and frustration to one of confidence and passion:

As far as I was concerned there was no reason for me to expect things to go well. You can imagine my surprise that things went really swiftly and smoothly in this site. ... As the

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weeks passed I grew more confident, more relaxed, and more accepting and prepared to the challenges of doing ethnographic fieldwork. I started to feel passionate again, and to actually enjoy fieldwork.

(Hallak-heritage)

As in the other RFs' vignettes, Hallak's relationship with her KPs, as well as her experience at each research site, affects her initial position and her subsequent transformation into a more confident ethnographer.

In contrast, while most of the CIs construct personal narratives in their business vignettes, there is evidence of a shift in positioning between the business and heritage phases, as the heritage vignettes move away from a personal narrative genre to display a greater variety of genres. These later vignettes appear confident, stylized and carefully planned as well as playful and sometimes subversive, and they present multiple voices. Accompanying these generic and stylistic shifts is an apparent distancing of the writer from the research site. This distancing effect is most striking in Blackledge's vignettes.

Crucial to understanding his linguistic and generic choices is the fact that Blackledge is an established poet. In the business phase, Blackledge worked with a Chinese-speaking couple who run a butcher's stall in Birmingham market. His vignette embeds him firmly within the market setting, starting "Here I am having a mug of tea in the market caff scribbling notes in my new notebook". He then draws the reader in with a rich, raw description which exploits a range of genres, including poetry, fieldnotes and transcribed speech, held together by a refrain of "Listen ... Write". The following extract illustrates this refrain, as well as his transcription of accent ("WHA' GWAAN?" or "What's up?"), his insertion of verse and extracts from fieldnotes and the juxtaposition of sounds ("chop-chop") and voices ("cheap-cheap").

Listen

WHA' GWAAN?

Write

the head of a young goat
crystals of ice defrosting
on eyebrows and eyelashes
falling as tears

...

Write

A woman who looks African buys a large piece of pork belly from B. He puts two pieces on the scales and she shows him which she wants. 'Do you want it cut?', making with his hands a cutting sign. 'Yes'. 'Here? How do you want it cut?' She indicates with her hand, an indeterminate sign which he seeks to clarify. He 'cuts' the meat with his hand.

Listen

chop-chop
cheap-cheap

(Blackledge-business)

Although we gain little direct insight into how Blackledge feels or how he interacts with people in the market, the way that he juxtaposes these diverse genres serves not only to embed him in the marketplace but also to recreate his role as researcher: an observer, trying in various ways to represent the noise, voices and activity around him.

In contrast, the genres on which Blackledge draws in his heritage vignette detach him from the research process. Positioning himself again as outsider, he recreates the Library of Birmingham as an alienating world, using poetic devices to create a description that would not be out of place in the Library's Fantasy section:

The glass elevator that until recently transported children from the earth to within reach of the stars has a sign on the no-longer-sliding door: OUT OF ORDER. In the time it once took for the perspex pod to rise unassisted from the mortal world into the realm of the imagination this place has gone from being a gold and silver beacon, a secular cathedral with no steeple, a fairy-tale castle wrapped in wire mesh, a palace of light for all the people, to become a prison of nerves and anxiety, of furtive glances and whispered conversations, of locked doors and key chains.

(Blackledge-heritage)

The extract illustrates his use of alliteration (“perspex pod”) and other forms of repetition (“of nerves and anxiety, of furtive glances and whispered conversations, of locked doors and key chains”), as well as metaphor (the Library as “secular cathedral” or “fairy-tale castle wrapped in wire mesh”) and contrast (“palace of light” or “prison”). The fantasy genre masks a political point (the Library had reduced its opening hours and services because of financial cuts), and thus the vignette serves to distance Blackledge from the reality of the research process in several ways: through creation of a parallel fantasy world, and through his focus on the political issues surrounding the research site.

Heritage vignettes written by other CIs focus on projecting and exploring the writer's academic identity and their academic contribution to the research by adopting academic genre conventions. Both Rock and Simpson cite academic sources in their heritage vignettes, provide quotations and include bibliographies. They also incorporate figures and images that evidence or illustrate their views.

