

Negotiating Power and Translation in a Bilingual (British Sign Language/English) Rehearsal Room

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ABSTRACT

Deaf people are typically encouraged to participate in theatre through the medium of sign language interpreted performances, translation events that the majority of *deaf* spectators do not consider effective in providing accessibility. This article draws on doctoral research that interrogates theatre-making techniques that might provide equality of participation in performances for *deaf* and *hearing* people. Drawing on Participatory Action Research and Applied Theatre methodologies, *deaf* and *hearing* actors create bilingual (British Sign Language and English) performances without pre-existing source texts, a process that is dependent both on the translation strategies employed within it, and on the societal conditions of *deaf-hearing* inequality. A socio-analysis of the power dynamics within two examples of practice is facilitated by conceptualising *deaf* and *hearing* as Bourdieusian *fields*. The analysis suggests that, whilst it is possible to override the impact of hierarchies within such a translation event, more typically societal inequalities that impact negatively on translation processes are maintained.

Keywords: Deaf; Bourdieu; Freire; Applied Theatre; Translation; Interpreting

1. Introduction

The prevailing translation paradigm intended to provide access for *deaf*¹ people at mainstream (spoken language) theatre performances is the sign language interpreted performance (SLIP). This involves the simultaneous translation of spoken dialogue into British Sign Language (Rocks 2015), typically (in the UK) by a single sign language interpreter positioned in the far downstage corner (Gebron 2000). Such performances represent translation events of significant complexity for theatre interpreters (Turner and Pollitt 2002; Richardson 2017). Furthermore, the majority of *deaf* spectators do not consider them effective in providing the access that they claim to offer (Richardson 2018).

This article draws on a doctoral research project that aims to move beyond the paradigm of the SLIP, by identifying different techniques for creating theatre that are equally accessible to *deaf* and *hearing* actors and audiences. Situated in a bilingual British Sign Language

¹ In italicising *deaf* and *hearing* throughout, I follow Bourdieu's convention of marking certain terms to indicate their specific meaning within the context of his *field* theory (see section 2 for a fuller discussion).

(BSL²)/English rehearsal room, the researcher seeks to answer the question: how can different methods of theatre making encourage equality of participation in performance processes for *deaf* and *hearing* people? More specifically, here I aim to answer the questions: how is power exercised and negotiated within the creative and translation processes of devised bilingual theatre? And: how do negotiations of power influence the achievement of equality for participants?

I commence by introducing a conceptualization of *deaf* and *hearing* cultures as Bourdieusian *fields*, a notion that allows the socio-analysis of the power dynamics within the project, particularly considering the inequality of *deaf* and *hearing* groups in wider society. I also discuss the Freirean methodology that informs the research, and the specific methods employed. Subsequently, I present data concerning communication and translation within the creative processes of the project. In so doing, I consider translation not as a cultural product, traditionally the focus of theatre translation scholars (Aaltonen 2000; Anderman 2005), but instead as a complex collaborative process that is integral to the production of bilingual dialogue without a pre-existing source text. Finally, I discuss the negotiation of power within these interdependent processes, and conclude that when hierarchies are flattened, translation strategies can be put in place that maximise inclusive dialogic communication. Conversely, the maintenance of the inequality of wider society within the rehearsal room inhibits effective translation, and participation remains restricted to those in positions of dominance.

2. Conceptualizing *deaf* and *hearing* as Bourdieusian *fields*

As a number of Bourdieu's concepts are relevant to the conceptualization of *deaf* and *hearing fields*, I summarise them here before applying them to my project.

A *field* contains individuals and institutions who occupy positions in relation to each other (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), and those in dominant positions have power to control that *field* (Thomson 2014). Bourdieu (1998) describes *fields* as competitive games, and the (unwritten) rules of that game are the *doxa* of the *field*, grounded in ideologies that have been accepted and internalized by the individuals within the *field*. The internalization of *doxa* is the process through which individuals acquire their *habitus*, most significantly from family and education systems (Bourdieu 1977). *Habitus* is the predisposition to behave in particular

² My adoption of the acronym 'BSL' throughout this paper reflects the common practice of users of that language to refer to it by finger-spelling BSL rather than by signing BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE in full.

ways (Bourdieu 1990). The greater the match between an individual's *habitus* and the *field's doxa*, the better that individual will be able to 'play the game' and the more likely they are to occupy a powerful position within the *field* (Maton 2014). The achievement of dominance is also supported by the acquisition of *field-specific symbolic capital*; social, cultural and linguistic assets (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1997) that elevate an individual's position in a *field* (Swartz 1997).

