Learning from Ninjas: young people's films as a lens for an expanded view of literacy and language

ESCOTT, Hugh and PAHL, Kate

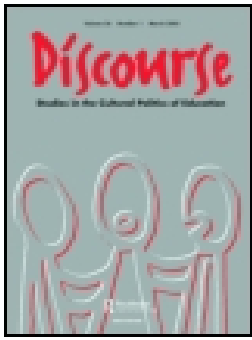Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

http://shura.shu.ac.uk/17450/

Published version

Copyright and re-use policy

Learning from Ninjas: young people's films as a lens for an expanded view of literacy and language

Hugh Escott & Kate Pahl

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 136

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Learning from Ninjas: young people's films as a lens for an expanded view of literacy and language

Hugh Escott[a] and Kate Pahl[b]

[a]Department of Humanities, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK; [b]School of Education, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

ABSTRACT

This article examines young people's films to provide insights about language and literacy practices. It offers a heuristic for thinking about how to approach data that is collectively produced. It tries to make sense of new ways of knowing that locate the research in the field rather than in the academic domain. The authors develop a lens for looking at films made by young people that acknowledge multiple modes and materiality within their meaning-making practices. We make an argument about the cultural politics of research, to consider how the language and literacy practices of young people are positioned. We argue for more consideration of how language and literacy appear entangled within objects and other stuff within young people's media productions, so as to trouble disciplinary boundaries within and beyond literacy and language studies.

The cultural politics of research

The idea of literacy and language as stable representational entities is being troubled by a relational turn (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2014; Ehret, Hollett, & Jocius, 2016; Leander & Boldt, 2013). Equally, research methodologies have also been challenged from within traditional social science, as well as from posthuman and new materialist perspectives (Law, 2004; Taylor & Hughes, 2016). Co-production has created a space where participants co-design and lead research rather than become 'data' within it (Facer & Enright, 2016). A collaborative, co-produced understanding of research methodologies together with a shift of perspective that orients towards the non-human has taken place, with a number of literacy scholars acknowledging this (Anders, Yaden, Da Silva Iddings, Katz, & Rogers, 2016; Kuby & Rowsell, 2017).

Here, we describe young people's media productions that eluded our descriptive abilities. We explore the implications of our analysis in relation to understandings of literacy and language practices. We try out different ways of seeing data. The separation of the doing and thinking of young people (their agency), and the doing and thinking of research teams is a research norm which serves to hide the cultural politics of knowledge

production (Facer & Enright, 2016; Olsson, 2013; Pahl, 2014; Procter & Hatton, 2015; Wood, 2015). We make an argument about the cultural politics of research, to consider how the language and literacy practices of young people are positioned. Arguably, professional researchers produce knowledge about the lived reality of others, for pay, through epistemologies that are often only accessible to other professionals working within university contexts (see Hyland, 2009; Wingate, 2015, for discussions of the role academic discourse and literacies play in constructing epistemologies). Researcher engagement with questions of positionality, epistemic reflexivity and ethics bring the politics of knowledge production into varying degrees of focus within different disciplinary backgrounds (Grenfell et al., 2012). In an era where the civic responsibilities of academics are increasingly being discussed – in relation to concerns with engagement, impact, social cohesion and the public role of academics (Lawson, Sayers, Lawson, & Sayers, 2016; Lumsden, 2016; Pahl et al., 2017; Ryall, Hodson, & Strine, 2017) – recognising the cultural politics of research processes is a significant undertaking for those considering what it would mean to work in extra-university contexts (Facer & Pahl, 2017). In relation to co-produced projects, where artists, young people, researchers and practitioners come together, reflecting on disciplinary research norms invites significant shifts in theoretical and methodological approaches.

The co-production of research

The co-production of research as a field has expanded recently, partly due to new initiatives such as the AHRC's Connected Communities programme (Facer & Enright, 2016). This field has been associated with many traditions, some strongly held within social science methodological histories, such as Participatory Action Research, and some in more hybridised forms, moving between the arts and humanities and social science (Facer & Pahl, 2017; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). Co-production has been associated with ways of doing research that might involve participants in framing questions, conducting a study with partners and with a collaborative approach to the production of knowledge. This approach can shift power and control within research projects. It can unseat traditional approaches to knowledge production that rely on disciplines and disciplinary structures as important sites for expertise and 'know-how'. Co-production as an approach to research can be messy, uncertain, complex and located within the everyday. Here we consider how an approach deriving from co-production can impact on language and literacy research with young people, with a particular focus on their film-making practices. The process of co-produced research pays attention to the politics of knowledge production and the ways in which different types of knowledge are legitimated by institutional or cultural forces (Bell & Pahl, 2017). This develops productive dialogue between different ways of knowing.

