Seeking access. Applied ethnopoetic analysis

Gate keeping or a gateway to poetry as knowing

Áine McAllister
University College London

This paper discusses a poetic output of a research project at the intersection of linguistic ethnography (LE) and poetic inquiry (PI) which explores the barriers experienced by refugee and asylum seekers, seeking access to Higher Education. The research draws on Jan Blommaert's applied ethnopoetics (AEP) work to reconstruct silenced voices (Blommaert, 2006). AEP as a 'means of recognition' of marginalised voices is explored. The paper goes on to explore the transformative possibilities for knowledge production offered by combining AEP with PI. This innovative approach and output are presented as act of resistance to normative expectations within academia which freeze conditions for voice (Blommaert, 2008). Questions are then offered to consider how we might advance the approach and its emancipatory potential further.

Keywords: Applied ethnopoetic analysis, poetic inquiry, poetry

1.   Introduction

In order to be heard in academia, to have one's voice 'ratified' as worth hearing (Rampton et al., 2022), one is expected to speak or to write in a particular way (Blommaert 2008). This article explores the implications of that for marginalised students and for academics who are marginalised for their 'othered' ways of knowing. To gain access to Higher Education, there is an (not always) implicit (but always insidious) expectation that one can demonstrate the acquisition of language skills in particular western cultural contexts (Li & Garcia, 2022), which means that some groups of students including refugees and asylum seekers are marginalised and silenced. Regardless of accomplishment, experience, qualification, funds of knowledge or breadth of repertoire, those who fall foul of these narrow, improvised, "oppressive'' (Badwan, 2021), structurally embedded language

ideologies (standard, academic and raciolinguistic) are often unjustly judged as 'inarticulate, hesitant, or lacking confidence' (Van der Aa and Blommaert, 2011: 9).

Also, newcomer academics in some fields who fall foul of expectations around academic language, are viewed as un-intellectual, and uncritical. Academics who are not yet firmly established in fields such as Linguistic Ethnography (LE), Socio-Linguistics (SL) and Language and Intercultural Studies (LAIC) must first prove that they can write in a particular way before they can seriously indulge an inclination, interest or aptitude for writing otherwise, for example through poetry. In this way, other ways of knowing remained othered, niche, and for the most part are still regarded as not academic enough to stand alone as critical objects. So, the cycle repeats itself. Creative-critical objects do not tend to stand alone in 'our' field(s), but besides, or as an interruption to, writing which is considered to be academic and critical. This must change; in the way we generate what we write about and in attitudes towards the ways in which we write or are expected to write to be taken seriously. As rallied by Alison Phipps (2019: 6): "Let's stop pretending our ways of knowing, our epistemologies, are the only valid ways of knowing something."

This paper will discuss the experiences of highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers who are seeking access to Higher Education; a group that is 'currently under-researched and not well served by education providers' (Ganassin & Young, 2020: 127). It will draw on a preliminary poetic output of the research project *Seeking Access. Refugees and Asylum Seekers Seeking Access to Higher Education: A Poetic Inquiry* (McAllister et al., 2021). The output is referred to herein as *Seeking Access*. In this project Applied Ethnopoetic Analysis (AEP), of narratives generated through critical translanguaging dialogue was overlayed by Poetic Inquiry (PI), through a process of poetic rendering (Glesne, 1997; Vincent 2018).

AEP is posited as a means of recognition of the voices of highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers; voices that are silenced because of the marginalised speakers' language variety. Furthermore, the paper emphasises that the silencing of this group occurs regardless of developed repertoire (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). A rationale for overlaying AEP with PI is provided with two aims. Firstly, extracts from *Seeking Access* are used to exemplify how the overlay uncovers and amplifies the voices of linguistically and culturally marginalised highly skilled refugee or asylum seeker participants. Secondly, the paper aims to advocate for the production and representation of knowledge in more emancipatory ways (offering AEP overlayed with PI as one model) as an imperative in fields such as LE, SL, and LAIC, within academia which persists as a "a highly contested space in which societal inequalities are reproduced" (Ferri, 2022: 382), through language ideologies, including raciolinguistic ideologies, language hierarchies, associated folk theories and language practices. AEP overlayed with PI is emancipatory for

marginalised participants because it demands attention to the poetics inherent in their narratives, facilitating a faithfulness to voice in an arena in which voice is not traditionally recognised unless it is produced in a particular way (Blommaert, 2018). AEP challenges this expectation, in order to uncover voice which is further amplified through PI as this paper will discuss.