In Bourdieu's theory, *field* and *habitus* are mutually interdependent, each structuring of and structured by the other. Individuals' *habitus* predisposes them to behave in certain ways. These practices structure the *field* and the social space created by the *field* conditions. In turn, *field* conditions continuously structure individuals' *habitus*. This process is exaggerated when there is abrupt *field* change. In such a scenario, an individual's *habitus* may no longer match the *field* and existing *capital* may be rendered worthless (Bourdieu 1997). This is *hysteresis*, a process that may offer transient opportunities for social change (Hardy 2014).

Field theory offers a means of understanding identity that is fluid and flexible, a more useful way of conceptualizing social groups than over-deterministic notions of culture (Swartz 1997). Here I conceptualize both *deaf* and *hearing* as Bourdieusian *fields*. In the case of the former, I build on O'Brien's (2012) work in suggesting that *field* theory offers an effective way of understanding the range and diversity of *deaf* identities (see below). Furthermore, in the absence of adequate definitions of *hearing* culture, the conceptualization of a *hearing field* allows a coherent exploration of the power imbalance between *deaf* and *hearing* individuals and groups.

Conceptualizing the deaf field

O'Brien (2012) argues that all *deaf* children develop a distinct *deaf habitus*. They are unlikely to acquire this from their parents, as 90% of *deaf* children are born to *hearing* adults (Lucas and Schatz 2003). Similarly, the majority of *deaf* people are now educated in mainstream schools (Ladd 2003), hence the acquisition of *deaf habitus* through shared participation in 'embodied actions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) at *deaf* schools is in decline. I suggest that the acquisition of a *deaf habitus* is not a uniquely sociological phenomenon, but rather that audiological deafness creates a physiological requirement to develop what Bahan (2014) calls a visual-tactile orientation to the world. Furthermore, it is this visual-tactile orientation,

as much as internalized ideologies, which predisposes *deaf* people to adopt particular *deaf* behaviours: *deaf habitus* is thus both a physiological and a sociological phenomenon. Typically, *deaf* behaviour includes the use of signed languages, which carry significant linguistic *capital* within the *deaf field*, and often act as a boundary marker between *deaf* ‘Us’ and *hearing* ‘Them’ (Armstrong 1999; Irvine and Gal 2002). *Hearing* people with little or no knowledge of signed languages have negligible linguistic *capital* in the *deaf field*.

Historically, symbolic *capital* in the *deaf field* has accrued not only to users of signed languages, but also to people who are members of *deaf* social networks. Particularly significant *capital* was accorded to *deaf* children of *deaf* parents. These notions underpinned early definitions of *deaf* identity (see for example Padden and Humphries 1988). More recently, however, there has been a greater understanding of the diversity, and indeed fluidity of practices displayed by people who self-identify as *deaf*. These include not only those born deaf, but also those deafened after acquiring spoken language, deaf-blind people, hard of hearing people, and in the case of children of *deaf* adults, those who are fully hearing but whose first language is a signed language³ (Leigh (2009) provides a useful exploration of the variety of *deaf* identities). Conceptualizing a *deaf field* is a useful way of including this diversity of people who self-identify as *deaf*.

Linguistically, the *deaf field* also incorporates variety. Vernacular signed languages may hold the highest symbolic *capital*, but in practice, signed (and gestural) languages exist on a continuum, ranging from ‘full’ signed language (with a complex visuo-spatial grammar) to simple visual communication using only mime and iconic gesture. Additionally, most *deaf* people are to some extent bilingual, having some competence in their local spoken/written language. Indeed, written communication in the local spoken language is commonplace and often expected (see the data from Group 4A in Section 5), even though literacy levels may be comparatively low (Harris *et al.* 2017).

Conceptualizing the hearing field

Within the literature, most explorations of *hearing* cultural practice are from the perspective of *deaf* writers. *Hearing* is defined as not-*deaf* (Padden and Humphries 1988), or, more

³ In the latter case, the acquisition of a primary *deaf habitus* by *hearing* children within *deaf* families is a purely sociological phenomenon: physiologically, they have the choice of both auditory and visual-tactile channels, but familial influence leads them to acquire a primary *deaf habitus*.

provocatively, as the absence of *deaf* ways of being (Bauman and Murray 2014). For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to focus on only one feature of *hearing habitus* and consequent practice: phonocentrism.

