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Participation, understanding and dialogue:
Intercultural learning among students in higher education and refugee youth

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Abstract

This case study investigates intercultural dialogue and understanding, participation, and intercultural responsibility among postgraduate students in a British university and recently resettled Syrian and Iraqi refugees who have been excluded from education due to forced migration and war. The case study is grounded in critical pedagogies that support human capabilities that seek to engage the excluded, disadvantaged, and marginalised; it also draws on the creative arts, narratives about educational experiences and aspirations, and the ecological 'classroom' (Van Lier, 2004) to promote intercultural dialogue and contest power relations among these young people. The study is guided by the following question: How can shared and unshared educational experiences, supported by the creative arts and processes of translanguaging, promote intercultural learning in higher education among (included) students and (excluded) refugees?

The postgraduate students and youths with a refugee background were brought together through three workshops (over 6 weeks). Before each workshop students and teachers/researchers met to co-construct activities to elicit narratives of educational experience, and shared understandings of home, family, culture, identity, language, and heritage. The first workshop included discussion of photo exposes and learning a song in another language together; the second workshop involved a walking tour of the university and a shared dinner in student accommodation; the third workshop invited participants in groups to co-construct their ideal university. Each workshop concluded with shared feedback in the form of 'post-its' and small, informal focus groups.

Through their motivation and agency in the workshops the young people demonstrated participation and responsibility in learning with, from and through one another. Power relations became subverted through processes of translanguaging, the displacement of English (through the use of Arabic), and multimodality, encouraged by the creative arts approaches adopted. The study highlights the importance of multilingual, intercultural, and multimodal approaches in higher education, informed by critical and humanistic pedagogies.

Introduction

This case study investigates intercultural dialogue and understanding, participation, and intercultural responsibility (Giroux, 2004; 2020; Guilherme et al., 2010; Haydari & Holmes, 2014) among postgraduate students in higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) and Syrian and Iraqi refugees (recently arrived in the UK) who have been excluded from education due to forced migration and war.[1] The case study, grounded in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and new materialism (e.g., Badan, 2020; Frimberger, 2016a; Harvey et al., 2019; Toohey, 2019), aims to understand the opportunities of shared intercultural learning among these two groups. Creative arts, life narratives and translanguaging were explored as approaches that enable the development of an intercultural pedagogy coconstructed by the researchers/teachers and both groups of participants, and that promote reciprocal intercultural learning.

Our purpose in developing an intercultural pedagogy for intercultural learning was, first, to enable the students (whom we work with in our Education department) to learn about forced migration and refugee/asylum experiences and their implications for the disruption of education; second, to enable the refugee youth (newly arrived into our community) to share their experiences of migration and education; and third, to build human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2006) in young people 'to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 18, cited in Crosbie, 2014, p. 92).

This experience and learning is important in enabling young people—students in higher education and refugee youth—to 'recover the ideals of engaged citizenship, reaffirm the importance of the public good, and expand their capacities to make a difference (Giroux, 2002, p. 450). As educators, we believe that encouraging young people to be critical of the reductive discourses of internationalisation, employability and competence is crucial in preparing them for a complex and uncertain future. In the current context young people need the experience and resources to tackle the global challenges affecting their communities and lives—of displacement through protracted conflict and war, racism fomented by populism and far-right ideologies, climate change, and now, the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the intercultural pedagogy explored here connects formal and non-formal education. It aims to support postgraduate students in higher education in assuming responsibility, participating, and taking action in the community and public sphere to create an inclusive environment for forced migrants and refugees, an environment that supports wellbeing and belonging, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7[2] and the UNESCO 2030 education strategy[3] through formal and non-formal education. Furthermore, it supports intercultural dialogue and intercultural experience that facilitates a sense of belonging and participation among refugee youth. Through dialogue and embodied engagement, assumptions about 'refugee' as 'vulnerable', 'victim', and 'other'—suggestive of fixed, depersonalised identities (Leavy, 2019)—may be exposed and interrogated, as refugee youths and students connect through home, family, and past experiences.

Decentring and decolonising research approaches through an intercultural pedagogy and new materialism

Our research approach responds to calls to decentre and decolonise ways of knowing. Researchers positioned in the global South are calling for epistemologies and methodologies that decentre and challenge colonial and Western/Eurocentric hegemonic positions, and that

foreground indigenous and local voices (e.g., Guilherme & Menezes de Sousa, 2019; Smith, 1999/2012; Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Similarly, in higher education, there are calls to address the epistemic injustices brought about through an education dominated by Eurocentric/Western/Global North thinking (Bambra et al., 2018; Connell, 2017; Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2019).

Connell (2017) questions how the higher education curriculum can give young people access to socially powerful forms of knowledge. She suggests that learners should be able to explore the social context of new knowledge formations and their relation to other, more widespread cultural formations. And Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2019) suggest working from their Australian university's list of graduate qualities to explore the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges to question established disciplinary knowledge construction and pedagogy. To this end, our research approach aims to decolonise and decentre concepts and methods of learning in higher education such as teacher-centred pedagogy and classroom contexts, and curricular that prioritise skills and knowledge development in students in preparing them for the neoliberal workplace. We position our investigation within the formal context of our postgraduate intercultural/international education community and curriculum and our disciplinary home of Education, the non-formal learning environment of the university campus, and the local community (the refugees' new home).