2.   Context

The UK is home to significant number of refugees who are highly qualified and have professional backgrounds. It can often take years for refugees and asylum seekers to re-establish their professional lives (Ganassin & Young, 2020) and delays are often exacerbated by the obstacles they experience in re-accessing Higher Education. Refugees and asylum seekers experience a range of institutional barriers (Lounasmaa, 2020), as well as economic and socio-cultural barriers (Baker et al., 2018). Significantly, *Seeking Access* reveals how institutional barriers create exclusionary university policies and practices; a lack of transparency of information; a lack of recognition of existing qualifications; complexities around funding, both mirror and exacerbate the obstacles created by wider (ever more hostile) immigration policies, exemplified by the The Illegal Migration Bill, passed by Parliament in July 2023. *Seeking Access* also portrays how asylum delays and challenges, fear of deportation, financial instability, a lack of basic resources for living, inadequate accommodation issues including a lack of privacy and the psychological and emotional trauma of seeking refuge in such a hostile environment demand that highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers bear an extreme burden of resilience as they attempt to navigate their re-entry to Higher Education. The educational exclusion experienced by highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers is often exacerbated by issues of language and linguistic injustice (Badwan, 2021), so paying attention to the experiences of this group, as well as to how those experiences are represented, is particularly relevant to the fields of LE, SL and LAIC.

Before I go further, I want to acknowledge, that the term 'highly skilled', and the categorisation of people according to skills is recognised as problematic and we must remain alive to questions such as ''What counts as skills? How are migrants' skills assessed, by whom, and for what purpose?'' (Vigouroux, 2017: 313). I recognise the risk of the dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers, in the linguistic violence of the unintended implication that those who are recognised by western colonial, capitalist, neoliberal paradigms as 'highly skilled' are somehow more worthy of access to Higher Education (or indeed to refuge in the wider sense). I remain vigilant from my position of relative privilege (Phipps,

2019; Badwan, 2021), albeit from the margins of that privilege (Ferri, 2022) against my own complicity in that violence. I do not use the term 'highly skilled' uncritically. I use it to draw attention to the fact that even when refugees and asylum seekers demonstrate that they meet the narrowly defined criteria set down for being 'highly skilled'; having a tertiary education and/or had extensive professional experience (Weinar et al., 2020), their skills, knowledge and professional experience often count for little (Ganassin & Young, 2020). Their status as 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' rather than migrant means that whether or not they are 'highly skilled' by definition has traditionally not been taken into consideration (Weinar et al., 2020). One of the implications of this is that they experience a lack of access to Higher Education at a level appropriate for their existing accomplishments, breadth of repertoire, and funds of knowledge, as *Seeking Access* reveals.

3.   Applied ethnopoetic analysis

AEP is a sub field of linguistic ethnography which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s (Moore, 2009), pioneered by Dell Hymes and developed by others working in the field such as Hornberger, 2009; Moore, 2009; Rampton, 2009; Van der Aa, 2013; Blackledge, Creese and Hu, 2016 among others and in particular by Jan Blommaert (2001, 2006, 2008, 2009). Through AEP, narrative is arranged into units on the page through attention to prosodic, syntactic, morpho-grammatical, phonetic, lexico-syntactic features and transition from one unit to another marks a change in those features (Blommaert, 2006). For a detailed discussion on how the process of AEP is carried out please see the above-mentioned references and McAllister, (in press). Although originally used for the analysis of traditional folk narratives, Blommaert (2006: 181) argued it is suitable for the analysis of narratives of other marginalised speakers in institutional contexts and he applied AEP to the stories of asylum seekers, in order to uncover details in their narratives which would otherwise go unnoticed.