Phonocentrism is the ability, choice and assumption of using a spoken language. Historically, humans have seen themselves as “becoming human through speech” (Bauman 2004:242). Furthermore, spoken language can often be represented symbolically as text; indeed, the existence of a written mode is often used to give a language legitimacy (McCoulough 2000). Consequently, the *hearing field* (in the dominant northern/western context) is not only phonocentric, but also graphocentric. Given this phonocentrism, it is unsurprising that spoken/written languages accrue high levels of linguistic *capital* in the *hearing field*. Possession of this linguistic *capital* provides access to every sphere of *hearing* public activity, and these languages dominate political, social and cultural discourse, contributing to the maintenance of *hearing* hegemony (Corker 1998).

When *deaf* people enter social spaces created by *hearing field* conditions, they often have low levels of linguistic *capital*, and adapt to this by drawing on all the communicative resources available to them. Often thought of as *deaf* bilingualism, by for example Grosjean (1992), Kusters *et al.* prefer to think of this as ‘translanguaging’, a practice in which individuals use not only bilingualism but also a wide range of other semiotic repertoires to facilitate communication: “image, text, gesture, gaze, facial expression, speech, posture, objects and the environment” (2017:11). Although translanguaging facilitates communication between *deaf* and *hearing* people, anecdotally *hearing* people are more likely to expect *deaf* people to adapt to *hearing* phonocentrism. *Deaf* people seem to accept this responsibility, and Kusters *et al.* argue that *deaf* people are generally better equipped for this, because of the “fluidity and transformative quality of signs/gestures” (2017:6), and because they are more likely to be multilingual than *hearing* people.

Deaf-hearing hierarchies

The different linguistic expectations of *deaf* and *hearing* people reflect the dominant position of the *hearing field* over the *deaf field*. The majority of *deaf-hearing* interactions occur within *hearing* social spaces: *deaf* people are “acculturated to, but not assimilated in, larger society” (Murray 2008:102), whereas few *hearing* people spend time in *deaf* social spaces. As a result,

hearing doxa influences practice within *deaf - hearing* interactions. The relevant ideology here is what Humphries (in an unpublished essay in 1975) coined as ‘audism’, “the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears” (Bauman 2004). It can be expressed by individuals, and also at an institutional level (Turner 2006:240). Furthermore, audist ideology may be uncritically internalized by *deaf* people, triggering what Gertz (2008) calls ‘dysconscious audism’.

Audism creates what Bourdieu would describe as symbolic violence, an often unnoticed phenomenon as it is not, or at least not only, mediated through physical violence (Schubert 2014: 180). Symbolic violence perpetrated by *hearing* people against *deaf* people is expressed as, for example, the stigmatisation of *deaf* people as unintelligent or disabled. As a result of audism, spoken languages are prioritized over signed languages: the majority of *deaf* children are educated using spoken language in mainstream schools (Ladd 2003); and their parents are encouraged not to use signed languages (Hauser and Kartheiser 2014). Additionally the notion of *deaf* as a culture is increasingly medicalized: health professionals attempt to restore ‘sufferers’ to a more ‘normal’ life (Miller *et al.* 2010); and *hearing* parents of *deaf* children are strongly advised by (*hearing*) doctors to have their children fitted with cochlear implants so that they can start to hear and learn a spoken language (Sparrow 2005). Each of these can be considered as an act of symbolic violence against *deaf* people.

The ever-present audist *doxa* of the *hearing field* maintains the linguistic dominance of *hearing* people over *deaf* people. The practices dependent on that *doxa* represent what van Maanen (2004) would describe as the societal frame of this performance project, and suggest that the effective negotiation of complex pre-existing power dynamics will be essential if participants are to adopt translation strategies that support a successful creative process.

3. Adopting a Freirean methodological approach

This project seeks to achieve equality of participation in performance processes. In an attempt to encourage the flattening of societal hierarchies, I adopt a methodology grounded in the work of Paolo Freire (1996). His ambition was for the oppressed (those suffering symbolic violence) in late 20th century Brazil to achieve equality with their former oppressors, without achieving dominance over them: “the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity [...] become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both”

(Freire 1996:26). He proposed a transformative process led by the oppressed, as only they truly understand their oppression. Any contribution by allies (who derive from the oppressor group) should be carried out *with* the oppressed, rather than *for* them, ensuring that the oppressed have agency in the process leading to their own emancipation.