Critical intercultural pedagogy

Theoretically, in developing the intercultural pedagogy, we take inspiration from Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy which used 'culture circles' to engage educators with peasants in rural Brazil, and later, in Chile. According to Freire, through dialogue, knowledge is established in the group; the culture circle becomes the basis for sharing knowledges and learning about others—their lived experiences, struggles, and hopes for the future. Similar to Freire's culture circles, we aimed to engage our students and refugee youth in knowledge exchange and reciprocal learning to understand one another's lived experiences. A further aspect of Freire's critical pedagogy is the agency of those involved. In understanding one another's realities, students and their teachers work together as co-investigators. Thus, education becomes a form of empowerment for young people as they involve themselves, alongside their teachers/researchers (Prue, Marta, and Taha), in the planning, implementing and developing of the learning activities, motivating them to engage with and struggle against oppression and injustice. In Freirean pedagogy, the starting point for us, as researchers, is the learners' and excluded learners' perceptions and awareness of the concrete, existential situation they find themselves in, their reflections on that situation, and their aspirations as they go forward.

By drawing on critical pedagogy we aim to explore, alongside our postgraduate students and refugee youth, the reality of oppression and exclusion brought about by forced migration due to conflict and war; to promote intercultural understanding and learning, and where possible, dialogue, to support the development of human capabilities within all individuals (Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1999): capabilities that enable young people to critique social injustices and discourses of inequality, and flourish in a world that is based on hospitality and intercultural understanding (Crosbie, 2014). Thus, our research approach, grounded in critical pedagogy and human capabilities, aims to contribute to understandings of equitable quality education

and lifelong learning that promote inclusion, participation, and responsibility in formal and non-formal education. Our research approach also contributes towards peace education—a transformative approach to education that is collaborative, reflective and experiential (Harris & Morrison, 2013)—by exposing our postgraduate students to forms of structural violence experienced by refugee youth, and to which they can respond.

New materialism, languaging, and translanguaging

As an additional theoretical lens, we turn to new materialism, a growing area of research that asserts the need to consider language, objects, and spaces together as a "semiotic assemblage" (Pennycook 2018), and that understands "knowledge/knowing and language/languaging … [as] relational, processual, and entangled (Toohey, 2019, p. 937).

By decentring language as the main form of communication, new materialism creates a space for knowing differently in higher education, not through linguistically-based knowledge systems, but performatively and through material embodied experience (Bayley, 2016; Frimberger, 2016a; Harvey et al., 2019). Grounded in creative arts approaches—for example, photographic exposés (Croghan et al., 2008), singing together (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck, 2005, p. 213), sharing a 'go-along' together (Badwan, 2020; Najar, 2016), and sharing food together—young people can explore language, identity, culture and cultural heritage, and representation to gain understandings of others. New materialism creates conditions for establishing intercultural dialogue and human relationships, beyond language, that attend to the "relational and performative process of becoming" (Harvey et al., 2019, p. 476). Thus, languages are but one form of the communicative assemblage of knowing, being, and relating.

Research methodologies focused on the embodied dimensions of intercultural communication and being human together allow for the unexpected to emerge and the "narratives of subjects [to] take on a life of their own" (Phipps, 2013, p. 9), thus opening up to spontaneous, subjective, and fluid engagement in intercultural encounters. Phipps (2011; 2019) uses the concept of 'languaging' to describe this embodied, relational, and affective experience. Languaging is "a way of articulating the full, embodied and engaged interaction with the world that comes when we put the languages we are using into action ... [Languagers] engage with the world-in-action, … move in the world in a way that allows the risk of stepping out of one's habitual ways of speaking and attempt to develop different, more relational ways of interacting with the people and phenomena that one encounters in everyday life" (Phipps, 2011, p. 365). New materialist methodologies enable people to understand notions of language, culture, and identity—as languaging experiences—within the subjective, affective, and symbolic dimensions of intercultural communication (Kramsch, 2009; Phipps, 2019).

We also acknowledge the broader social space of intercultural communication, captured in Li Wei's expanded definition of the concept of 'translanguaging' where:

> a language user brings together the full complexity of their personal history, experience, the environment, attitudes, beliefs and ideologies, and their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance (Li Wei 2011a: 1223). This Translanguaging Space has its own transformative power because it is

> forever ongoing and combines and generates new identities, values and practices. (Li Wei 2018, cited in Kramsch & Zhu, 2019, p. 6)

Bradley et al. (2018) highlight the multimodal nature of communication in this expanded meaning of 'translanguaging', and acknowledge the "multiplicity, fluidity, mobility, locality, and globality of the resources deployed by individuals for engaging in complex meaning-making processes" (p. 2). These understandings of knowing, languaging and translanguaging have potential to uncover the intercultural learning experiences of the postgraduate students and refugee youth as they engage with one another in the social and ecological spaces—the everyday material worlds of the learners (van Lier, 2004; Najar, 2016)—beyond the classroom.