Rock, for example, structures her heritage vignette around the intellectual question of her status as insider or outsider in the library where her KP works, supporting her arguments with references and using her own experiences to reflect on the nature of ethnography. She concludes:

Hult tells us that “accounts by ethnographers who have studied societies with which they have a heritage connection demonstrate that one must negotiate being simultaneously an insider and an outsider” (2014: 65). This was my experience in the library as my own heritage as a library user across time and space ebbed and flowed against the research site.

(Rock-heritage)

Rock playfully prefaces her vignette with the image of a traditional library ticket, the kind stamped with the return date, with keywords in different columns representing her status as a library insider (“renewal”, “overdue”, “charges”) and outsider (“circulation review”, “weeding”, “bio med”) (Figure 8.1). The exercise seems indicative of her attempts to organize and make sense of her experiences, while also pushing at, and playing with, the conventions of the vignette genre.

Similarly, Simpson uses his heritage vignette to develop his ideas about superdiversity, playfully appropriating voices from a research seminar audience in Finland – “Over coffee the questions came” (Simpson-heritage) – to critique his team's description of Harehills in Leeds as a superdiverse neighbourhood. This act of Bakhtinian ventriloquism allows him to refine his

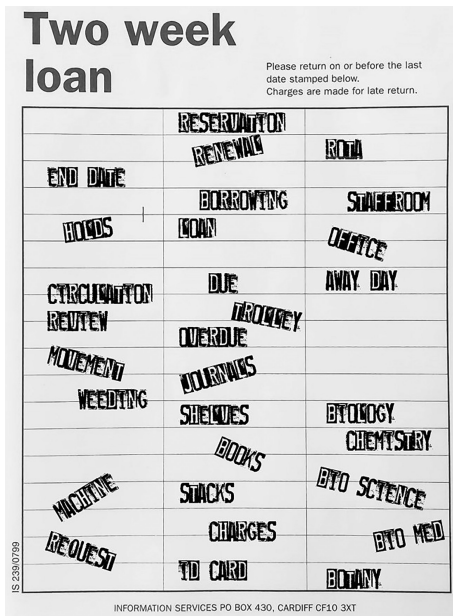


Figure 8.1 Preface to heritage vignette (Rock 2015b)

position and recognize patterns of migration and settlement that underlie the ethnic diversity of the area: “even if it is not (to me at least) immediately predictable” (Simpson-heritage). The photos of Harehills which he reproduces from the seminar to illustrate his points are taken by a team member whose voice he also appropriates, both in the seminar and in the vignette, in describing the different neighbourhoods. Simpson’s vignette also incorporates conventions associated with report-writing or scientific scholarly writing, primarily the use of bullet points (a technique also used by Zhu in her business vignette, along with emboldened headings).

As these examples show, the senior researchers’ vignettes were increasingly used not primarily to construct a personal narrative as a way of reflecting on their position within the research site, but to think through academic arguments and positions. This development suggests a shift in positioning over time, from the initial novelty of immersion in a research context towards more theorized, detached and yet playful perspectives. Just as crucially, the genres exploited in the vignettes point to a possible distinction between the focus and concerns of the CIs on the one hand, and the RFs on the other, or at least a difference in what they felt they could use the vignette to achieve.

Relationship with KP and research site

Another key theme to emerge from our analysis relates to the nature of relationships between RFs, CIs and KPs, and the ways in which these relationships shape experiences in the field and the data gathered. Issues ranged from challenges in securing KPs’ participation and efforts to build rapport through to ethical concerns in determining where boundaries lie between personal and professional relationships.

As we have seen, the vignettes produced by RFs were largely self-reflexive accounts, often focusing on their personal and professional relationships with the KPs and expressing positive and negative emotions in raw and personal terms. For example, Hallak is “uneasy”, “anxious”,

“befuddled” and “lonely” in her relationship with the business KP, and enters the heritage site feeling “worried”, “apprehensive and unconfident” (Hallak-heritage). As her relationship with the heritage KP develops, Hallak becomes “confident, more relaxed”, even “passionate” (Hallak-heritage). In Birmingham, Hu reports feeling “uneasy” and sometimes “defensive” in her relationship with her heritage KP; she experiences “shock and anger”, before they are able to negotiate a more “relaxed” relationship around shared experiences and common views.