AEP is 'aimed at the reconstruction of silenced voices in an act that liberates them'(Hymes, 2003: 11; Blommaert 2009: 271). It 'brings out the implicit structure in spoken discourse' (Blommaert, 2018: 2) and makes 'visible and audible something more than is evident on first hearing' (Blackledge, Creese & Hu, 2016: 657) by 'unearthing the underlying poetic structure that is the essence of narrative' (Hornberger 2009: 349). AEP acknowledges the significance of the relationship between form and function. When we impose form, we ignore function and this silences the voices of non-standard speakers. By recognising the poetic function of language and the poetics inherent in speakers' stories, AEP recognises that that one's voice is evident in one's specific ways of speaking (Blackledge Creese & Hu,

2016). 'Non standard' speakers whose ways of speaking are "often deviant from hegemonic norms…experience negative stereotyping of parts of their repertoire, the dismissal of their ways of speaking as illegitimate, irrational, not-to-the-point, narrative" (Blommaert, 2009: 271). AEP counters this narrative inequality and the discrimination, silencing and othering that arises from it.

4.   Poetic inquiry

PI is also a form of ethnography and like AEP, its position is one of advocacy and one which calls for the democratisation of the research process to counter 'taken-for-granted, hegemonic practices' (Sarangi, 2009: 239) because it foregrounds the voices, perspectives and the lived experienced of participants. Like LE, PI emphasises the importance of language. It challenges the 'limits of language by limiting language' (Trundell & Wardell, 2020); to heighten its impact by distilling narrative down to what is essential through a rigorously attentive and critically introspective process to reveal voice (Zhu et al., 2022). Poetic devices inform the analysis of data to craft poetry which represents "a form of counter-storying that disrupts the normatively accepted master narrative" (Davis, 2021: 7) and disrupts normatively accepted and dominant ways of sharing knowledge which silence voices in academia. Poetry, which is an interpretive act of critical thinking (Davis, 2021), is not a science, but PI recognises that scientific knowledge is a lion without antelopes or zebras (Cesaire, 1982), and that in fact there is "more than one way to know things" (Serpa, 22: 3). Poetic inquiry resists the fallacy of objectivity and the tyranny of reason imposed by western colonial epistemic traditions (McAllister & Brown, 2023). It does so by attending to the aesthetics of language; such as arrangement, word choice, rhythm, rhyme, phrase, and line structure (Rawlins, 2018) as well as to poetic devices such as 'metaphor, imagery and symbolism' (Serpa, 22: 3). The poem becomes 'an aesthetic tool of persuasion' (Makihara & Rodríguez, 2022: 58) powered by the poetic imagination. It is by imagination that we abandon the ordinary course of things (Zalipour, 2011), which is why the impact of layering PI on AEP to represent participant's perspective is worth considering for scholars of/in LE, SL and LAIC who want to challenge the narrow parameters set down by academic language ideology, for the production and manufacture of knowledge in academia.

5.   Layering applied ethnopoetic analysis and poetic inquiry

Linguistic Ethnography centres the significance of the 'non standard modes of talk and text' to minimise 'linguistic inequalities and prejudices …., while promoting social justice via critical language awareness' (Sarangi, 2009: 239). AEP, a LE method, reveals the voices of linguistically and culturally marginalised participants by acknowledging the inherent poetics in the way they construct their own narratives rather than imposing conventions to recontextualise their narrative. While the process of AEP, pays attention to the syntactic, morpho-grammatical, phonetic, lexico-syntactic, as well as prosodic features of a narrative to arrange it on a page (Blommaert, 2006), the lens of PI acts like a microscope; to zoom in on and stretch space between words and lines to reflect time and silence, to spotlight central images to engage the reader, to locate the first and last line of what *might be a poem* that will draw the reader in and leave them with as profound an emotional knowing as possible. The impact of this attentive highly focussed 'crafting' is assisted by the line breaks and indentations that inform the process through the conventions of AEP. For a more detailed description of the process of poetically rendering ethnopoetically analysed narrative, see McAllister, (in press). Combining AEP with PI, brings the linguistic ethnographer closer to praxis and therefore to being a catalyst for change; it changes what we recognise as knowing, ways of arriving at knowing, and who is in the know through its engagement with 'wider and more varied audiences than those typically reached by conventional academic outputs' (Van Rooyen & D'abdon, 2020: 2). This is because in PI, poetry is deployed as a method not just for analysis but for representation as well (Faulkner, 2019), in essence offering a valid means by which the form in which knowledge is represented is changed.