Our study, situated in the above context and guided by the concepts discussed, is guided by the following questions:

> RQ1: How can shared and unshared educational experiences promote intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning in higher education among (included) students and (excluded) refugee youth?

> RQ2: How can creative arts methods, languaging, and translanguaging support the development of a critical intercultural pedagogy to build intercultural responsibility and participation in formal and non-formal higher-educational contexts?

Methodology and method: Creative arts-based workshops as an 'entangled' space for building a critical intercultural pedagogy

Methodologically, this study, reflecting the overarching aims of this research monograph, seeks to develop intercultural pedagogic resources that are arts-based and dialogic.[1.] Our research approach sought to enable young people (students and refugee youth) to experience a sense of being in the community together. We also wanted to foster the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to proactively face and resolve local and global challenges, and thus contribute to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world (Crosbie, 2014; Nussbaum, 2011; Wilson-Stryder & Walker, 2017). Rather than focusing on languages, culture and identity as unidimensional and definable constructs that research participants somehow act out in front of researchers, instead—like the researchers working within new materialism—we understand these constructs as embedded in fluid co-constructive, co-creative, meaning-making spaces and processes that enable expression of agency, creativity, relationality, and becoming. We investigated these ideas in three workshops over 6 weeks which aimed to bridge intercultural divides, and explore the intersections of language, identity and experience.

The context for the study is a small university town in the North of England. The study is situated a high-ranking ("Russell" group) university which attracts many international postgraduate students and doctoral researchers. The university also attracts many international academics, which is the case in the Education department where this study is located. The region has an industrial heritage which has been affected by the UK's shift to a post-industrial, knowledge economy. Considered to be once highly 'monocultural', the region is opening up to investment from private sector business and industry and therefore attracting

inward migration. Against this backdrop, the Government has chosen to settle refugees who have been granted asylum into towns nearby. The wider region also hosts a growing number of asylum seekers and other migrants. It is in this context that we explore intercultural encounters among students in higher education and recently arrived refugees.

The participants included, at any one time, up to 20 postgraduate students and 20 Syrian and Iraqi refugees. The students were invited to participate through email and our postgraduate network in the department. The refugee youth were invited to participate with the help of two intermediaries employed at the local city council and who are responsible for the resettlement of the refugee youth and their families. This connection was supported by the third author (Rajab) who was an advisor to our project. Among the participants and researchers, at least six home languages were present (Arabic, Chinese, English, Kurdish, Polish, Spanish). The participants were approximately aged from 16 to 28. The project was approved by the ethics committee in the department. Postgraduate students' consent was implied by their support in working with the researchers to develop the pedagogy. The refugee youths' consent process was managed by the intermediaries, and included signing consent forms which had been translated into Arabic by the third author whose home language is Arabic. In order to minimise misrepresentation and misunderstanding arising in the communication among researchers and researched who occupy different positions within social structures, we encouraged dialogic and embodied relationships among researchers/teachers, students and refugee youth, underpinned by languaging (Phipps, 2011; 2019), translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Li Wei, 2018), and active and methodical listening (Bourdieu, 1996) to promote understanding across social and cultural structures and distance, and thus minimise the latent harms of research.

Before each of the three workshops, the postgraduate students and researchers met to coconstruct the workshop activities to elicit narratives of educational experience, and (un)shared understandings of home, family, identity and belonging, language, and heritage. The researchers drew on decolonising approaches to researcher practices through Freirean intercultural pedagogy (Freire, 1970) whereby researchers work *with* and *for* the research participants (not *on* or *about* them) with an aim to decentre and question their own power in the research process (Ladegaard & Phipps, 2020; Smith, 2012). This decentring approach acknowledges, too, the intersection of researcher/researched positionalities and the ethics entailed as "researchers as socially, politically and historically positioned selves are part of, and inextricably intertwined with, the lives and everyday practices of their research participants" (Giampapa, 2016, p. 289).

Acknowledging these stances, our own researcher ethos with the postgraduate students, refugee youths, and the two gatekeepers was to collaborate and cooperate. In our shaping of the workshops, we wanted to make room for reciprocity and spontaneity; to flatten roles to support engagement in shared learning and mutual exchange; and to centralise creative arts to encourage dialogue, languaging and translanguaging, and embodied experience of everybody's past, present and future personal and collective stories.