Within sociolinguistics, there are ongoing concerns about the authority and legitimacy of linguistic research in everyday contexts (Grainger, 2013). Here, we explore the ways of thinking about literacy and language that have authority and legitimacy in the practices of our participants, in order to reflect on the authority of professionally produced knowledge about language. We did this by working with a participant-led lens that guided what we came to interpret. Our approach was not completely co-produced, as the research questions (What is language? What would it be like in a world without language?) were pre-set, but the practices of inquiry were co-produced, in a way that created a participatory lens (Franks, 2009).

How does the participant's lens shift literacy and language research?

Traditionally, sociolinguistic research has constructed everyday understandings of language in particular ways, through discussions of things such as folk linguistics (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003 and a predominant focus on everyday spoken language (Lillis, 2013). These everyday ways of knowing about language are part of the reality of people's lives and are often tacit and embodied. These ways of knowing feature in specific ways within research undertaken by professional researchers in universities as 'data' or to some degree as 'inaccurate' or 'uninformed' ways of understanding language. For example, linguistic descriptivism is contrasted as the more benevolent 'good guy' in relation to widespread prescriptivist and standard language ideologies, a topic explored in detail in Curzan's (2014) work which reframes prescriptivism as an 'evolving sociolinguistic phenomenon' (pp. 12–13).

Within sociolinguistics, co-produced or participatory research activities raise significant issues in terms of validity, criticality and reliability. Bucholtz, Cassilas, and Lee (2016) (revisiting the work of Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1993) discuss how in considering the ways in which sociolinguistics research can empower those that the research is undertaken *for* the benefit of, actually having research done *by* participants, in an action research approach, is 'too removed from academic dialogues and too uncritical of participants' perspectives to be of significant scholarly value' (2016, p. 26). We would argue that researching *with* participants through co-production approaches is of significant scholarly value because of the ethical, methodological and theoretical challenges it raises.

We are interested in how individuals understand language in everyday contexts. This is due to our concerns with how to address language inequality. As the way in which language is understood and valued dictates how individuals can successfully negotiate everyday interactions, everyday understandings of language have real authority and legitimacy. As 'literacy is embedded in … oral language and social interaction' (Barton, 1994, pp. 130–136), taking the knowledge that people have about language seriously (Olsson, 2013) involves both considering language and literacy together (Lillis, 2013) (as part of an assemblage of meaning-making), and further shifts in methodological approach.

We consider that understanding everyday knowledge of linguistic practices is vital in making sense of language and literacy in communities. Rampton (2010) discusses the methodological implications of attempting to explore both the poetic and the mundane in social and situational contexts. He argues that in order to explore 'how the artful and the everyday are interwoven in young people's situated negotiations of social-relations-&-social-activity' (p. 2), linguistic ethnographic approaches need to take into account aesthetic concerns. For Rampton, exploring everyday language involves attempting to capture ways of using language that are 'allusive and indirect, low-key poetic, grounded in activity and background understanding' (p. 12). Working with co-production methodologies allowed us to surface allusive everyday understandings of language through a participant-led gaze embedded within the research process. The film we explore is both an aesthetic and research object, created through a process of co-production. It captures meaning-making which is informed by everyday understandings of language; in-school and playground interaction; and an aesthetic informed by a shared cultural understanding of 'ninjaness'. Our data involves writing, language, aesthetic conventions and stylistics, gesture, sounds, material objects and

movement. It defies easy categorisation. Below we try to make sense of this through a number of different analytic lenses.

Material/discursive lenses – working with what participants choose to focus on

In taking participants' knowledge about language and literacy seriously, we worked with them to learn from them. Foregrounding participants' agency in the research process leads to a shift in our theoretical and methodological perspectives. Because of this shift, other parts of the 'meshwork' become more relevant (Ingold, 2013). In literacy and language research, there has been a turn to seeing 'literacy in motion' (Boldt & Leander, 2017, p. 414) whereby literacy practices are conceptualised in relation to non-representational practices involving material and energy (Kuby, Rucker, & Kirchhofer, 2015). This conceptual framework recognises that literacy cannot be seen as divided from language nor can it be separated from the materials it is formed from. It is made from materials, and these materials generate literacy (Bridges-Rhoads & Van Cleave, 2017).