As reported elsewhere in the literature (Bhattacharya 2007), the RFs’ personal feelings towards the KPs raise questions regarding the boundaries between the personal and professional. In the heritage phase, for example, Hanušová describes accompanying her KP on hospital visits where they chat like friends in the waiting room. She wonders “whether to produce fieldnotes based on these encounters ... would she feel upset if she realized that I also used the opportunity for my own purposes?” (Hanušová-heritage). According to Hanušová, her relationship with the Roma charity worker is “more personal than work-based” and she often wonders whether the KP fully understands that Hanušová needs to record their interactions in her fieldnotes (Hanušová-heritage). In the business phase, Lyons asks herself “how much I should say or ask to maintain good relationships with them but not cross “the line” (and what is “the line” anyway?)”. The uncertainty expressed by RFs does not indicate naivety or lack of confidence on their part, but is rather indicative of their particular roles on the project, in the course of which they tended to embed themselves deeply into the research site and to develop close relationships with KPs.

The RFs’ relationships with their KPs and the research site also shape their evaluation of their identities as researchers. Hu, for example, writes that “the feeling of being accepted as part of the market is great as it enables me to concentrate more on my observation” (Hu-business) and Hallak becomes “more accepted and prepared for the challenges of doing ethnographic fieldwork” (Hallak-heritage). In contrast, Lyons feels she has to “shed this academic self” in order to maintain good relations with the Polish shopkeeper who appeared to feel alienated by Lyons’ academic status (Lyons-business). Alongside negotiation of their own positions as researchers, RFs’ experiences in the field had other impacts on their perceptions of research. In the heritage phase, the London KP did not work from a fixed base (as the shopkeepers in the business phase had done) but travelled to various locations around the city. This meant that Lyons would find herself having to meet her KP at different locations across North London at short notice. Lyons’ understanding of “research site” evolved; it was not fixed as with her first KP, but rather attached to her KP like a “picnic blanket” (Lyons-heritage).

In contrast to the RFs’ highly self-reflexive accounts, CIs tended to adopt less personal approaches. They are interested, engaged and thoughtful, but they tend not to focus on their emotional responses with the rawness evident in the RFs’ accounts. Rock, for example, watches the business KP’s family with an observer’s fascination: “This was a real insight into a world far from mine with tumbling children filling the space with chatter in two, sometimes three, languages with no attention to which language was in play at any time” (Rock-business). Zhu and Li capitalize on the cultural differences between themselves and the business KPs, but their conversations with the male Polish shopkeeper are framed in terms of mutual cultural curiosity. Li, for example, focuses not on the personal relationship he was establishing with T and E, the Polish shopkeepers, but on the content of their conversations, and he reflects on the impact that his presence might be having:

It took no time, at least to me, to get into an interesting conversation ... T in particular was educating me about things Polish. He was particularly aware of the cultural differences

between the various eastern European groups ... I was impressed with their knowledge of the wider society. ... I didn't feel their work in the shop was affected by our presence ... whether they were consciously trying to present a more positive picture of the Polish community or not, I wasn't sure. On the whole they were objective and aware. The customers largely ignored us.

(Li-business)

It is important not to overstate the differences we found between the CIs and RFs, and to note exceptions. For example, Lyons was the most experienced of the RFs, and this is reflected in the academic confidence evident in her vignettes. Zhu describes bonding with the female Polish shopkeeper in the business phase over shared experiences as a mother and a migrant to the UK, much as Hu describes in relation to the female butcher in Birmingham. The CIs also express emotions such as excitement and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the vignettes suggest a tendency towards two different orientations corresponding to career age and role in the project. In the next section, we pursue this source of difference in relation to individuals' position in the team and their relationships with other team members.