Sensitive to the multilingual dimension of our research, and in accordance with our new materialist methodology that recognises that knowledge is produced creatively and through experience, we consciously chose not to include interpreters in the workshops. Informed by a theoretical stance where languages are viewed as resources that people draw on flexibly to

make meaning in their communication with others (Busch, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Giampapa, 2016), we also did not want to prioritise any one language. Some of the refugee youths chose to communicate in Arabic; others used their (varied) English language resources to language and translanguage their experiences. Three of the postgraduate students spoke Arabic in addition to Taha; thus, translations occurred naturally and spontaneously when languaging and translanguaging were insufficient. The refugee youths were also keen to learn English, so the workshops also facilitated language learning, following Busch's (2017) repertoire approach: where languages and semiotic resources are linguistic repertoires that enable people to communicate flexibly their life experiences of mobility, migration, and participation.

The three workshops took place in the afternoons, lasting 3 to 5 hours, and included sharing food and drink. The first workshop took place in a classroom; it included an icebreaker (the marshmallow challenge), discussion of photographic exposés to learn about one another's families and life experiences, and learning a song in another language together. The second workshop focused on shared and unshared educational experiences; it involved a walking tour of the university and dinner in student college of accommodation. In the third workshop, we returned to the classroom; participants, in groups, were asked to imagine an ideal learning scenario and were invited to coconstruct their 'ideal' university. Each workshop concluded with feedback in the form of 'post-its' and small, informal focus groups. In undertaking our analysis of the workshop experiences (our 'data'), we wanted to capture the 'entangled' and 'relational' assemblages (Harvey et al., 2019; MacLure, 2013) of the researchers and participants as they dialogued, languaged, and translanguaged about their lived experiences together. Thus, we resisted qualitative coding and categorising in favour of rich descriptions of individuals' assemblages. We present this entanglement next (as our 'findings and discussion').

Making connections through creative arts (workshop 1)

The first workshop aimed to make connections between the postgraduate students and Syrian and Iraqi refugee youths, and the researchers/teachers (all of whom are 'participants'). The workshop activities revolved around enabling us, as participants, to learn about one other through 'doing'. We began with an icebreaker (the marshmallow challenge); followed by a shared photo collage; and finally, group singing. The three activities enabled participants to build relationality and shared understandings by sharing memories and stories of home, cultural heritage and personal identifications, and singing together. From the start, and following our critical pedagogic approach, we worked to collapse roles (of researcher, teacher, participant) and other identities (refugee, postgraduate student, English/Arabic speaker, age, gender, religion, etc.) to establish a shared community.

The marshmallow challenge

Serving as an ice-breaker activity, the marshmallow challenge—requiring groups to build the tallest, freestanding tower out of marshmallows and dried pasta (spaghetti) in 10 minutes—emphasised group communication, collaboration, and problem solving through doing rather than speaking. The researchers/teachers facilitated the formation of groupings of four to six members, attending to diversity across gender, language, and ethnicity. At the end, the groups

had to decide which was the most impressive structure and why. Linguistic (in)competence (Phipps, 2013) in any one language was collapsed as participants translanguaged to communicate achievement and success, 'here, this one there', 'good', 'nice'; offered encouragement to one another, 'come on'; and expressed embodied gestures and emotions as they navigated suggestions and alternatives, excitement, and laughter.

An important aspect of the intercultural communication that was prevalent throughout was the growing sense of participation and collaboration and an absence of othering. Translanguaging, through informal and affective communication and without the need for an interpreter, facilitated the building of relationships as participants sought to achieve a shared goal. The activity created a sense of goal-oriented motivation that values multiple and diverse perspectives. This emergent relationality facilitated a smooth transition to the next activity.

Intercultural photography exchange

Recognising its power as a means of representation and communication (Croghan at al., 2008), the intercultural photography exchange was planned in a way that helps participants, especially refugee youth, to personally elicit and reconstruct the reality of their past, present, and future. In anticipation of this workshop, we asked all participants to safely and securely forward some photos from their childhood or near past. We then printed out the participants' photographs onto a flipchart, paired participants, and asked them share stories about the photos and themselves. Croghan et al. suggest that intercultural photography exchange draws on personal construction theory where people are able to tell their life stories as they experienced them; each picture is interrogated and interpreted as a basis for intercultural exchange and dialogue.

In our case, we noticed the depth of self-reflection within the pairs. Where English was limited, participants creatively drew on translanguaging resources (Li Wei, 2018), expressing their memories using additional pictures from their smart phones to facilitate communication. There were moments of celebration of cultural similarity, as one participant noted:

> Something very curious happened during the first workshop when I was showing the pictures I had brought to my partner. When talking about a picture of my sister, my mum, my grandpa and me at my grandparent's house in the village [in Spain], he told me the house looked very similar to his family house in his country. He immediately started searching his phone to show me pictures of his house. When he found them, it was true that the outside and the materials used to build the house were very similar! Who would have thought that a house in a tiny village in Spain and a house in Syria would be similar?" (Postgraduate student)

A particular strength of the intercultural photo exchange is that it breaks down power dynamics between participants, and thus, perceived status of the other, as both work together to reconstruct and share everyday lived experience. Moreover, photo-sharing may provide a therapeutic experience, especially for forced migrants who may have experienced oppression, violence and loss, as it offers a safe space to express emotions. It also offers an opportunity to reconnect with their identity and cultural heritage, as one participant noted:

> We should focus more on what unites us rather than what separates us. In my opinion the photo activity … was a very good way to start getting to know others in the group both through the pictures and through the narratives they elicited. In my opinion labels like

'refugees' or 'immigrants' usually contribute to the dehumanising of the individuals that make up the group, so through this activity we could talk/listen to our personal narratives and start creating common grounds. (Postgraduate student)

Croghan et al. (2008) suggest that the photo-elicitation offers young people an opportunity to show rather than 'tell' aspects of their identity that might have otherwise remained hidden. It may therefore be a useful tool for looking at contentious or problematic identity positions (Moskal 2017). In our study, it enabled the postgraduate students and researchers to gain insights into the lives of young people who had experienced forced migration due to conflict and war, and subsequent experiences of relocation in a new country. Marta relates her dialogue with 17-year old Amjad from Syria:

> Amjad left Syria when he was a young child, possibly about 8 to 10 years old. He does not exactly remember what his age was when his family was forced to move to neighbouring Jordan. 'Do you remember Syria, Amjad?' 'Hm', he said.

> He does not remember well how long he lived in Jordan, perhaps 7 or 9 years. He remembers he worked in Jordan for 5 years from morning to late evening often until midnight. He had four jobs. It is difficult to communicate what he did for his jobs. He must have been 12 to 16 years old when he worked at his four jobs from morning to late at night. 'No school in Jordan,' he said. He does not like that place; he would never like to go back to Jordan. He moved to England a year ago with his parents—Mum and Dad, and one sister. The second sister got married and stayed in Jordan. He spends most of the time at home. He just sits at home. He would like to go out, but he does not have any friends to go out with. He misses having friends. He meets some people in the college he now attends (5 days a week) to learn English. Sometimes they go to the city, perhaps once a month, just to walk around and see the city. Just to walk around and feel free. He misses having friends and going out.

> I drew the journey Amjad described on our poster. I showed him my pictures from a ski holiday with my family in France and we made a map of Britain and France in Europe. He said France is very close to the UK, so we drew the ferry and the tunnel for the cars to cross the channel on our map. He does not like the winter and the snow in my pictures. He saw the snow once, last winter outside of his house in England. Snow stayed for three days but he did not like it. He liked my picture of the Scottish Highlands on our camping trip. We talked about sleeping in tents, making a fire in the evening, and washing in the fresh stream in the morning. He liked the mountain story very much.

> Would you like to ask me anything, Amjad? Silence. Is he afraid to ask or does he not have the words to ask?

Sharing a song

Singing is a powerful social activity with a long-lasting emotional impact, including between people from different backgrounds, so we designed our workshop to conclude with the joyful experience of sharing a song. Participants were asked to identify a simple song from their folklore or culture, not translated or modified, and verbally teach it to others. In small groups, the participants identified a couple of simple sentences and began to teach each other their song. Laughs were heard from one table as people were pronouncing the lyrics wrongly; at

other tables participants were seen standing, using their hands and bodies to express the words of their song; and at another table participants were clapping hands and cheering loudly because they 'got it right'.

Due to the shared positive emotional experiences, this activity enabled each participant to have a 'voice' that could be heard and was listened to with interest and love. The laughing and singing voice had become the sound of our 'joint, negotiated enterprise' (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck, 2005, p. 213), and an established human connection (Nussbaum, 1997) that carried across institutional boundaries and echoed the moments of situated learning and meeting (Frimberger, 2016b, p. 296). The cooperative spirit generated through the singing activity collapsed power and status that divides, and fostered deepening relationships among the participants.

Intercultural learning via the 'go-along' (workshop 2)

Inspired by Najar (2016), we started the second workshop with an introduction to the idea of a walking tour of the university campus. And following Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, we wanted to take learning out of the classroom to engage in grassroots and community experience, acknowledging that the university campus is located in and around the city itself. Therefore, we devised activities that used space differently to open up new modalities of learning. Through the lens of trans/languaging, the space created by the go-along allowed us to develop understandings of how the arts methods would build and enable positive trans/languaging spaces of criticality and creativity.

The participants were organised into small groups of two to four people where postgraduate students were mixed with the refugee youths. The researchers joined these groups, both as facilitators and participants. The small group discussions were digitally recorded, either on personal mobile phones or using digital recorders.

We walked along in small groups, stopping at the guided tour sites which the postgraduate students had organised in advance. The sites included a medieval castle and cathedral, both now intertwined with the life of the University, but also used by the community for festivities and celebrations. We also visited places of everyday student life (the Student Union building, the university library). At the Student Union, a student representative described one of its volunteer societies that links refugees from Syria and Palestine with university students and people in the community to assist in their settlement and integration (e.g., through English language lessons). The society also organises campaigns to raise awareness of forced displacement and refugees' lives among students and in the local community. We visited the main library where the librarian-guide took us deep into the university vaults to show old books in Arabic. The refugee youths were excited to learn about these books, and also discover that they could use the library themselves as members of the public.