Our work engages with an ethical concern about how literacy and language practices can be understood (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017). From Kress (1997) who opened up a visual and multimodal perspective to Kuby's work, where entanglements with materials are part of literacy (Kuby et al., 2015), understandings of literacy have been moving along a continuum that includes language, visual, together with material, gesture and non-verbal modes of communication. In the film (described below), we saw an embodied understanding of the relationships between sound, language, writing, objects and humans. We found complex moments in the film. Our data refused to 'speak', instead it sang, jumped, whooped, fell or was silent, resisting interpretation and instead, invited uncertainty. Material/discursive approaches provided a way of describing how 'matter and meaning are mutually articulated' (Kuby et al., 2015, p. 400). An attention to the vibrancy of matter (Bennett, 2010) and the agency of objects in an intra-action between objects and humans highlighted the role of objects in unfolding events (Barad, 2007). This approach pulls matter into the foreground. Kuby and Crawford (2017) recognised things that seem 'unfathomable, unbelievable and/or uncomfortable' (p. 10). The objects' immanence becomes part of the unfolding activity (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Rautio, 2014.) Young people's accounts in the film, described below, produced a more messy, contextual and uncertain view of literacy and language as stable entities that can be boundaried by disciplinary structures (Bridges-Rhoads & Van Cleave, 2017, p. 308).

Considering everyday understandings of language and literacy in community contexts result in a shift in researcher approach. This involves re-thinking the multimodal 'domain of research' (Kress, 2011, p. 241), through a participant-directed process, which results in unconventional 'data' (in this case, films) that may invite diverse analytic lenses to support interpretation. This troubles an understanding of how literacy can be understood. Within literacy education, a posthuman perspective has surfaced other things, including materials, objects, matter, sounds and stuff (Taylor & Hughes, 2016). This de-centres the agency of the researcher and the meaning-makers. Kuby, Rucker, and Darolia (2017) consider the question of how literacy educators can conceive of agency when it is enacted between humans and non-humans. These questions of agency and matter are current in a context where settled conceptual framings and disciplinary based knowledge are

being interrogated. Co-production as a lens provides a way of a reflecting on how the fields of language and literacy are constructed by research norms.

Context for the research

We discuss a film by five 10- to 11-year olds, who were invited to respond to the idea of a world without language. The film was scripted and made in a playground context. The film comes from a project called 'Language as Talisman' (funded through the AHRC's Connected Communities programme). We explored the use of everyday language in schools and youth contexts across Rotherham. We asked young people to make films, write poetry, make talismans and tell stories. Rotherham, UK, is a town about 10 miles from the larger city of Sheffield and is characterised by a post-industrial context, having suffered severe unemployment after the closure of the mines and the steel industries in the 1980s and 1990s. We worked with schools and youth contexts to co-produce answers to the question of how language was important. Our work was centred on exploring language-in-use. We created a collaborative space of practice within which teachers, young people, youth workers and artists all engaged to consider the 'special' nature (or not) of language. Our title was derived from young people's ideas and our research questions shaped by their ideas. In collaboratively exploring everyday understandings of what language is, and its importance, we strove to understand young people's perspectives. The co-production lay in the collaborative nature of the research processes and a focus on the following film as answering our research questions.

Making sense of objects in communicative ensembles

The Ninja film was about a world where language was banned and where talking was not permitted unless you had a paper permit. The making of the film was framed within a discussion of the importance of language. The boys were given a short tutorial in film-making. The film was a response to research questions, which were, 'Why is language important? What would it be like in a world without language?'

   We describe one instance where the boys represented their understanding of language through the use of a material object, the 'Talking Permit'. We initially explored the ways in which material objects were interacting with different modes within the boys' meaning-making (see Recount 1). We then incorporated material objects into the frame of multimodal transcription drawing on a framework from Taylor (2006, 2014) and from Marsh's insight that multimodal analyses exclude objects (2017). We placed language alongside visuals and gesture together with an additional column on materiality to make sense of a whirlwind of activity that centred on objects (see Table 1). This led us to re-frame the discussion in relation to the objects (Recount 2).