Makihara and Rodriguez (2022: 48–50) name poetry itself as a 'form of emancipatory praxis (Atan, 2020)' which 'can take what is normative in language and social life and provide ways of transgressing and playing with these constraints (Bauman, 1975; Sherzer, 2002).' It is emancipatory for academics because it provides the opportunity to represent knowledge produced in a way which centres creativity as part of the critical process (Li, 2011, Zhu & Li, 2020) and recognises and affords other ways of knowing to un-other them. Arriving at poetic representations of participant perspectives, through PI, brings AEP further in its challenge of the impact of standard language ideologies. The narrowly defined conventions that facilitate the dominance of traditional academic language in turn perpetuate the dominance of mostly white, western, male, middle to upper class speakers for whom English is a first language (Garcia et al., 2021). While it is true that poetry has its own conventions that must be learned, they are a different set of conventions and when they are applied to produce research outputs though PI, they both

challenge the dominance of those narrow conventions of academic language and create texts that:

> expand the meaning of the literal by invoking a comparison with the non-literal. Ethnographic poetry has the potential to evoke open-ended connections between things, thus emphasising the power of possibility. It can touch us as both cognitive and sensual beings…..it potentially allows us to come to more complex, nuanced and thoughtful connections and conclusions that might not otherwise be the case.   (Blackledge & Creese, 2023: 66)

When AEP and PI are combined, poetic conventions such the use of rhythm, rhyme, repetition, form, metaphor, etc. are not just acknowledged as valid and applied, they are directly drawn from the speakers narrative, the inherent structure of which is faithfully adhered to; this constitutes an act of recognition, rather than an act of imposition. Combining AEP with PI adds to the distillation process and allows the output to meet a double challenge; the PI process ensures that the poetic output is crafted and aesthetically impactful while AEP process ensures validity (Maynard & Cahhmann-Taylor, 2010). The overlaying of AEP with PI allows the researcher to adhere to the stringent standards of factuality that ethnographic poetry is held to (Maynard, 2009), by remaining as close as possible to the participants narrative structure both in content and form. Research poetry created through AEP layered with PI allows the reader 'to arrive at their own understanding without excessive researcher influence' (Blackledge & Creese, 2023: 6) on the participants' own way of representing their narrative in form and content.

Furthermore, by using the poetic form as an output, 'in traditional research spaces which are often hostile to arts based ways of being and knowing such as poetry' (Van Rooyen & D'abdon, 2020: 3) academics do identity, resist symbolic violence and exercise agency (Zhu, 2022) by actively recognising the creative as critical (Li, 2011, 2018; Zhu & Li, 2020a), feeling as knowing and not separate from criticality (McAllister & Brown, 2023). Layering AEP with PI creates texts which provoke and centre aesthetic experiences and emotive reactions as valid ways of knowing, rather than 'exclusively privileging cerebral understanding'(Van Rooyen & D'abdon, 2020: 4).

6.   The project

In *Seeking Access* a process of poetic rendering was layered on AEP to deepen the analysis of refugee and asylum seeker participant narratives, which had been critically, collaboratively and creatively constructed through translanguaging dialogue. For a detailed discussion on this dialogic process, which is outside the

scope of this paper, see McAllister, (in press). The poetic rendering process further amplified the voices uncovered by AEP, increased the profundity of the participant narratives and afforded an emotional knowing. The collection of participant voiced poems in *Seeking Access* demonstrates that when combined with PI, AEP extends beyond a means of recognition of silenced voices to a means of recognition of other ways of knowing with the potential to disrupt and undo silence experienced by the marginalised highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers who were seeking access to Higher Education. Such poetic approaches, despite their transformative potential remain on the margins and as such academics who engage with them also experience marginalisation, which should be a matter for serious consideration for those concerned with the production and manufacture of knowledge.

Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor (2010: 5) discuss a continuum on which they place poetic ethnography, ethnopoetics and ethnographic poetry. The participant voiced poems in *Seeking Access* are situated on that continuum-between ethnopoetics and ethnographic poetry and the process of creating them constitutes a movement along that continuum. The poems are the result of a process by which applied ethnopoetic analysis of dialogic exchanges followed by poetic rendering, leads to the researcher's poetic representation of participants' voices. However, in recognition of the fact that the narratives were critically, creatively, reflectively and collaboratively constructed by and with the participants, those participants are recognised as co-owners of the poems pertaining to their particular narrative. Consent was an ongoing dialogic process, approval was sought at each stage, including over the final form and content of the poems. The poems spotlight the participants' sophisticated, lyrical, and emotive deployment of language (McAllister et al., 2021; McAllister, in press); nothing has been added, narratives have not been re-ordered. Space on the page has been used to represent silence and to sharpen the focus of the poetic lens used to create the poetic representations of the participants' testimonies of seeking access to Higher Education as highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers.