As we progressed through the sites, the postgraduate students and refugee youth exchanged impressions and experiences. They discussed the presence and/or absence of such educational sites in their own communities, similarities and differences, and their contact with them. The refugee youth gained the opportunity explore the campus through the eyes of the

postgraduate students and researchers, a place to not previously known to many of them, as we discovered, despite their living in close proximity to the university town. The participants' discussions about the similarities, memories, feelings, and images of all of these places evoked shared connections. As a student recalled:

> The project and workshops encouraged me to realise the importance of breaking stereotypes in education. Many people may have preconception and stereotypes of people from certain areas, for example Syria and Iraq. People from these countries are considered as [a] threat to society. However, after working with them, I realised they were the same as other youth regardless [of] nationalities and background. They were just as kind as everyone else. They were excited about meeting different people and experiencing something new.

The tour ended with a shared meal in the dining hall of one of the university colleges, a place that was formal and celebratory, but also part of everyday student life. The shared meal, as material embodied experience (Bayley, 2016), enabled the group to learn about Eid (as the workshop happened in the end of Ramadan) and about our eating and cooking traditions and practices. The college chefs asked in advance for the participants' recipes. Some sent them and the chefs prepared the food according to both refugee youths' and students' suggestions. The meal prompted discussion about the importance of eating, buying, and making food together in participants' home places. Here discussion centred around who buys the food, who cooks, who is present, what is the same/different, what is lost/gained?.

Through this activity we aimed to demonstrate how intercultural learning goes beyond the classroom space and out into the everyday material world where people draw on multiple languages and modalities in communication with one another (Badwan, 2020; Canagarajah, 2013; Li Wei, 2018; Phipps, 2011; van Lier, 2004). As Najar (2016) argues, the process of intercultural learning relies on a variety of places, objects, and practices, whether these are of an educational value or not. In the case of our university tour, these were entering historical buildings (the cathedral) that represented the university's rich cultural tradition, visiting the university library and discovering how to access and use it, learning about the students' clubs and their activities, and even eating a meal together in a university college: '[w]ithout these moments in time and space, and without these practices in situ, intercultural learning would be without its essence and in many cases impossible' (Najar, 2016, p. 149).

The shared experience of the 'go-along' (Najar, 2016) and sharing food together (Bayley, 2016) enabled us (participants and researchers) as a group to explore human experience as it intersects across language, identity, culture and cultural heritage, and representation, and thus gain understandings of one another and establish intercultural dialogue and human relationships, beyond language.

The university as an intercultural learning space (workshop 3)

In the third workshop the participants and researchers worked collaboratively to create a poster which represented their shared idea of the university as an intercultural learning space.

This activity enabled us, again, to consider points of commonality and sharedness. The university campus tour (workshop 2), which had occurred shortly before this workshop, provided experiences which postgraduate students and refugee youths could draw from to cocreate their imagined 'ideal' university.

This time, participants formed of their own volition groups of six to eight people, although in each group we ensured that there was one facilitator and one language mediator to support communication.

Each group was given a sheet of paper, colourful markers, and stickers. They were encouraged to discuss what their ideal university would be like, for example: the environment, facilities, the different types of learners present, interactions among students and teachers, activities and schedules, intercultural communication and language matters, beliefs and attitudes, and how learners would be challenged to prepare for work and future lives as responsible participatory citizens.

Participants' discussions, involving multimodality and translanguaging, began by invoking educational places and arrangements familiar to them, again including the similarities and differences, and the memories and feelings they aroused. Again 'sharedness' was an important element of working together. After discussing their ideas, they sketched and illustrated their ideal university as a poster on their A4 paper. They then presented their poster to the whole group, led by their chosen representative.

Each group responded differently. One group focused on writing up their description of the buildings, types of learners, activities, and student-teacher relations. Another group created a visual representation of the university as a boat. A third group imagined 'a learning city', with a castle and houses (perhaps based on their experience of the campus in workshop 2). The imagined university would offer scholarships for refugees and reasonable fees for students. It would be 'green' place where the students would respect the environment and one another. Yet another group chose to make a map of their ideal university, drawing signs and symbols for different types of buildings, services, and activities.

One group proposed a university flag filled with the colourful figures of people which symbolised togetherness combined with personal freedom: 'you are free here' was the slogan on the flag.

The posters provided a visual space for participants to develop their own understandings of an ideal university, and how it differs from the learning places they know. The posters shared some common features. These included images of sports and music facilities, places of open worship, and cafes. Descriptors—visual and verbal—were concerned with inclusion, sustainability, and mutual respect, for example, accommodating the diversity of learners by providing a supportive environment through peer groups. The participants' visions of the learning place were dynamic, as illustrated in the representation of the ideal university as a mobile boat. The imaginaries of the university also featured multiple languages and ongoing informal language learning, learning beyond the classroom, outdoor learning (learning camps with bonfires), playing sports and games, and cooking and eating together.