First, however, we note the potential impact of team members' orientations and relationships on how data are collected, selected, analysed and reported. Sultana (2007) discusses the critical role positionality plays in knowledge production and the implications for research ethics. We have seen that decisions about what to include in fieldnotes can be partly based on the RFs' perceptions of their relationships with the KPs (Hanušová, for example, felt uncomfortable recording what felt like personal conversations). Their relationships also appeared to shape their ability to access data from their KPs. In her business vignette, Hu, for example, reports that her close relationship with the female butcher MYC (based on their shared identities as "working mummies and immigrants") enabled her to enlist MYC's help in convincing her husband to collect and submit otherwise inaccessible data. In contrast, Hu reports in the heritage vignette that after a personally difficult incident, she was "extra cautious" in talking to the KP. Over time, through the use of relevant social anchors (discussed further below), Hu built her relationship with her KP and reflected positively on the outcome of being able to capture "precious data" which would not have emerged without the earlier "clashes" (Hu-heritage). The discursive co-production of knowledge through team discussion and analysis must be seen as shaped by the diverse perspectives within a team, which in turn emerge from distinct orientations and relationships in the field. As explored in the discussion section, the various ways in which researchers seek to affiliate with their participants are thus crucial in appreciating how understandings emerge from the research process.

Positionality and relationships with the wider team

The team members' orientations towards the team, and how they position themselves within it, are also discussed in the vignettes. While the team clearly functioned as a source of support and guidance, the vignettes also show that team members perceived and responded to potentially complex hierarchies and power relations.

Most of the writers describe varying mixtures of anticipation and trepidation as the project started. These accounts shed light on how academics responded to their perceived status and role in the team and the wider research community, with potential implications for how they approached the process of knowledge co-production. The CIs tend to present themselves as experienced researchers going into new territory: for Simpson, it was the first time he had taken a senior role; for Li (whose previous work had involved Chinese communities), it was his first

experience of “doing ethnography without knowledge of the language involved” (Li-business); for Rock (whose research had centred around police stations) it was a different type of site and her first time to work in a team (Rock-business). The CIs construct themselves as being confident about the extent and limits of their own abilities and appear to relish the new opportunities brought by the project. Simpson, for example, describes being back in the field as “refreshing” and refers to “the magic” of engaging directly with data, bemoaning “how far my other institutional roles have pulled me away from the core business of doing research” (Simpson-business). The vignettes seem to reflect, and contribute to, the wider identity projects pursued by these senior academics.

For some of the RFs, anticipation and trepidation was linked not only to the new site but to their new role as linguistic ethnographers – as, for example, when Hallak reported having to read up on ethnographic research before the project started. There is also evidence that their personal as well as their academic identities are at stake, in part, we suggest, because of their greater personal investment in the research site and relationships. For example, the way RFs perceived they were positioned by the wider research team, namely as members of Polish-, Chinese-, Czech- and Arabic-speaking groups in their respective cities, was significant in their identity performances. Regarding the search for KPs, Hanušová admits that “My contacts with the Czechs and Slovaks living in Leeds were fairly limited” (Hanušová-business), and Hu notes that “Disappointedly my years of working as the Treasurer for the Birmingham Chinese Community Centre didn’t seem to be of too much use” (Hu-business), while Lyons writes, “I felt the weight of being THE Polish speaker in the team, which meant I would be relied on as an expert on the language and culture, which I didn’t necessarily think I was” (Lyons-business). Interestingly, the project has a significant impact on Lyons’ self-perception, and by the end of the business phase, she writes “What a change did the project make! I was now openly a Polish native speaker and appreciated for it!” (Lyons-business). As this suggests, the RFs’ identity positionings as constructed in the vignettes are not fixed but temporary and dynamic, shifting over the course of the research.

What comes out of most vignettes is an appreciation of the mutual support provided by all team members. A sense of responsibility to the team and the wider research community also appears to guide members’ work on the project and their engagement with the research site: Hallak writes of her “personal responsibility as a researcher towards the research community and how I represent it in general and towards the TLANG team in particular” (Hallak-business); while Rock writes of her “deep conscientiousness through responsibility to other team members and to the obligations of the funding” (Rock-business). Again, however, junior and senior members construct their needs differently. In contrast to how the RFs sometimes felt they were valued, the CIs’ vignettes show their appreciation of the RFs not only for their language abilities and cultural knowledge, but also for their competence as researchers. “Teamwork works”, as Blackledge (business) says of his relationship with Hu. Simpson describes working with Hanušová as both “stimulating and reassuring” (Simpson-business) while Li is delighted to work with Lyons because she “has done very interesting and wide-ranging work in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis” (Li-business). Unlike the CIs, many of the RFs look to the team and to each other for peer support, particularly in the initial stages. Hu writes in her business vignette that “it’s quite relieving to hear that RFs more or less have the similar worries on various issues. We talked among ourselves about these issues and shared our stories, tips or advice, to help and encourage each other”.