The poems created in *Seeking Access* reveal the systematic loss of voice experienced by bi/multilingual highly skilled refugee and asylum seekers as they seek access to Higher Education at a level commensurate with their existing academic and professional accomplishments. At the centre of this structural refusal to ratify the voice of these marginalised speakers, are language ideologies which 'direct language behaviour and the interpretation of language acts, and also account for folk and ''rankings'' and hierarchies of linguistic varieties (Blommaert 2009: 265). Language ideologies mean that differences in language variety become the basis of discrimination and inequality (Hornberger, 2009) and exclusion through

increased barriers which shape shift and delay the lives of refugees and asylum seekers who are non-standard speakers of English (McAllister, in press).

Extract 1.
And, sometimes, the language is the reason.
     I have been here
          for about one year and ten months.
I searched a lot
     but without any result.
        This notebook
          represents the result
            that I achieved
             on a paper
               that is still white
       there are only my dreams on it.

               (This Notebook © 2021 Áine McAllister
                     with Moutasem Alibraheem)

It is particularly significant that where a lack of competence in the dominant language may exist, this is used to justify utter denial of access. The denial occurs regardless of what other resources can be indexed in a marginalised bi/multi-lingual speakers' repertoire (Blommaert & Bakkus, 2013). The silencing impact of this on bi/multi-lingual non-standard speakers is keenly obvious in the above extract from *Seeking Access*, in the image of the blank notebook.

It is further revealed that even when aspirant students can clearly demonstrate relevant language competence through experience, that experience is willfully unrecognised if it is not acquired in a western context (Li, 2022). The emotional impact, stress and frustration of this silencing and 'gaslighting' is evident in the extract from *Seeking Access* below:

Extract 2.
I have written my English thing.
   I can speak English.
I have worked
       in an English-speaking country before coming here.
But still, the need of proving
     that you have this level
      of English as a teacher
       even though I was able to do it
         before coming here
           this is also another stressful part for me.

I don't mean
>
> they should not ask
> > but the experience
> should be taken into consideration:
> > > what I have done.

<div align="right">(The English Thing © 2021 Áine McAllister
with Havva Nur Bektas)</div>

Beyond the AEP and the poetic rendering of participant narratives which were collaboratively and creatively constructed, many other aspects of the project were collaborative and participatory. The project was designed to be language and intercultural communication *as* social action research project (Zhu, 2020): *Seeking Access* underpins ongoing work for a university public policy fellowship to develop engagement pathways with policy makers to improve refugee and asylum seeker access to higher education. The artifact was collaboratively analysed in workshops with refugee participants and the findings of that collaborative analysis continue to inform discussions and university departmental education plans to create tangible improvements to admissions and scholarships policy and practices for highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers.

As I have already set out, in the process of seeking access to Higher Education, bi/multilingual highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers experience a loss of voice due to standard, academic and racio-linguistic ideologies, which are weaponized to willfully misrecognize their suitability for entry to Higher Education at the appropriate level. The collaborative analysis in participant workshops mentioned above further emphasises that even after having gained access, against the odds, marginalised refugee and asylum seeker students also experience a further and persistent denial of voice amongst their peers, due in part to folk hierarchies which are informed by folk theories as defined by Zhu Hua as:

> informal beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and values about languages, speakers and discursive practices. (…) They are not formulated systematically nor reinforced by institutions, but exist as everyday understandings among our family members, our colleagues and strangers we meet. The ordinariness makes them omnipresent and gives them legitimacy and power without the burden of accountability.
>
> <div align="right">(Zhu, 2024: 31)</div>

The below participant voiced poem was created from participant dialogic utterances in workshops during which *Seeking Access* was collaboratively analyzed as a preliminary output. Utterances were poetically rendered, and the form is informed by the conventions of AEP. It demonstrates how a linguistically exclusive university culture leads to feelings of disconnection and unbelonging, and

impacts negatively on self-esteem of pupils, irrespective of their records of achievement and accomplishment academically and/or professionally.