In this workshop, as with the previous two, although Arabic and English were the main languages of communication, participants brought other linguistic identities to the workshops. The multilingual aspect of the workshops was mentioned in several feedback questionnaires from the participants. For example, one of the international students reported:

> Using different languages allowed the young people to express themselves in their preferred language (English or Arabic) and it contributed to create a space where they could feel comfortable. In my case, as a Spanish native speaker who doesn't know a word of Arabic, I didn't have that choice and I interacted with everyone in English. Not having this choice didn't make me feel I was in a less advantageous position though. I think it would have been a Babel Tower if we all had tried to speak in our own languages since there wouldn't have been enough translators and communication wouldn't have been possible. The fact that most of us did not have English as our first language contributed, in my opinion, to create a space where there was room for mistakes, for different accents and for taking our time to express what we wanted to say. (International student)

However, as with Workshops 1 and 2, multimodality and embodied communication collapsed linguistic identities and the dominance of English. Where languages were unshared, languaging, translanguaging, e.g., drawing images of education in the ideal university, stood in place of translation.

The workshop created a further point of reflection for one student on how societal and economic structures impact educational opportunities for young people:

> [A] central aspect that the workshops (specially the second and third) made me reflect upon is the importance of economic stability to secure access to education. Of course, everyone should have the same opportunities to access high-quality education. However, we know this is not the case, and with university fees on the rise, money is key. If one has the privilege of being able to afford university costs, then this person will have access to this education and better work opportunities in the future. However, if one can't afford paying that amount, this person will either be denied access to university studies or will have to ask for a loan and be indebted for pretty much the rest of their life. Of course, this debate has deeper ramifications and implications (one could access higher ed but have to work at the same time to pay the cost; is that student in the same position as one who doesn't have to work to afford uni?), but on a very surface level it can mean that we're denying the opportunity to go to uni to passionate individuals who could become excellent doctors, researchers, lawyers, etc.

As this reflection illustrates, this activity of co-creating the 'ideal' university enabled the participants to bring their voices and visions together to create "something unique and valuable to higher levels of generalization about societies, their histories, dynamics and structures" (Blommaert, 2016, p. 9). Thus, the workshop demonstrates how intercultural learning relies on a variety of places, material objects, and practices, whether these are of an educational value or not (van Lier, 1997; Phipps, 2011).

Conclusions

In this study we have investigated intercultural learning between postgraduate students in higher education in a UK university, and refugee youth of Syrian and Iraqi background who have been excluded from education due to conflict and other forms of protracted crises. Our two research questions sought, first, to understand how students' and refugee youths' education experiences, both shared and unshared, can promote intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning; and second, how creative arts methods can support a critical intercultural pedagogy to build intercultural responsibility and participation in formal and nonformal higher educational contexts.

Concerning the first research question, we drew on new materialism and arts-based workshops (Badan, 2020; Frimberger, 2016a; Harvey et al., 2019; Toohey, 2019) to promote intercultural dialogue and reciprocal learning. The workshops demonstrated that creative arts methods—intercultural photo exchange, sharing a song, a go-along, sharing food, and collaborative poster making (on the ideal university)—can support participation, engagement, and encourage sharing of educational experiences and stories of the self.

While the workshops enabled students to listen to refugee youths' stories, and thus, better understand the refugee situation in the UK that requires sensitive attention, i.e., the importance of providing sanctuary as a human right to those escaping war, the result of geopolitical events for which they bear no responsibility. In some cases, refugee youths shown us and told us that they are inspired by the university and would like to study here in the future. In this way, our research has demonstrated that links can be established.

The experiences of participants, evidenced in the workshops, demonstrated reciprocal understanding through processes of languaging (Phipps, 2011; 2019), translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Li Wei, 2018), and dialogue. These encounters, among the two groups of young people and teachers/researchers, unlikely to happen in everyday life, helped those involved to feel, for a moment, a sense of being in the local and global community. This reciprocal learning aligns with Kramsch and Zhu's (2019, p. 2) notion of 'cultural translation' which involves the "interlingual transfer of meaning, but also, in a metaphorical non-linguistic sense, the negotiation of meaning between people with different value systems and different communication cultures".

Concerning the second research question, our critical intercultural pedagogy approach, inspired by Freire (1970) and Giroux (2004; 2020), enabled us—as students, refugee youths, and teachers/researchers—to engage with one another to build a sense of participation, reciprocity, and shared learning via the coconstructed workshop activities. The study sought to empower refugee youths by inviting them into the world of the university and its students; it also sought to build an ethos of intercultural responsibility and societal participation among postgraduate students by exposing them to first-hand experiences and stories of forced migration, loss, resettlement, and educational disruption. Following Friere (1970), we decentred traditional teaching methods and transformed the traditional classroom into an ecological space (van Lier, 2004) that facilitated hospitable, ethical, and reciprocal learning. Identity positions of researcher, teacher, insider (students) and outsider (refugee youth) were collapsed through an inclusive methodology and pedagogy of coproduction where all participants worked collaboratively in creating the workshops, sharing ideas and artefacts, and experiencing the university campus, and student life and learning together.