   Our materially located augmentation highlighted how material objects, in this case, the 'talking permit' resonated across the episode. It amplified the interplay of gesture, objects and gaze within the episode. With a lens from the new materialism, the vibrant nature of the 'talking permit' came to the fore together with the choreographed role of the swords. The objects in the film (swords and permits, ground and sound) opened up a dynamic, vibrant engagement with sounds, humans, objects and gesture to produce a complex assemblage.

We present an initial Recount below, of the film, from the human participants' perspectives:

Recount 1 – Ninja Story

The film involves Ninja, Police Chief, Rookie, Newsreader and Cameraman (participants' names changed to acting roles)

After the written credits presented to the viewer, over which the soundtrack involves a boy singing, in a deliberately high-pitched voice involving lengthening of sounds: 'It's a Niiinja stooory', the scene cuts to the playground. Newsreader explains that 'in a world where talking is banned, one Ninja will not rest until he has screamed his guts out'. Ninja comes into view and jumps around, swinging a metre ruler as if it is a sword and makes high pitched shouts, before hiding behind a bench. Newsreader announces that Police Chief and his new Rookie 'are going to investigate the Ninja'. They discover Ninja behind the bench and capture him. Ninja asks why he has been arrested. Police Chief explains that there is a law against talking. When questioned about this he displays his 'Talking Permit', a piece of paper pinned to his top, which says 'Talking Permit' on it. Ninja escapes and runs away.

Newsreader is seen sitting on the bench reporting on Ninja's nearby noisy activity. Police Chief and Rookie chase Ninja as he does this. During the confusion the police notice that Newsreader is breaking the talking law and they arrest him.

In the next scene, the police have lost both Ninja and Newsreader who then appear and stab them with their swords.
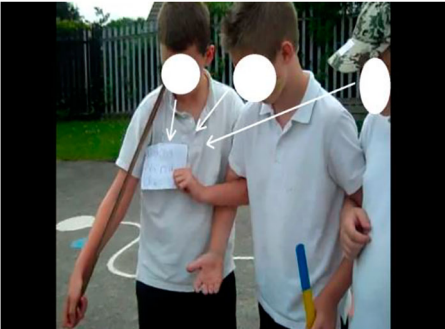
At the end of the film each character was interviewed about why talking was important. In his interview Police Chief symbolically tears up his language permit asserting that 'I think talking is very important as well'.

We first analysed the 'Ninja' video in order to understand the role of gesture and visual communicative practices within the film. We saw communication as multimodal (Kress, 1997). Using transcription conventions from Taylor (2006, 2014), we included gesture, tone of voice, visual and embodied movement in our analytic lens. But objects were playing a significant role in this film. The work of Latour (1987) and Actor Network Theory (Law, 1999) contributed to our analysis, in that it offered a methodology for tracing the trajectories of objects across spaces and their role in the action. We focused on its application to literacy research (Clarke, 2008). Brandt and Clinton (2002) drew on Latour's work to consider how objects themselves could have agency 'without the mediating permission of a local literacy event' (2002, p. 343). This helped us understand the affordances that were drawn upon in multimodal interaction and the possibilities of tracing communicative practices across from object to sound and singing to spoken word and then to gesture and embodied responses. This led to the work of Leander and Boldt (2013) who argued for a more embodied and sensory understanding of literacy practices. The nuanced discussions by Kuby et al. (2015) articulated how young children's intra-actions between objects and texts mediated their meaning-making practices. Our multimodal analysis, therefore, considered objects alongside gesture and language. We re-did our transcription (see Table 1) to consider how objects were included in the mix in a column called 'materiality'. This highlighted the role that objects played in the assemblage of humans and inanimate things. Here, we present a transcription segment that describes the opening scene of the film:

Transcription conventions (5) = seconds pause

Narrator:	A: (off-screen narrator) In a world where talking is banned one Ninja will not rest until he has screamed his guts out.
Ninja:	Woooo ahhhh
Newsreader:	Police and his new rookie are going to investigate the ninja.
Police Chief (to Rookie):	Did you hear that noise?
Police Chief:	You go that way.
Ninja:	What's going on?
Police Chief:	You're arrested there is a new law you can't talk.