Extract 3.
They Say
They say my English
　　　is amazingly perfect.
　　　　　　but they don't take the time
　　　　　　　　　to listen
　　　　　　　　　　　　　what I've said.

They understand me
　　　　but they don't like
　　　　　　　the way I speak
　　　　　　　　　　or value my opinion.
They don't take me seriously
　　　　　　　because the way
　　　　　　　　　I speak.
I am not supposed to talk
　　　in a certain way.
I am required
　　　to deliver my message: *my accent is not a barrier.*

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Áine McAllister, 2024)

Through this poem and the earlier two extracts from *Seeking Access*, the article hopes to emphasise three things about the experience of highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers who are seeking access to Higher Education; firstly even though language may often actually be a barrier, language ideologies and language hierarchies impose additional perceived barriers which these marginalised speakers must continually reject and resist. Secondly this burden of resistance to exclusion and silencing imposed on refugees and asylum seekers is relentless; it changes shape and continues after access is granted. Thirdly, in academia, this burden exacerbates and sustains wider experiences of exclusion.

7.   Discussion

This article focuses on the impact of various types of language discrimination for highly skilled refugee and asylum seeker students explored in *Seeking Access*, a collection of participant voiced poems; an artifact which asserts its place in academia as a standalone creative-critical output.

It is argued that improved equality and equity, central social justice concerns of LE, SL, and LAIC, urgently require further challenge and wider changes to attitudes about how we represent knowledge in academia and that those changes have emancipatory potential for both the academics engaging in the production of 'othered' representational forms and the participants they collaborate with. There is already a significant commitment in the field(s) to move the margins through more collaborative ways of analysing language as well as through more democratized, less extractive conditions for its (dialogic) generation and use. There are significant and growing calls for more immediately and directly social justice focused research in the field(s), (Phipps & Ladgaard 2020; Zhu, 2020), and reflexivity around to what extent this research actually 'makes a difference to tackle prejudice, othering, oppression and exclusion' (Ferri, 2022: 381). There are significant moves to challenge and de-centre western epistemic traditions, by moving beyond the narrow reductive conventions of academic language for example in (Phipps, 2019; Phipps & Sithole, 2022; Yohannes & Phipps, 2024). We can continue on this path through wider and more proactive valorisation of various forms and functions of language in the academic domain. In that endeavour, building also on existing work which recognises creativity as criticality (Li 2011, 2018; Zhu & Li 2020) and on work which recognises the power of poetry in the field(s) (Phipps & Saunders, 2009; Phipps, 2019; Blackledge & Creese, 2023), this paper focuses on the potential offered by acknowledging poetry as a decolonial form with emancipatory potential for researchers and participants. It deploys an example of a process and an output that moves through criticality to creativity, to centre the voices of linguistically and culturally marginalised participants and to move a wider readership aesthetically to an emotional knowing.

Through *Seeking Access* it is keenly acknowledged that improving equality and expanding notions of what representational forms count as valid-valued research outputs must extend also to concrete challenges to extractive practices 'derived from capitalist ideas relating to 'ownerships' of knowledge and data and to its production' (Phipps, 2024). To that end in *Seeking Access* participants are named as collaborating authors in the participant voiced poems pertaining to their own narratives. Decisions such as these, called for in the production of knowledge demand particular attention to ethical frameworks (Phipps & Ladegaard 2020); while all participants have a right to anonymity, they also have a right to claim ownership of knowledge produced by virtue of their participation. Every effort should be made to ensure that marginalised participants are rightfully recognised as partners. Giving close consideration to authorship and ownership is but one way in which this can be achieved, in order to:

> …go beyond the extractive practices of knowledge production and the tokenism of epistemic best practices in an effort to bridge the missing links between the real bearers of knowledge and the processes of knowledge production, recognition, dissemination and consumption.   (Yohannes, 2023: 8)

However, in reality, the actualisation of such a collaborative ethos extended in a meaningful way to participants is challenged in academia by a competitive economic culture in which research outputs are quantified and performance is measured against neoliberal, capitalist parameters (O'Regan & Gray, 2018) which are also epistemically colonial.

Extract 4.
These trees represent the beautiful nature
        unfortunately they are plastic
              and not natural.   This is the reality.
There are many universities here
              but you cannot enter them
                    because of their impossible conditions
                        and the lack of the recognition
                            of your previous studies.
They also look like plastic trees.