Our methodology, underpinned by an ethic of care towards our guests, the Syrian and Iraqi refugee youths, offered them opportunities for English language learning, intercultural dialogue, and learning about higher education in their newly settled country (Mackenzie, McDowell & Pittaway, 2007). Following Fassetta et al. (2017), all participants engaged in 'offerings' (of ourselves and our experiences) and 'remakings' as we shared together our life experiences. As researchers, our purpose, as researchers, was not to collect 'data' for research, but to 'give back' (Smith, 2012): to enable young people to understand each other's lives and learn about the possibilities for education—whether as refugees living in a new country, or as postgraduate students whose privileged positionalities offer routes to success in the neoliberal global economy (as noted by one student earlier). Thus, our critical intercultural pedagogy, underpinned intersecting roles (Giampapa, 2016) and new materialist methdologies, sought to decentre and decolonise ways of knowing (Guilherme & Menezes de Sousa, 2019; Smith, 2012; Walsh & Mignolo, 2018) and the epistemic injustices such thinking entails (Connell, 2017; Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2019).

Our exploratory study had ambitious aims, and not all were successful or achieved. The study raised some methodological and ethical questions. While the refugee youth accepted our invitation to visit the campus and participate in the activities, our marshmallow ice-breaker activity appeared trivial to some, and they questioned: "Why have we come to University to do this activity". Despite this initial apparent disappointment, the refugees' continued engagement over the three workshops suggested that they found, on the whole, the experience valuable and enjoyable. Student participation was more erratic. The students' roles as hosts of their university may have conflicted with their (possibly neoliberally-inspired) aims for being at university, e.g., developing skills for employability. This assumption needs further investigation, but is poignant: do students believe the purpose of their university education is to prepare them for the neoliberal workforce of the Global North (Giroux, 2004), or should universities be creating spaces to promote understanding of and responsibility towards others' wellbeing, and what participation in society means (as represented in SDG4.7)?

The study also raised the ethical issue of inviting refugee youths into an elite university that the refugee youths may never have sufficient language or financial resources to enter. One student commented, "Are we showing them something that they cannot gain access to?". However, such narratives of refugees as excluded and helpless victims (Leavy, 2019) are countered by the example of the Muslim Eritrean, Golriz Ghahraman, who journeyed to New Zealand as a refugee from Eritrea via Sudan, who cleaned university lecture theatres by night and sat in those same rooms by day as a student, and who is now a Member of Parliament in New Zealand (Zealand's first African MP, 2021). Nonetheless, these matters and various identity positionings deserve further attention and investigation when devising pedagogies that decentre young people's (both students' and refugee youths') expectations about formal and nonformal learning in higher education, their agency, and motivation.

We must also acknowledge what we cannot achieve in these elicited encounters. While our methods facilitated embodied communication through languaging (Phipps, 2011), translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Li Wei, 2018) and informal translation between Arabic and English, intercultural dialogue among students, refugee youths, and teachers/researchers was at times inhibited by unshared language, resulting sometimes in incomplete and

unsatisfactory communication. Students and refugees' responses to and experiences of such learning, and the underpinning methodologies, need deeper understanding.

Overall, our study was perhaps insufficiently prolonged to fulfil our ambitious aims which included fostering the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that support young people to dialogue and engage with one other to further their intercultural understanding so they can contribute to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world (Crosbie, 2014; Nussbaum, 2011; Wilson-Stryder & Walker, 2017).

A further unrealised aim concerned dissemination of the findings. Unfortunately, our project timetable and funded activities prevented us from taking our emergent findings back to the Syrian and Iraqi refugee community (and the youths' families and friends. A dissemination event, organised with the support of the gatekeeper (from the Durham City Council), would have helped to maintain the links between the university students and refugee youths and their communities. However, this was not possible: the students were leaving for their summer holidays; the dissemination event was not supported by the project funding and not included in its deliverables. Furthermore, the refugees' community, as a further space for intercultural learning beyond the university, is worth further investigation. Reflecting on our incapacity and failure to maintain the connections established via the workshops has taught us that more persistent and longer-term efforts are required to create a sense of intercultural dialogue and responsibility between excluded refugee and university students. Despite these limitations, our study has demonstrated the importance of intercultural and multimodal approaches in higher education, informed by critical and humanistic pedagogies, in repositioning power relations and in developing participation and responsibility (as articulated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7).

Notes

[1.] Like the four other case studies presented in this volume, the study presented here is part of the AHRC GCRF-funded project "Building an intercultural pedagogy for higher education in conditions of conflict and protracted crises: Languages, identity, Culture" (BIPHEC). https://biphec.wordpress.com/

[2.] Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 aims to "by 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Retrieved 20 january 2021 from https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal

[3.] The UNESCO 2030 education strategy emerged from the Incheon Declaration 2015. It aims towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. Retrieved 20 January 2021 from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

Acknowledgements

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