Although Freire was not overtly influenced by Bourdieu, the triggers for his pedagogy align closely with those for Bourdieu and his *field* theory: dominance and oppression (Burawoy 2011). Both understand society as a site of struggle in which the ideologies (or *doxa*) and institutions of the dominant classes establish and maintain hierarchies that subjugate the oppressed. For Bourdieu, however, this is a permanent state. *Habitus* is difficult to over-ride (Bourdieu 1977) and even a state of *hysteresis* that results in the restructuring of a *field* (Hardy 2014) does not remove the *doxa* that define that *field*. His approach is a ‘rationalist pedagogy’ in which all strive to emulate the practices of the dominant group: audism is an example of practices derived from a rationalist pedagogy. By way of contrast, Freire’s approach is a bottom-up, transformative ‘populist pedagogy’ (Burawoy 2011). For Rancière (2003), Bourdieu’s ‘sociocratic’ perspective is fundamentally anti-democratic, disallowing any meaningful move towards equality. He agrees with Freire that the removal of hierarchies is possible, through agonistic confrontation within a pluralist democracy.

Freirean pedagogy is relevant here as it is central to Participatory Action Research (PAR), a collaborative methodology that aims to empower oppressed groups by giving them the tools to generate local knowledge and instigate societal change (see for example Finn (1994), Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) and Reason and Bradbury (2001) for further discussion). Such methods are advocated by Wurm and Napier (2017) as a means of addressing inequality between *hearing* researchers and *deaf* research participants, and inform the design of this project.

Freirean pedagogy is also relevant to the specific performance methods used in this project. Freire’s approach was adopted by Boal (2000) in his Theater of the Oppressed, and the techniques he pioneered became influential in the field of Applied Theatre (AT). AT is an umbrella term, originally coined by Ackroyd (2000) to include all forms of theatre with high indices of participation and transformation. It is a specific form of PAR, in which theatre practitioners disempower themselves in the pursuit of creating a democratic process within particular communities or particular places. Participation is an interactive embodied practice

as a means of generating what Fabian (1999) calls performative knowledge. Through participation, projects aim for personal, educational, social and/or political transformation. (See Nicholson (2014) for a comprehensive overview of the field of AT).

Within this AT project, the specific methodological approach adopted by the actors is devising. In this technique there is an expectation of “members of the group contributing equally” within “a model of cooperative and non-hierarchical collaboration” (Heddon and Milling 2016:4). Importantly, the starting point is the absence of a script, and participants in this project are required to produce cross-cultural, and often bilingual, theatrical material. Given the range of audiological statuses and linguistic competences of the participants (see section 4), the creative process is dependent on effective translation practices. Indeed, translation and creative activities are mutually interdependent.

4. Research methods

The project took place over five days in June 2017. Ten actors participated in the project, recruited from extended networks via social media. Five of the actors self-identified as *deaf* and five as *hearing*. Of the five *deaf* actors, all were able to use BSL and had some competence in written English. Three of the five could also communicate in spoken English, their receptive skills supported at least partially by technology (hearing aids or cochlear implants) and lip-reading. Of the five *hearing* actors, all were competent in spoken and written English, but only one was able to use BSL. In addition to the ten actors, two professional BSL/English interpreters supported the research activities.

The actors were tasked with identifying bilingual performance techniques that offer equal access to *deaf* and *hearing* participants, and subsequently with creating new performance material using those techniques. On day one of the project, they used the activity of free-listing (Weller and Romney 1988) to generate potential approaches, and these were refined into a working list. During the remainder of the project, the techniques on that list were used as the starting point for actors to work in smaller, more practicable groups to devise new scenes. The composition of these groups was determined by discussion and mutual agreement, and the groups created their own theatrical material, without external direction. If they required communication support they could request the input of one of the BSL/English

interpreters, but this was optional; the interpreters were on standby rather than being automatically embedded within the groups.

As well as the raw data of the finished scenes, the project generated metadata in various formats: my own field notes, participants' and interpreters' reflective diaries (written English and BSL video⁴), and structured reflexive interviews that the actors undertook on the final day of the project. Metadata were also generated from a semi-structured interview that I conducted in spoken English with one participant, Dan, at his request, in response to his frustration at the ongoing power imbalance within his group. When quoting data, I refer to acting participants using their own names, a convention agreed within the ensemble to allow the subsequent presentation of data in the language in which they are generated⁵. In contrast, the interpreters wished to maintain professional boundaries and accordingly their data are anonymized.

5. Two examples of practice

What follows is an analysis of data from the fourth re-grouping of the participants, on the afternoon of day three, into Groups 4A and 4B, as these examples most usefully shed light on factors that influence the exercise and negotiation of power within the project. In Group 4A, societal hierarchies are maintained and unequal power dynamics influence the working practices and translation strategies of the group, with negative consequences. In the case of Group 4B, however, the participants successfully negotiate power dynamics, adopt effective translation practices, and facilitate a more productive creative process.