(This Small House © 2021 Áine McAllister
with Moutasem Alibraheem)

It must be acknowledged that the difference that a focus on equality, equity and justice in research practices and methods "can make under prevailing conditions might often be close to negligible" (Phipps & Ladegaard, 2020), and that universities are neoliberal spaces whose agendas are driven by capitalist and colonial systems of logic. Institutional pledges by universities to improve inclusion and diversity and tackle inequality can be tokenistic draw cards for high international fees (Ferri, 2022). Since refugees and asylum seekers do not fit in to the category of students who are able to pay those high international fees there is no urgent incentive to change policy and practice to tackle their linguistic or cultural marginalisation and exclusion. In other words, their increased inclusion holds little currency in a neo-liberalised university space. In fact, one of the ways in which universities are implicated in border control and implementing hostile immigration policies (Lousamaa, 2020, 2023) is by charging prohibitive international fees to asylum seekers, based in the UK, effectively excluding them.

Nevertheless, the participant voiced poems in *Seeking Access* are a call to action for university leaders to reconsider how university policy frameworks in Admissions, Widening Participation and Equality Diversity and Inclusion, can

be adapted to breakdown the structural barriers which refuse to recognise the existing accomplishments and qualifications of highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers. It is a call to action for leaders, policy makers and curriculum designers to see past non standard language use to acknowledge the repertoires of bi-multilingual speakers and to recognise knowledge and ways of knowing acquired in non-western cultural contexts. So that, Higher Education can be reimagined as a context of genuine inclusion rather than a site which sustains the exclusion of marginalised and highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers.

Extracts 5.
All these years,
      all this passion
             that I had for chemistry, for science
                 it never materialised
                    never put it in practice.
…..
             I still want to do it.
Even if I have uh two years or three years left to work   *[laughs]*
             I will still do it.
To be able to encourage someone.
To help someone do homework.
To help someone pass exams, to understand science.
           (The Odyssey © 2021 Áine McAllister with Kona Katembwe)

8.   Concluding questions

Notwithstanding the challenges referred to above, and towards whatever difference can be made through practices of knowledge production and manufacture, I would like to conclude with some questions that we might ask ourselves:

–   If we acknowledge the value of AEP 'as a method for recovering voices obscured in the paragraphed representations (and automatic line breaks) so insistent in environments dominated by schooled literacy', (Rampton, 2009: 362), why must those paragraphed representations continue to dominate the form in which we produce and are prepared to manufacture knowledge?

–   If we perpetuate the dominance of these narrow parameters in the production and manufacture of knowledge, then what is lost by not acknowledging the ways of knowing and of making meaning that students from linguistically

marginalised groups such as highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers bring with them?

–   First however, we must recognise that voice cannot be given or taken away (Qasmiyeh 2019) but it is structurally silenced by the narrow parameters of academic language. Those parameters are underpinned by the 'coloniality of language' (Li & Garcia, 2022: 316); a refusal to recognise what those in non-dominant linguistic and cultural groups know as valid.

–   If we deploy AEP to re-transcribe participant narratives as means of and for analysis and then we proceed re-encrypt our analysis in academic prose for consumption, to what extent are we perpetuating the separation of the knowledge holder from the analysis and delegitimizing their way of making meaning? A second question follows to try resolve this tension and points to a direction for further study. How can we approach AEP collaboratively with participants and work towards AEP informed collaborative *auto*ethnographic PI in which poetic representations are created with or by and owned by participants, rather than extracted from them?

In this article, I have presented a model for combining AEP with PI so that "the looking-glass of linguistic practice" which (…) "provides a magnified image of the workings of powers and the deep structures of inequality in society" (Blommaert, 2009: 265) can be deployed to generate poetry, as 'a productive form of transgression and counter-conduct' (Del Percio et al., 2021: 6) in the LE, SL and LAIC fields. I have presented the act of analysing and writing poetically in academia as a creative-critical and decolonial act of resistance to the dominance of 'academic' language. I hope that in doing so I have suggested some credible avenues of possibility which might legitimise the questions posed and guide us as we consider them further in relation to the production and manufacture of knowledge.

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Address for correspondence

Áine McAllister
IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society
20 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AL
UK
a.mcallister@ucl.ac.uk

Publication history