Table 1. Materially augmented multimodal transcription.

Line/scene/ staging	Materiality	Speech/ vocalisation	Action [arrows added for gaze]	Gesture, facial expression
(15) [00:52–00:53]	Talking permit flutters in the wind Metre ruler (brown) is held Metre ruler (yellow and blue) is held	Ninja: How come you can talk?		Boys link arms Ninja looks confused and lifts right hand palm up in the direction of Police Chief
(16) [00:54]	Safety pin and written paper create the talking permit. 'Talking Permit Chief' is written on Metre ruler sword is held. Metre ruler brown and yellow is held	Police Chief: Talking permit		Police Chief flattens the paper pinned to his shirt out to display his 'permit'
(17) [00:55–00:57]	A4 piece of ruled paper is held in left hand Metre rule brown 'sword' is held Metre ruler yellow and blue 'sword' is held Talking permit is focus of gaze			Ninja looks confused and holds right hand palm up in front of him Rookie shakes head and lifts a piece of paper up

Ninja: How come you can talk?
Police Chief: Talking Permit [5] sorry it's the law.

The table shows firstly materiality, speech/vocalisation, action, gesture/facial expression. Placing materiality as the first column situates the talking in a different way. The objects (talking permit, metre-ruler swords, A4 sheet of paper) become important parts of the communicative ensemble. Included in the 'materiality' column were two metre 'swords' (one brown and one yellow-and-blue) that contributed to the interactional sequence, along with the talking permit. The rulers are held differently by the Ninja (horizontally) and the Police Chief (vertically) to culturally signify both a 'Ninja' identity and an

authoritative identity. The simple object (Talking Permit) decides who can speak and who cannot. The Talking Permit is a literacy artefact that holds power as a material object (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). It has a history and acts within the film to change people's status. It also contributes to the authority of the Police Chief. The power of the paper permit is reinforced when Ninja is told that the Police Chief can talk because he has a permit and Ninja turns to Rookie only to be met with a silence that reiterates the permit's power. Ninja's response, however, is to reject this authority and run away. The two rulers accompany the boys in their chase. The episode also included some high-pitched singing and yelling ('Woooo ahhhh'). This kind of vocalised 'stuff' sat alongside the material permit and the swaying rulers as an, 'almost material' presence.

This discussion of where the object was within the episode changed our understandings. We realised that the permit itself was not simply a prop, but was central to understanding the ways in which the boys were choosing to communicate. The two metre-ruler swords also aided the communicational ensemble in critical ways, augmenting the story. We wrote the 'Recount' from the point of view of the objects:

Recount 2 – Ninja Story from the point of view of the objects

A piece of paper with 'Ninja Story' and credits written on it. A wooden bench. The ground. Grass. A ruler moves through the air over the bench as the bench is stood on. The bench then provides cover for the ruler. A sheet of ruled paper sways in the wind as it moves towards the bench. Another ruler moves towards the bench at the same time. The rulers and paper meet behind the bench and then move in front of the bench and stop. A piece of paper pinned to a shirt is pulled on. The blue and yellow ruler rapidly moves away from the bench.

A piece of A4 paper is held above the bench in pair of human hands. A metre length yellow-and-blue 'sword' moves across the grass behind the bench. The brown ruler follows this movement. The yellow-and-blue ruler enacts a complete turn round the bench twice over. A held piece of paper is dropped onto the bench. One metre ruler is held vertically by human hands and moves away from the bench. Two ruler 'swords' strike at two humans who fall to the ground. The ground receives two fallen human boys. Metre ruler (brown) and metre ruler (yellow-and-blue) move around a hard playground carried by humans. The brown ruler is held vertically in relation to the horizontal bench. The yellow-and-blue ruler is held horizontally in relation to the bench. The brown ruler pokes a human boy. The yellow-and-blue metre ruler pokes a boy. The ground receives the boy. The yellow-and-blue 'sword' is held up high in the air.

A piece of paper is removed from a shirt and torn in two.

Analysis

Here, we focus on the permits and noise, objects, gestures and sounds, and the human/non-human interactions. We turn to new materialist perspectives to think about intra-actions and the boundaries we are drawing around them to make sense of this ensemble. By attending to participants' perspectives, we consider the objects as well as the talk in our accounts.