These reflections on the way individuals position themselves and their relationships with team members raise questions about how these relations of power may influence the co-production of knowledge in the research team.

Discussion

The use of researcher vignettes enables a deeper understanding of how emotions and relationships on the project developed and were managed over time. Our analysis suggests that junior and senior team members positioned themselves differently in relation to the team and the research site, with potential implications for team decisions and research outcomes. Many of the CIs begin to use their vignettes to develop theoretical ideas about superdiversity from an often relatively distanced vantage point. In contrast, the RFs' more personal engagement with the research site may explain why most used the vignettes in a way that could be described as "therapeutic" – an opportunity to explore their emotional responses to the research – and to develop insights into the superdiverse contexts from their more involved positions. Analysis of the RFs' accounts shows that emotions play a significant role in the research process and the formation of researcher relationships. It also brings out the potential harm to ethnographic researchers in building up complex personal relations as part of their professional work (an ethical issue which may otherwise not come to light) and the need for senior researchers to protect junior colleagues (Copland and Creese 2015). At the same time, vignettes can also create a safe space in which researchers can work through these issues.

The way in which these relationships play out also performs an important "anchoring effect" for both junior and senior members of the team. We observe, through the accounts, the use of and search for different types of anchors – "subjective" and "internal" as well as "objective" and "external" (Grzymala-Kasłowska 2015). Anchors can be typified as "subjective" and "internal" (e.g. national identification), or "objective" and "external" (e.g. formal citizenship). The most tangible anchors are legal and institutional (personal documents, legal status), economic (consumed goods, types of economic activity), spatial and environmental (such as place of birth, place of residence). The most subjective anchors are those related to self-concept, individual values, beliefs and memory (e.g. religious beliefs, ethnic identity) (Grzymala-Kasłowska 2015). Interestingly, the type of anchors sought correlated with researchers' level of seniority within the project. Generally, CIs turned to the academy to anchor themselves, while RFs turned to reference points that they shared with their KPs or, sometimes, with each other. Senior members of the team were likely to search for objective and professional anchors and wrote in an academic genre, or felt confident to try out different genres. This meant their vignettes tended to be less personal and more "external" but appeared to carry significant symbolic relevance in affirming their academic identity and status. CIs also drew on social anchors (as in Zhu's alignment with one KP around motherhood), but these were used less frequently compared to the RFs. RFs in contrast frequently searched for and exploited a range of subjective and internal anchors in order to manage their relationships with KPs. Hu (heritage), for example, explains how she offered language tuition to her KP and how this interaction strengthened their overall relationship; while Lyons drew both on personal and academic anchors in protecting her first KP from the demands made by the research team (Lyons-business) and sought to bond with her second KP over a common love of language (Lyons-heritage). The search for reference points, or "footholds", becomes more visible in situations of crisis (Grzymala-Kasłowska 2015). This was apparent when Hu experienced what she described as an "ideological clash" and Hallak "reverse culture shock", both due to difficulties in their relationships with their KPs. Identifying a common social anchor enabled Hu to strengthen her relationship with her heritage KP, while not doing so meant it was harder for Hallak to improve relationships with her business KP. A common misconception within the co-production literature is the assumption that the *ethnic* matching of researchers and participants leads to better quality research relationships and outputs (Goodson and Phillimore 2010; 2012). This paper points to the wide range of social anchors

that researchers draw on to create points of reference which become integral in shaping and managing research relationships. In research in superdiverse contexts, these reference points will intersect and take in a range of different socio-political as well as personal characteristics.