Group 4A

This group has six acting participants. Of these, three self-identity as *deaf*. All three can use BSL, but Holly and Ruth have hearing aids and use of their voice, and can thus also access spoken communication. Mehwish, however, is profoundly *deaf* and communicates predominantly using BSL. The *hearing* participants (Dan, Elle and Steph) all use spoken English, and Dan also has functional competence in BSL. In summary, five of the actors can communicate using spoken English; BSL is available to four. All the participants also have

⁴ Where quotes from BSL video diaries are presented in English below, these have been translated by the author, who is *hearing* and a competent user of both languages.

⁵ As signed languages are produced on the body (including the face) and can only meaningfully be recorded using video technology, data generated in a signed language cannot be disseminated in their source modality without compromising anonymity.

some competence in written English. At the start of the creative process, they choose to work without an interpreter.

Within the group there are no established leaders: the actors who have previously adopted positions of power within the project are now all working in Group 4B. Ruth notes that

[One issue is] personal power within the group, because a few people like to force their way, dominate the conversation, and other people's ideas are ignored. I realize that ideas were challenged. People have their own view and want to take control of the group (BSL video diary, day four).

Or, as Steph summarizes, “Too many directors, not enough actors” (written English diary, day four).

Participants identify the relatively large size of the group and the lack of a recognized leader as conditions that allow a power struggle to develop. Elle suggests that “There’s six people, with six ideas, and six opinions and it’s taking time navigating through them [...] it’s been hard to make decisions and keep moving forwards [...] I think we’ve been lacking a bit of team work” (written English diary, day four). For her, the solution (in retrospect) would be to appoint “someone who is going to go ‘here we are everybody, we are going with this, that’s a great idea, no we’re not doing that’” (*hearing* actors reflexive interview, day five). Dan agrees, although despite his own greater awareness of *deaf/hearing* inequality issues than his peers (as a student BSL/English interpreter), he rules himself out of holding this responsibility: “I’m not the one in charge; I’m not the one who should be telling everybody what to do” (semi-structured interview, day four).

Power dynamics within the group are mediated entirely in spoken English, by both *deaf* and *hearing* actors. No translation is provided for Mehwish, despite her not having access to spoken language. The *deaf* participants who can use BSL choose only to speak, and an interpreter also notices, “The bilingual hearing participant does not sign and elects to use voice at most points” (written English diary, day three). Dan notes that the group is

using hearing cultural norms to try and settle dominance [...] It is [collaborative], but only in the sense that it would be with a hearing group, where the person who shouts loudest gets to speak and people listen ... it's a case of the turn taking

being done by the loudest voice wins. Which doesn't work for everyone, just for the person with the loudest voice (*hearing* actors reflexive interview, day five).

Ruth points out that the lack of translation means that “information is being missed [...] there's a communication breakdown [...] The *hearing* people are speaking but the *deaf* aren't getting it at all - so they aren't involved in what is going on” (BSL video diary, day four). Mehwish adds, “When hearing people are speaking, sometimes I don't understand anything” (BSL video diary, day three).

Progress within Group 4A is slow. In an attempt to facilitate the creative process, Steph writes “a script to give the idea a structure [...] which made it easier to understand” (written English diary, day three). She writes in full, grammatically correct English. This is often challenging for *deaf* people, who typically have relatively low literacy levels (Harris et al. 2017), and my instinct is that, without translation, this will add to the exclusion of the profoundly *deaf* participant. An interpreter notes that “using English to agree scripting shows a slight dominance to the English language” (written English diary, day three). Dan also observes that “the script was definitely being written (and thought about) in English, even the bits in BSL”, rather than the “English sections [being] devised in English and the BSL sections in BSL” (ibid.). The profoundly *deaf* actor is “largely left out of the writing process” (ibid.). Furthermore, I note in my field notes that the script is used as a tool for maintaining hierarchies. Two participants assert its status as the definitive version of the scene, and when Mehwish creates something different, they criticize her for getting it wrong.

The dominance of spoken and written English within this process leads the interpreters and me to reassess the initial translation strategy of interpreters being on standby rather than actively inserting themselves into interactions. On ethical grounds, i.e. the exclusion of the one profoundly *deaf* participant, the interpreters intervene, but the group's *hearing* communication strategies have reached a point where it cannot function in an interpreter-friendly way. Participants talk over each other in a manner that compromises the interpreting, and Ruth notices that the interpreters attempt to resolve this by adopting a powerful position within the interactions: “The interpreters are trying to control things, slow it down and explain more” (BSL video diary, day four). Inclusivity in the group, however, does not improve. Dan notes that Mehwish is

not being given the opportunity to kind of say “Hang on guys, can I be involved” because her involvement is almost always to catch up with what has already been discussed, and the only time she is getting into it is where somebody has specifically stopped and said [to her] “Hang on, what do you think?” And that is not happening very much (semi-structured interview, day four).