From literacy practices to object-oriented ontologies

The two Recounts presented different parts of the same story. Recount 1 told a story of a world without speech, where an object carries sway over language. Recount 2 repositioned meaning-making within a wider cacophony of objects, movements, gestures and sounds. This activity needed a different kind of lens to make sense of it that included the concept of non-human activity, that rest on rulers, swords, permits, pieces of paper and benches. Recount 1 is more human-oriented and focuses on what the action was

from the point of view of the humans, but not the objects. Recount 2 brought different analytic conundrums to the mix. In creating an object-oriented recount, we worked to trace the role that they play in the communicative ensemble, and how the objects roles change through their relational interaction with other aspects of this ensemble.

Posthuman perspectives

Our search for theoretical perspectives that made sense of the encounters described in the films led us to posthuman perspectives. These refuse to take the distinction between humans and non-humans for granted and trouble the epistemological certainties of a human-centred perspective (Kuby, 2017). By privileging emergence and non-human encounters, we were able to see different things – the permit, the bench and the swords. This did not rest on ontological assumptions of human-centred linguistic foci (Colebrooke, 2008). We drew different disciplinary boundaries. We attended to the cartographies of new materialism that offered an unsettling of ontological positions about disciplinary knowledge (Dolphijn & Van Der Tuin, 2012). Theories from posthuman and 'new materialist' sources challenged us to think about the 'vibrant matter' of inanimate objects that were presented in the films (Bennett, 2010; Coole & Frost, 2010). This led to the re-drawing of boundaries around what mattered in our data. This meant that we could value and transcribe the role that objects play in the moment-by-moment unfolding of meaning-making but place them in the context of literacy and language research.

Re-thinking the boundaries of meaning-making

We also began to think about our own researcher agency when making sense of this data. We reconsidered the boundaries of what counted as representation. Barad's (2007) agential realism takes as central to the researchers' practice a process of considering where to draw the boundaries between different phenomena and argued that we need to take as our starting point the 'most basic, constitutive articulation of boundaries within any phenomenon' or the 'cut' between a defined, measured object and the 'agencies of observation' (Rouse, 2016). This theoretical approach has an affinity with the way that co-production practices ask us to consider the boundaries we draw when engaging with the cultural politics of knowledge production.

The new materialism offers a way forward in dissolving the boundaries of meaning-making between humans and objects when looking at communication. Bennett (2010) saw the immanent agency of objects as including, 'the ability to make things happen, to produce effects' (p. 5). Coole and Frost (2010) saw materiality as 'something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable' (p. 9). Dolphijn and Van Der Tuin (2012) argued that the new materialism offered a lens that evaded classification and modernist framing (p. 111). In breaking down boundaries, it was possible to think about how new relationships could be re-configured between objects and stories. We then could re-think the boundaries between the objects in the film and the talk through a more 'intra-active' perspective.

Intra-active perspectives to make sense of communicative ensembles

The work of Barad (2007) has focused on the 'inter-action' between humans and the non-human. Kuby et al. (2015) drew on Barad's concept of 'intra-action' to look at the relationship between materials and time and space within literacy learning. They considered 'a post humanist view of materials and humans intra-actively entangled together' (Kuby et al., 2015, p. 4). This turn was a significant shift and required a more developed understanding of the material object's active role in meaning-making ensembles. This perspective offered a challenge to ideas of the object as 'background' within a communicative setting, but brought alive possibilities for complex interactions between objects and human (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010). We also recognised the resonance of the cultural symbol, 'Ninja' that was brought in, object-like, to this communicative ensemble (Stornaiuolo, Smith, & Phillips, 2017; Willis, 2000). Sounds also became part of the sword-like activity in this mix. The 'Woooo ahhhh' has a resonating force across the episode. The Ninja's resonance is vocalised within sound and sword. The boundaries between speech and writing, material objects, gesture and sound are re-configured through the rush of this ensemble of meaning-making.

Reflection – where does this get us?