The nature of research relationships is integral in shaping the way those engaged in research make sense of one another (Denzin 1986). Building on this notion through the analysis of researcher vignettes, we see how the search for reference points or social anchors is key to (re-)negotiating relationships and researcher identities. Our analysis suggests that the search for social anchors not only shapes action and interactions in ethnographic fieldwork, but that the socially constructed nature of these anchors provides opportunities for new reference points to emerge – both of which, we argue, are key to developing and maintaining researcher resilience. Li (business), for example, alludes to his search for cultural anchors as he works to identify and build on his Polish links before engaging with the Polish KPs, while Lyons (business) finds that cultural anchors emerge during the fieldwork which serve to recreate her Polish identity. These cultural anchors in turn strengthen her sense of belonging and validate her sense of worth on the project, while enabling her to develop social ties with her KPs. These examples show how the identification of relevant social anchors provides stability and strengthens individual researchers' ability to function effectively as part of a large research team. Those who struggle to connect with relevant "footholds" are likely to find their resilience as a researcher in a given context compromised.

Conclusion

This chapter explored team research as a way of generating new perspectives on superdiversity, by focusing on what researcher vignettes reveal about the process of team research. An interplay of factors tended to encourage the more junior academics to produce personal narratives which both informed the wider team about aspects of the research site to which the CIs had less access, and at times appeared to fulfil "therapeutic" purposes as they worked through their emotional responses to the field site and developed insights which drew on their immersion in the site. In contrast, senior members of the team drew on a wider range of genres in trying to make sense of the research site, often recreating academic conventions as they theorized their experiences. This distinction did not neatly divide RFs from CIs and their experiences may best be represented along a cline, with Lyons, for example, as a particularly experienced and confident RF, but the distinction is useful in highlighting how varied perspectives can emerge from team members' different roles, experiences and responsibilities.

Also evident in the vignettes was the way in which researchers relied on social anchoring in both managing and shaping research relationships. Recognition of the importance of social anchoring within fieldwork, and in particular the observation that social anchors do not always emerge from shared ethnicity, culture or national background but also from less salient, subjective and unpredictable factors, has particular resonance for research in superdiverse contexts. By highlighting, through analysis of their vignettes, the myriad ways in which researchers can anchor themselves in a research site, with implications for how they collect and interpret data, we suggest that superdiversity research can be enriched through recognition of the heterogeneity of a research team. The concept of social anchoring helps us to reconceptualize researchers' identity positions and alignments in more dynamic and unpredictable terms, and to highlight the active ways in which researchers search for common reference points in order to anchor themselves and their relationships in a research site. The analysis in this chapter shows how vignettes emerge not only as a way of reflecting on the research process, but as a research method itself – a way of exploring how our understanding of superdiversity is in itself the

product of diverse perspectives and the co-production of interpretations that have the potential to lead to new forms of knowledge.

Note

- 1 AHRC *Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities*. (AH/L007096/1). Angela Creese (PI). With CIs Mike Baynham, Adrian Blackledge, Frances Rock, Lisa Goodson, Li Wei, James Simpson, Caroline Tagg, Zhu Hua.

Further reading

Goodson, L. and Phillimore, J. (2012) *Community Research for Community Participation: From Theory to Method*. Bristol: Policy Press.

A reflexive edited collection of community engaged research in a range of settings.

Grzymala-Kazłowska, A. (2015) Social anchoring: immigrant identity, security and integration reconnected? *Sociology* 50(6): 1123–1139.

An overview of the concept of social anchoring in relation to migration.

Creese, A. and Blackledge, A. with Bhatt, A., C. Jonsson, K. Juffermans, J. Li, P. Martin, A. Muhonen and J.K. Takhi (2015) Researching bilingual and multilingual education multilingually: a linguistic ethnography. In Wright, W.E., S. Boun and O. Garcia (eds) *Handbook of Bilingual & Multilingual Education*. Malden, MA: Wiley/Blackwell, pp. 127–144.

An analysis of researchers' reflections on their multilingualism.

Related topics

Superdiversity and its potential as a theory: descriptive and explanatory adequacy to understand the complexity of majority-minority cities.

Blurred vision? "Superdiversity" as a lens in research on communication in border contexts.

Micro-entrepreneurs and messaging apps: networking and doing business in superdiverse city spaces.

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