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Looking for a Third-space Methodology for Intercultural Travel

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I currently have two book chapters and a journal special issue article in press; and I am working on a book for Routledge. These together represent a development in thinking about the intercultural, how to research it and how to write about it. I shall look at each in turn and indicate the nature of this development of ideas.

'Linguaculture, cultural travel, native-speakerism and small culture formation on the go' (Holliday, 2021a)

This is an invited chapter in an area in which I would not normally write, given that I do not consider myself part of the world Englishes

academic community. I requested that I should therefore do it from a semi-autoethnographic perspective based on my own experience of the relationship between English and culture. This was accepted. This was therefore also an exercise in how to write with a less reference-cluttered mode while still maintaining academic rigour. This helped me to work from direct observation up, following Stuart Hall (1991, p. 35) as a means for bypassing Centre prejudice and realising the natural state of language as hybrid (Rajagopalan, 2012; Saraceni, 2015; Schneider, 2016), thus dissolving native-speakerist boundaries and, following Risager (2020), contesting the false, Centre, essentialist notion that 'a language' represents 'a culture'. Appreciating the transient, hybrid nature of language enabled my emerging concept of small culture language formation on the go as parallel to small culture formation on the go.

'Recovering unrecognised deCentred experience' (Holliday, 2021b)

This is another invited chapter in which I used a reconstructed ethnographic narrative about a postgraduate student from outside the West encountering the complex of prejudice deep within the dominant discourse of the neoliberal, Western university, as well as becoming aware of some of the prejudices she brought with her. This therefore supports the theory that our best resource as intercultural travellers is the experience we bring with us. The reconstructed ethnographic narrative both derives from a constructivist, postmodern qualitative research approach and enables the representation of a wide range of informal ethnographic data about students, academics and university systems collected over a number of years. The validity of this immediate analysis of data is in how, through direct observation, the researcher is taken to unexpected places. The weakness of much interview-based research is that it can too easily

take at face value what people say, and does not sufficiently interrogate the intersubjective positionality and implicit intervention of the researcher. The deCentring in this chapter therefore applies to the researcher as well as to the implied experience of the characters in the reconstructed ethnographic account. As a researcher who has been brought up with Centre-Western discourses of prejudice, by constructing characters in the reconstructed ethnographic account that are like me, I can begin to see an uncomfortable reassessment of my own professional history. I try never, therefore, to speak for research participants, either real or reconstructed, who are labelled as coming from outside the West, but only for myself as expert in the prejudices that they meet. How it is possible for me to write is thus a long-standing concern (Holliday, 2005).

Third-Space methodology

This is where the notion of third-space methodology comes into play. While this was not an explicit theme in this chapter, it is through its writing that I have been able to develop further how we need somehow to intervene between the powerful Centre forces that bring essentialist blocks of prejudice and our ability to find threads of hybridity that can bring us together. I have been developing the notion of blocks and threads for some years now (Amadasi, & Holliday, 2017; 2018; Holliday, 2015; 2020; Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020). I have defined third space as 'a place where normality is sufficiently disturbed to enable us to deCentre' (Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020, p. 8). This notion is different to the common idea of 'in-between two cultures' which gives a false sense of separate, bounded cultures. Instead, I wish to frame it as a normal space where 'new relations of self, other and world develop in the moments of openness' (Delanty, 2006, p. 33). It 'entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' by escaping the Centre 'fixity' of colonial discourse and 'politics of polarity' so that we can all 'emerge as

others out of selves' (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 5, 94, 56). However, its normality does not come easily. We have methodologically to do something to enable this because we are too easily seduced by Centre grand narratives.

'The yin-yang relationship between essentialist and non-essentialist discourses related to the participation of children of migrants, and its implication for how to research' (Amadasi, & Holliday, forthcoming)

This question of the need for methodological intervention was addressed in this invited article in a journal special issue connected with the CHILD-UP project, which is part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Baraldi, 2019). The project aims to research the 'hybrid integration' of children with migrant backgrounds in seven European countries, where Amadasi is a researcher and part of the Italian team and I am a scientific advisor. The article addresses what researchers should do when the exigencies of particular settings do not conform with expectation, with particular reference to restrictions created by the COVID epidemic.

The article is also inspired by the PhD thesis of one of my prior PhD students (Duan, 2007). Duan developed his research methodology around Chinese Taoist philosophy in which the yin-yang construct allows apparently conflicting realities to exist at the same time. This enabled him to make sense of apparently conflicting data regarding Chinese secondary school students. In their diaries, they wrote about how they rejected the common stereotype imposed upon them that they

were only interested in studying for examinations. When interviewed, they conformed to the dominant discourse and said the opposite to what they had said before. Looking at their diaries would not have happened if Duan had not been prevented from initial planned data collection by the SARS epidemic and had not had to think laterally in search of a more creative approach for collecting data. An important finding of his thesis is that conflicting discourses can operate within the same person at the same time.

The yin-yang construct therefore encourages the creative developing of research methods to suit particular exigencies. This is far away from what has become known as 'mixed methods' which is critiqued in another recent article (Holliday, & MacDonald, 2020) as a neoliberal attempt to find easy formulae for commodifying the false perception that qualitative methods need always to be validated by quantitative methods. The classic postmodern ethnographic approach, as insisted upon by Clifford & Marcus (1986), is instead to make decisions about methods as a result of a developing understanding of the nature of the social setting (Spradley, 1980, p. 32). This does not preclude choosing quantitative methods where necessary; but this choice is driven by ethnographic principles and disciplines – to enable thick description that allows the unexpected to emerge away from dominant discourses that might lead the researcher in prescribed directions. Indeed, this enables us in this article to argue that, because of the diverse settings in different country settings in the CHILD-UP project, it makes sense to use a macro-ethnography to determine the broad nature of each setting to inform appropriate methods for qualitative date collection.