We need to start thinking differently about what literacy and language is and what it could be, drawing on the young people's representational practices where material objects and communication became entangled together. We have found this episode very complex to represent here as it brings in metre-ruler swords, sounds, jumps, noises, leaps, written inscribed text, gestures and words but it also plays with meaning. Sometimes, silence is also relevant and we have found in similar instances (for instance, in a youth-created film about fishing where the action takes place in silence) that our language of description fails in response to this. What we also argue here, however, is that young people's perceptions of language and literacy in lived representational practice can be a key source of thinking for literacy and language research and this adds to an understanding of the field that works to incorporate what young people recognise as important into disciplinary understandings. When we co-produce with young people everyday understandings come to the fore, and our argument here is that this in itself can re-shape how we see literacy and language as a site of enquiry and could lead to new conceptualisations, drawn from the everyday, on what literacy and language could become.

Disclosure statement

Funding

References

Anders, P. L., Yaden Jr. D. B., Da Silva Iddings, A. C., Katz, L., & Rogers, T. (2016). Entanglements, intensities, and becoming: Non-representational perspectives on literacy research. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *48*(3), 255–257.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe half way: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bell, D., & Pahl, K. (2017). Co-production: Towards a utopian approach. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *21*(1), 105–117.

Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Boldt, G. M., & Leander, K. (2017). Becoming through 'the break': A post-human account of a child's play. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *17*(3), 409–425.

Brandt, D., & Clinton, K. (2002). Limits of the local: Expanding perspectives on literacy as a social practice. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *34*(3), 337–356.

Bridges-Rhoads, S., & Van Cleave, J. (2017). Writing posthumanism, qualitative enquiry and early literacy. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *17*(3), 297–314.

Bucholtz, M., Cassilas, D. I., & Lee, J. S. (2016). *Beyond empowerment: Accompaniment and sociolinguistic justice in a youth research program*. In D. Lawson, R. Sayers, R. Lawson & D. Sayers (Eds.), *Sociolinguistic research: Application and impact* (pp. 23–44). London: Routledge.

Burnett, C., Merchant, G., Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2014). The (im)materiality of literacy: The significance of subjectivity to new literacies research. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *35*(1), 90–103.

Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, B., & Richardson, K. (1993). Ethics, advocacy and empowerment: Issues of method in researching language. *Language & Communication: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *13*(2), 81–94.

Clarke, J. (2008). Assembling 'skills for life'? Actor-network theory and the new literacy studies. In M. Prinsloo & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Literacies, global and local* (pp. 151–172). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Colebrooke, C. (2008). On not becoming man: The materialist politics of unactualized potential. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 52–84). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). Introducing the new materialisms. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: Ontology, agency and politics* (pp. 1–42). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Curzan, A. (2014). *Fixing English: Prescriptivism and language history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dolphijn, R., & Van Der Tuin, I. (2012). *New materialism: Interviews and cartographies*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press. University of Michigan Library. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11515701.0001.001

Ehret, C., Hollett, T., & Jocius, R. (2016). The matter of New Media making. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *48*(3), 346–377.

Facer, K., & Enright, B. (2016). *Creating living knowledge. The connected communities programme, community university relationships and the participatory turn in the production of knowledge*. Bristol: University of Bristol/AHRC Connected Communities.

Facer, K., & Pahl, K. (2017). *Valuing interdisciplinary collaborative research: Beyond impact*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Franks, M. (2009). Pockets of participation: Revisiting child-centred participation research. *Children and Society*, *25*(1), 15–25.

Grainger, K. (2013). 'The daily grunt': Middle-class bias and vested interests in the 'getting in early' and 'Why can't they read?' reports. *Language and Education*, *27*(2), 99–109.

Grenfell, M., Bloome, D., Hardy, C., Pahl, K., Rowsell, J., & Street, B. V. (2012). *Language, ethnography and education: Bridging new literacy studies and Bourdieu*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hultman, K., & Lenz Taguchi, H. (2010). Challenging anthropocentric analysis of visual data: A relational materialist methodological approach to educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *23*(5), 525–542.

Hyland, K. (2009). *Academic discourse*. London: Continuum.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art, and architecture*. London: Routledge.

Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. (2011). 'Partnerships in research': Multimodality and ethnography. *Qualitative Research*, *11*(3), 239–260.

Kuby, C. R. (2017). Why a paradigm shift of 'more than human ontologies' is needed: Putting to work poststructural and posthuman theories in writers. *Studio International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *30*, 877–896. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09518398.2017.1336803

Kuby, C. R., & Crawford, S. (2017). Intra-activity of humans and nonhumans in writers' studio: (Re)Imagining and (Re)defining 'social'. *Literacy*, 1–10. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/lit.12120/pdf

Kuby, C. R., & Rowsell, J. (2017). Early literacy and the posthuman: Pedagogies and methodologies. Editorial to Special Issue. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *17*(3), 285–296.