Neither the use of the (untranslated) written script nor the intervention of the interpreters are strategies that encourage inclusive, dialogic communication within the group. The creative process is slow, and participants’ frustration pushes them increasingly towards using *hearing* strategies. As Dan comments, “The *deaf* actors that can speak or listen in any form are just reverting to that because it is so much quicker” (semi-structured interview, day four). He suspects, however, that in the interests of working as quickly as possible, “some of the *deaf* actors [...] will just say something, or lip-read, and even if they haven't fully understood it, it's still quicker than waiting for the interpreter to finish” (ibid.).

To support progress towards completion of the scene, I invite Moira, one of the actors in Group 4B, to spend a short time directing the group. Moira is profoundly *deaf*, a first language user of BSL, and a student of performance on the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland’s ‘BA in Performance in BSL and English’ course. She directs the actors using a mix of BSL, mime and gesture. The process remains hierarchical, as Moira adopts a position of power over the group, but her fluidity of communication choices encourages a noticeable shift in communication preferences and translation strategies within the group. The interpreter is no longer required. One of the bilingual *deaf* actors reverts to using only BSL; the other alternates between speech and sign, sometimes undertaking self-translation. One *hearing* participant opts to replace speech with a *lingua franca* of gesture and mime. For the *hearing* actors, the intervention of a director, whilst creating a power dynamic of its own, is essential in making this group effective. Dan notes that “having Moira direct was a vital change to the process [...] This is a vital step for restructuring the power in the room. It was the first time the process has felt properly inclusive” (written English diary, day four, emphasis original).

Later, when Moira has returned to her own group, the previous hierarchies begin to re-emerge. Two participants again dominate Mehwish by asserting the accuracy of the written script and criticizing her when they judge that she is doing it wrong. I intervene, remove the written script, and create a new hierarchy by placing Ruth in charge, on the grounds that she

is *deaf*, can speak and sign, and works as a teacher, and thus presumably has some leadership skills. I comment in my field notes that “the rehearsal became more fair and fast moving – the hierarchy removed”, and the group eventually completes the scene they are working on.

Group 4B

Group 4B works at the same time as Group 4A. It has four participants, two *deaf* (Moira and Sean) and two *hearing* (Jasmine and Michaela). Moira is profoundly *deaf* and has no use of spoken English. Sean has hearing aids and is competent in both BSL and spoken English. Jasmine and Michaela are both users of spoken English. Neither have competence in BSL, but both are experienced in physical theatre techniques and are predisposed to communicating visually rather than using dialogue. All four participants have some competence in written English.

During the project, Moira and Jasmine have both emerged as leaders within the different creative processes. Furthermore, Jasmine and Sean have volunteered to lead warm-up games and exercises on different days. Despite (or perhaps because of) the shared experience of power embodied by Group 4B, no observable hierarchy is created. Moira notes that everybody “is throwing in ideas” (BSL video diary, day three), and I observe in my field notes that the creative process also includes a number of well-known drama exercises, initially described by Boal (2002), which involve organic shifts of leadership between the participants. The resulting ethos allows the development of a genuinely collaborative approach, underpinned by a flexible approach to communication and translation strategies.

Importantly, these actors do not prioritize one language as the language of the creative process. Instead, all four actors use all the semiotic tools at their disposal to make communication work, what Kusters et al. (2017) might call translanguaging. As Michaela notes, “We devised by writing things down, or finger-spelling. Myself and Jasmine spoke clearer with bigger lip movements, and Sean helped us as he can speak and sign” (written English diary, day three). Gesture and mime become a *lingua franca*. Importantly, as Moira points out,

We started with movement; we held back on dialogue and just did actions to help the improvising. It helped us think of the words that we would put into a script

but for now, we kept that to one side and just focussed on the actions (BSL video diary, day four).

The process is supported by each actor's efforts to build their own bilingual competence. Michaela notes that "learning more BSL words/phrases every day has helped me understand and communicate – and it was very easy to pick it up" (written English diary, day three). Jasmine similarly undertakes small moments of self-translation using signs she has learnt during the earlier part of the project. From the other end of the linguistic spectrum, Moira tries to develop her lip-reading skills, working with Michaela on sections of spoken dialogue. "When we were ready we sat with each other like in a mirror and I was watching her lip pattern, so we could practice picking up our cues from that" (BSL video diary, day three). By the fourth day, she reports that

I'm much more confident at lip reading ... It all comes from practice. Compared with the first or second day when it was really confusing, now I feel much more confident to discuss things with hearing people and to try to lip read (BSL video diary, day four).