The particular and unexpected exigency that the article focuses on is, because of COVID restrictions, an online focus group with children of migrants, where it was found that their use of the chat facility revealed agentive participation that had not previously been seen. Keeping in

mind the yin-yang construct leads the researcher to be mindful of how preferences for particular interpretations are driven by dominant discourses. This is therefore a form of third-space methodology in that it takes us researchers into an unexpected place that enables us to make sense outside the dominant discourses. In the article we describe the context for this unexpected place as a conflict between the Centre essentialist and the non-essentialist discourses that provide false and other explanations of the behaviour of the children of migrants. This enables us to map out the in-between route through which we have to navigate our third space.

The particular fault line that marks this third-space route is whether or not the children have the agency and the brought intercultural resources to exercise hybrid integration. 'Hybrid integration' has been defined, with specific reference to children of migrants in European education settings, as being able to 'exercise agency in constructing their identities and changing their social contexts' and 'negotiation' of 'hybrid identities' (Baraldi, 2019).

The false suggestion that these children might not be able to negotiate their own hybrid integration comes from one such essentialist discourse – what I have called a West as steward discourse in which we in the West imagine that we need to teach people from the rest of the world to be individualist, critical and autonomous, denying any cultural ability that they bring with them (Holliday, 2019, pp. 128–129; Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020, pp. 17–20). This essentialist discourse in turn relates to the Orientalist grand narrative which imagines the East and South are bound by tradition and group thinking (Said 1978). In language, this essentialist imagining for there foreign Other produces native-speakerism – where learning so-labelled Western languages is falsely assumed to require the first-time introduction to 'cultures' which are falsely labelled as individualist, agentive and critical (Holliday, 2018).

A deCentred architecture of intercultural travel (Holliday, forthcoming)

This realisation of the importance of the Orientalist grand narrative, which I wrote about in some detail in my (Holliday, 2011) book, is at the core of this short monograph that I am currently working on. This looks at how I was unawaredly brought up with Orientalism throughout my childhood. Orientalism was between the lines of children's stories, education and media; and that I took this with me when I went to live in Irán in 1973 at the age of 23. Using reconstructed autoethnographic accounts plus journal entries from my time in Irán, I analyse how my appreciation that Iránian society was as individualist and hybrid as any Western society was inhibited by, but not overwhelmed by this Orientalism. I trace threads of hybridity from other aspects of my upbringing through aspects of cultural practices and artefacts in Irán and through to my personal and professional life since leaving Irán. I note how particular discourses connect media experiences in Irán, in national myth, soap opera and political satire, with those in Britain, and a Iránian cosmopolitan ownership of the world on the basis of rich, boundary-dissolving cultural flows.

Here I develop further a third-space methodology in which a critical researcher voice finds unexpected and reflexive positionality as the autoethnographic texts are separated out as data to allow an explicit thick description to emerge between them and other texts. Importantly, this also allows what Ogden refers to as 'the intersubjective analytic third' that relates to the 'unique dialectic generated' between 'the separate subjectivities of analyst and analysand' which takes on 'a life of its own' (Ogden, 2004, p. 169). He is speaking about psychoanalysis; but I think this perfectly relates to the relationship between the researcher and what is being investigated where this relationship is indisputably

intersubjective. It is also helpful when Ogden states that 'there is no such thing as an analysand apart from the relationship with the analyst' and vice versa (Ogden, 2004, p. 168). This enables me to make sense of myself as the researcher trying to make sense of myself as the cultural traveller as being the same person. What we need to do to work out how to deal with being in less familiar intercultural settings is methodologically similar to how we need to deal with the research settings everywhere. We are implicated in very similar ways. The researcher must struggle to discount essentialist prejudices about the people being researched in similar ways to how the intercultural traveller must struggle to discount essentialist prejudices about the people and practices they encounter.

A further emergent aspect of this third-space methodology is the value of direct observation of cultural life everywhere. Whether in Irán or in any other location, in the street, in taxis, in cafés and so on, watching how people pass by, present themselves to others, make sense, reject or accept, will help inform what is happening in any other location. This will however only work if we can, through the third space, clear our minds of essentialist grand narratives. This will then activate all the experience of the intercultural that we bring with us. This time to reflect is what Ogden (2004, p. 117) refers to as 'periods of reverie', which then allow 'projective identification', where 'a variety of forms of intersubjective thirdness are generated, which stand in dialectical tension' with whatever is the focus of the research. This then enables a creative reassessment of thinking-as-usual and the putting aside of essentialist narratives (Simmel, 1908/1950).

A creative trajectory of new thinking

Writing this reflective account has helped me to think holistically about my research trajectory. This also helps further to remind me that research

is not about a series of separate studies in which countable findings about people located separately to the researcher are reported - often in the form of what this or that group think or behave with regard to this or that - but instead a holistic development of thinking. Readers may note that what has become a common fare of transcribed face-to-face interview data does not feature in any of the studies described above. While I do not wish to denigrate such studies, remembering that I have authored and co-authored several in recent years (Amadasi, & Holliday, 2017; 2018; Holliday, 2012), I wish to claim that they will mean little without the sort of intersubjective reverie and deep connection with the complexities of social life that researchers themselves bring to the event.

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