Kuby, C. R., Rucker, T. G., & Darolia, L. H. (2017). Persistence(ing): Posthuman agency in a writer's studio. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *17*(3), 353–373.

Kuby, C. R., Rucker, T. G., & Kirchhofer, J. M. (2015). 'Go be a writer': Intra-activity with materials, time and space in literacy learning. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *15*(3), 394–419.

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Law, J. (1999). After ANT: Complexity, naming and topology. In J. Law, & J. Hassard (Eds.), *Actor Network Theory and After* (pp. 1–14). Oxford Blackwells.

Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Lawson, D., Sayers, R., Lawson, R., & Sayers, D. (2016). *Sociolinguistic research: Application and impact*. London: Routledge.

Leander, K., & Boldt, G. (2013). Rereading 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies'. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *45*(1), 22–46.

Lillis, T. (2013). *The sociolinguistics of writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lumsden, K. (2016). 'Audit culture, the enterprise university and public engagement' [blog post]. *The Sociological Review*. Retrieved from https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/blog/audit-culture-the-enterprise-university-and-public-engagement-sociologists-doing-enterprise-and-knowledge-transfer-work.html

Marsh, J. (2017). The internet of toys: A posthuman and multimodal analysis of connected play. *Teachers College Record*, *119*(12). Retrieved from http://www.tcrecord.org ID Number: 22073

Niedzielski, N., & Preston, D. (2003). *Folk linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Olsson, L. M. (2013). Taking children's questions seriously: The need for creative thought. *Global Studies of Childhood*, *3*(3), 230–253.

Pahl, K. (2014). *Materializing literacies in communities: The uses of literacy revisited*. London: Bloomsbury.

Pahl, K., Escott, H., Graham, H., Marwood, K., Pool, S., & Ravetz, A. (2017). What is the role of artists in interdisciplinary collaborative projects with universities and communities? In K. Facer & K. Pahl (Eds.), *Valuing interdisciplinary collaborative research: Beyond impact* (pp. 131–152). Bristol: Policy Press.

Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2010). *Artifactual literacies: Every object tells a story*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Procter, L., & Hatton, A. (2015). Producing visual research with children: Exploring power and meaning making. In E. Stirling & D. Yamada-Rice (Eds.), *Visual methods with children and young people: Academics and visual industries in dialogue* (pp. 50–72). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rampton, B. (2010). *An everyday poetics of class and ethnicity in stylization and crossing* (Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies, 59). Retrieved from https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/Research-Centres/ldc/publications/workingpapers/abstracts/WP059-An-everyday-poetics-of-class-and-ethnicity-in-stylization-and-crossing.aspx

Rautio, P. (2014). Mingling and imitating in producing spaces for knowing and being: Insights from a Finnish study of child–matter intra-action. *Childhood (copenhagen, Denmark)*, *21*(4), 461–474.

Rouse, J. (2016). The conceptual and ethical normativity of intra-active phenomena. *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, *30*. https://doi.org/10.20415/rhiz/030.

Ryall, A., Hodson, J., & Strine, C. (2017). Everybody knows: Engaged research and the changing role of the academic. *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, *14*(1), 329–350.

Stornaiuolo, A., Smith, A., & Phillips, N. (2017). Developing a transliteracies framework for a connected world. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *49*(1), 68–91.

Taylor, R. (2006). Actions speak as loud as words: A rnultirnodal analysis of boys' talk in the classroom. *English in Education*, *40*(3), 66–82.

Taylor, R. (2014). Multimodal analysis of the textual function in children's face-to-face classroom interaction. In A. Maiorani & C. Christine (Eds.), *Multimodal epistemologies* (pp. 228–244). New York, NY: Routledge.

Taylor, C., & Hughes, C. (Eds.) (2016). *Posthuman research practices in education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Willis, P. (2000). *The ethnographic imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice*. Bristol: Multilingual matters.

Wood, E. (2015). Ethics voice and visual methods. In E. Stirling & D. Yamada-Rice (Eds.), *Visual methods with children and young people: Academics and visual industries in dialogue* (pp. 129–139). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.