Where these competences are insufficient, and translation is required, Sean undertakes intra-group interpreting whenever possible. Jasmine notes that this is particularly useful. "Having a BSL to English speaker in the group made it easier to negotiate dialogue and what was going to be said" (written English diary, day three).

Group 4B creates two new scenes in the time in which Group 4A creates one. During the creative processes of both their scenes, the group requests an interpreter to support communication on only one occasion, to work out specific issues of narrative development and to clarify small moments of miscommunication. Michaela notes that the group "rarely used an interpreter" (written English diary, day three) and I observe the actors building rapport directly rather than having their communication mediated by an external agent.

As with Group 4A, this group also uses written English on flip chart paper to ensure that the physical improvisation develops a consistent structure. The process here, however, is different. This group begins not with discussion and writing, but with physical improvisations from which they produce a bullet-pointed list of actions, the function of which is supportive rather than prescriptive. Only when they are certain how they wish the sketch to unfold do they create a more formal script, to ensure that bilingual dialogue can be delivered

consistently and accurately. I observe that rather than making language choices that match their own predispositions, and ignoring the necessity for translation, each participant ensures that their peers understand what is happening. The group is consistently inclusive and the result is a successful bilingual creative process.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The data suggest that effective communication within the creative processes of this project is supported by linguistic flexibility and a high degree of functional bilingualism. This includes not only individuals who can code-switch and provide intra-group translation, but also the practice of translanguaging (Kusters et al. 2017), which here includes language-free communication using gesture and mime, and written materials in simple English. Conversely, effective communication is compromised by practice that places one language in a dominant position, such as the use of untranslated spoken English by Group 4A.

Furthermore, inclusive communication is maintained by favouring the use of intra-group translation wherever possible, rather than having an embedded interpreter. Occasional professional interpreting is sometimes required, but the data from Group 4B suggest that without one, individuals can build relationships with each other directly and develop effective translanguaging practice. This contradicts the *doxa* of both *deaf* and *hearing fields* that includes the ideology that the use of a BSL/English interpreter is the default solution for communication problems between *deaf* and *hearing* individuals. The data from Group 4A suggest that the use of an interpreter gives all participants an understanding of the general flow of an interaction, but does not necessarily facilitate meaningful dialogic communication.

The different translation strategies adopted by the two groups are influenced by the power dynamics at play within their creative processes. Consider Group 4A. Here the audist use of spoken English excludes the single profoundly *deaf* participant. Each of the three oppressive practices described by Freire (1996:122ff) are observed. There is ‘cultural invasion’ in that the dominant practice of speech is imposed on a *deaf* participant who is a competent theatre-maker in BSL but cannot now contribute. There is ‘manipulation’, in that the *deaf* actors with voice are subconsciously persuaded to participate through speech, even though this is exclusive, and, as Chin (1991) warns, is a means of deforming the minority group. Through a

combination of cultural invasion and manipulation, there is also ‘divide and rule’: two of the *deaf* participants work with the *hearing* actors; one cannot.

The hierarchy created is the natural condition of spaces where practice is determined by Bourdieusian *field* conditions, in this case the *hearing field*. Spoken English is understood ideologically, in this context, as being dominant, and all actors, *deaf* and *hearing*, have internalized the *doxa* that speech is the language modality of power. Individuals’ levels of *field*-specific linguistic *capital* create a hierarchy, and in this case, the *habitus* of those with higher levels of linguistic *capital* predisposes them to use speech. For the *deaf* actors who can use their voice, this is an example of dysconscious audism. Those with no linguistic *capital*, in this case Mehwish (profoundly *deaf* with no spoken language competence), find themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy, a position in which they are excluded from spoken interactions, which in this case means all interactions. Those in positions that are more dominant do not recognize the effect of linguistic *capital* on their position in the *field*, and focus only on the creative process. No translation is offered for Mehwish, an act of symbolic violence against her. The process becomes a vicious cycle. As *habitus* and *field* are each mutually structuring and being structured by the other, the more the participants speak, the more the social space resembles the *hearing field*, which in turn predisposes individuals to communicate more using spoken rather than signed language.

The *field* conditions influencing the work of Group 4A are disrupted when I ask Moira to join the group as their director. In this role, Moira is in a *de facto* position of power, but her *habitus* does not match the *field* that she enters. Rather her symbolic *capital* is drawn predominantly from the *deaf field*. She has significant social *capital* as a political activist within the *deaf* community. She has acquired cultural *capital* as a deaf performer and undergraduate at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Most significantly, being a first language user of BSL gives her significant linguistic *capital*. The impact of Moira entering the space of Group 4A is for its *field* to be significantly, if only temporarily, restructured by her *habitus* and *capital*: she introduces the conditions of the *deaf field* and the rehearsal begins to resemble *deaf* social spaces. Fully inclusive dialogic communication is not achieved, but the group is at least transported away from acceptance of *hearing doxa* by the translanguaging strategies that she uses.

During Moira's intervention, the two actors with no access to BSL have their contributions curtailed. One remains focused on the written English script, unable to participate in the *deaf*-led experience. Dan notes that, "The other hearing actors were visibly uncomfortable and didn't understand" (written English diary, day four). This is the phenomenon that Bourdieu calls *hysteresis*, a mismatch between *habitus* and *field* and a situation in which individuals have the potential to over-ride the predispositions of their *habitus* and contribute to the shaping of a new *field* (Swartz 1997). Moira undermines the arbitrary language ideology that places English as dominant. When she leaves the group, two of the participants modify their communication and translation strategies to be more inclusive. The *field* conditions introduced by Moira may have partly restructured their *habitus*, although this would most likely be temporary, and Bourdieu (1977) would argue that such a restructuring is difficult, and only achievable after a long time. Indeed, two other participants are unable to adapt so quickly, and remain trapped in the earlier hierarchies created by their group, using only speech (even though one is *deaf* and could use BSL) and focusing on the written English script (as already described).

The power dynamics exhibited by Group 4B are somewhat different. In Bourdieusian terms, this group embodies a large amount of pre-existing symbolic *capital*, particularly Moira and Jasmine's social *capital* as leaders and cultural *capital* as performers, as well as a diversity of linguistic, or more accurately, communicative *capital* acquired during the week by all four actors as a result of their willingness to make communication work. The data suggest that the group do achieve effective communication, and that the precondition for that achievement is the willingness of participants to negotiate power and adopt a range of communication and translation strategies that reflects the language needs of the Other rather than the predisposition of the Self. Whenever possible, no specific codified language is used, and gesture and mime are adopted as a *lingua franca*. When formal language is required, linguistic ideologies are not asserted, and rather than being used to maintain power, language and translation choices are made that create conditions of equal participation.

In Bourdieusian terms, the actions that support the creation of effective communication require a significant act of will by each individual to over-ride the predispositions of their *habitus* and the *doxa* of the *field* with which they self-identify. Leaving *doxa* behind, particularly those drawn from linguistic and audist (and indeed anti-audist) ideologies, suggests that the space in which effective communication occurs cannot in itself be described

as subject to the conditions of a Bourdieusian *field*, because it is not a site of inequality and struggle. Of course, this is context specific, as such a space is likely to sit within other *fields*, defined by other *doxa*, and thus containing other hierarchies that are not created by the unequal acquisition of linguistic *capital*. Furthermore, the pre-existing *fields* are not destroyed, as their inherent hierarchies are still present in the societal frame of the external world. *Deaf*-space still represents practice generated by the *deaf field*; *hearing*-space remains a feature of the *hearing field*. In contrast, this ‘third space’ (after Bhabha (1990) and Greenwood (2005)) is a liminal space, situated between *deaf* and *hearing fields*, and offering the individuals who achieve it the liberty to act, free from linguistic ideology and *doxa*.

This third space is, then, a utopian goal, undefinable in Bourdieusian terms. It is achieved using a bottom–up approach, a Freirean populist pedagogy rather than Bourdieu’s top-down rationalist pedagogy (Burawoy, 2011). It is created by dominant and oppressed groups working together to negotiate a position of equality through the creation of a public sphere of interaction. This new public sphere is not aligned with Bourdieu’s view of society and its realization supports Rancière’s (2003) rejection of *field* theory as an anti-democratic sociological system that condemns those with little symbolic *capital* to remain at the bottom of hierarchies, kept in their place by the institutions of the *capital*-rich.

The example of Group 4B suggests that such a Freirean third space is achievable within a bilingual rehearsal room, even after only a few days of working. The data from Group 4A, however, and the subsequent socio-analysis, both point to a paradigm in which work within the rehearsal room can only be separated with difficulty from the influence of wider institutional and societal contexts, in this case *deaf-hearing* inequality. Linguistic ideologies pervade the rehearsal room, and only with significant effort by participants to override their ideological positions can hierarchies be flattened. When they are, however, all actors can have equal agency in the mutually interdependent processes of translation and collaborative creativity.

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