Vietnamese refugees in Britain: Language, translation, and the politics of protection in camp life and beyond

Rebecca Tipton
Annabelle Wilkins
The University of Manchester, UK

Abstract
Through the lens of assemblage thinking and “territorialisation,” this article examines the operationalisation of language support by the voluntary sector in the Thorney Island and Sopley camps, which temporarily accommodated Vietnamese refugee arrivals in Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Drawing on archival sources, the role and agency of interpreters are foregrounded in an analysis of the relationships between the materiality of the camps, camp practices, and their impact on refugee experience. A post-camp initiative to train refugees as parasocial workers (a role that included interpreting) reveals a more person-centred approach, in contrast to what we have termed a solutionist approach to interpreting observed in the camps.

Keywords
refugee camps, refugee interpreters, territorialisation, Vietnamese refugees, voluntary sector

Corresponding author:
Rebecca Tipton, Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, The University of Manchester, Samuel Alexander Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK.
Email: rebecca.tipton@manchester.ac.uk

Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage).
Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century in Britain was marked by a complex and shifting (im)migration landscape shaped by increasingly restrictive immigration policies under the UN Refugee Convention. The government’s decision to take in thousands of refugees from Vietnam in the 1970s and 1980s at a time of considerable domestic upheaval in the form of high unemployment and housing shortages raised thorny, and often highly racialised, questions about resettlement in a radically different cultural and linguistic milieu. Although such questions had arisen at other points in the twentieth century, they took on particular urgency in a period marked by arrivals of forcibly displaced individuals within a relatively short period of time owing to conflict in other parts of the world.

As with other asylum and refugee arrivals (e.g., Hungarians in 1956, Czechs in 1969, Ugandan Asians in 1972, Chileans in 1973, see Taylor, 2020), the British government relied heavily on the charity sector with regard to short- to medium-term material, psychological, and communication support for the Vietnamese. Much has been written about state-voluntary sector relations in the United Kingdom over the twentieth century (see Crowson et al., 2009; Hilton et al., 2012) and, while recent scholarship in translation and interpreting studies has investigated the language policies and practices of contemporary international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (Delgado Luchner, 2018; Footitt, 2017; Tesseur, 2017), limited attention has been afforded to (historical) domestic responses to communication needs for new arrivals and agents of humanitarian and welfare support.

This article explores language support provisions (translation, interpreting and English language learning) in reception and early resettlement phases with specific reference to Thornery Island and Sopley refugee camps and a parasocial work training initiative set up as the camps closed. It seeks to shed light on the wider humanitarian system of government and governance in Britain at that time, the transition from humanitarian to welfare support, and the place of translation and interpreting within them. Drawing on theories of assemblage and the related concept of territorialisation (see DeLanda, 2016; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), we explore intersections between the built environment, policies, routine practices of the camp, and the role of interpreters in (re-)mediating camp and post-camp experience against the prevailing politics of protection.

Our discussion is informed primarily by archival data to illuminate the ways in which various agents within the camps created and enacted language regimes in the absence of scripted policy on translation and interpreting provision (e.g., what was to be translated or interpreted, when and how and for whom), and how aspects of these regimes were co-opted by camp authorities to serve wider political goals. We also show how the transition to interpreter-mediated mainstream welfare support (for housing, employment, etc.) outside the camp marked a shift in approach to the well-being of the interpreters themselves, thereby drawing attention to the largely solutionist, that is, unplanned and reactive, language support provisions in the camps.

As Hilary Footitt (2019, p. 139) observes in relation to British archival holdings of the Second World War, the architecture of the archive “offers no easy key to investigating the role of languages” in that period. A similar conclusion can be drawn in relation to investigating language support, and translation and interpreting provisions in particular, for Vietnamese arrivals in the 1970s and 1980s. And yet it quickly
becomes clear from the records held at the Hampshire and West Sussex record offices—the primary archives used in this article—that language mediation is central to activities of the camps, with abundant references in the minutes of committees, correspondence between camp authorities and external institutions.

While interviews with key informants who had experience of camp life as an interpreter or recipient of interpreter support have good potential to supplement archival material, the memories of interactions and perceptions of treatment inevitably fade over time. The disparity between one informant’s overwhelmingly positive experiences of working as an interpreter in Thorney Island camp recounted in an interview in 2019, and the challenges facing interpreters reported in minutes from camp meetings from the early 1980s is striking in this regard, and has implications for the representation of refugee voices across time. Furthermore, following Footitt, we agree that little is to be gained from seeking to impose the tropes of contemporary professional interpreting practice with their heavy emphasis on loyalty/disloyalty on the archival data. Instead, “placing language intermediaries back within the particularities” (Footitt, 2019, p. 139) of camp and post-camp life is more conducive to understanding the dynamics of social relations and impact of the broader political contexts that shaped attitudes to and handling of language support. We start by contextualising the arrival of Vietnamese refugees before exploring the potential of assemblage thinking and its operationalisation in the analysis of selected events within and beyond the camps.

**Refugees’ arrivals from Asia**

After initial reluctance to agree to a private request from the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, the government accepted a quota of 10,000 Vietnamese refugees from camps in Hong Kong in 1979 (Robinson & Hale, 1989), which at that time had the status of a Crown colony of the United Kingdom. This quota was later followed by arrivals through family reunion cases and the Orderly Departure Programme (Barber, 2018; Wilkins, 2021). The epithet of “boat people” commonly used to describe the Vietnamese refugees, many of whom had left the country by sea in all manner of precarious craft, is indicative of the tendency to universalise and to some extent dehistoricise refugee experience present in much scholarship on refugeedom (see Malkki, 1996; Rajaram, 2002). It is particularly unhelpful in investigating the Vietnamese experience, which is characterised by linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, or a “hidden diversity” (Haines, 2011, p. 28) that is seldom acknowledged in interpreting studies. Among the arrivals were Sino-Vietnamese (ethnic Chinese) largely from the north who left after the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979, and South Vietnamese. Therefore, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and a wide range of dialects were spoken among groups who fled to destinations including Belgium, France, and Australia (see Glynn, 2016; Thomas, 1999).

It is difficult to ascertain the numbers of Vietnamese speakers residing in Britain at the time of the upheavals in Indochina. The 1971 census results for Greater London, for example, do not list Vietnam as the country of birth at a statistically significant level and, aside from visiting students, it is reasonable to assume numbers were very low across the country as a whole.1 Charities tasked with providing initial support typically had to rely on the willingness of individual refugees to come forward as interpreters, many of whom
had limited English and no knowledge of institutional processes or practices. This contrasts to an extent with other groups of refugees, such as those who arrived following the 1956 Hungarian uprising who were supported by Hungarian nationals who had largely come to Britain through the European Voluntary Worker scheme in the late 1940s (see Tipton, 2018).

The Joint Committee for Refugees from Vietnam (JCRV) set up by the Home Office oversaw support for new arrivals. Initial funding provided by the government was extended for a short time as part of a distinguishing policy feature of the period known as “front end loading,” namely, an injection of human and capital resources in the early phases after arrival (Hale, 1993, p. 280). This policy emerged as a consequence of the Conservative government’s commitment to “minimising state intervention wherever possible, reducing government expenditure, and encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own welfare and destiny” (Robinson & Hale, 1989, p. 3). It was anticipated that once this mechanism had come to an end, support in the longer term would emerge from the formation of community associations, in addition to mainstream welfare services (see Wilkins, 2021 on the development of such associations and role of language in their operations).

Despite being given a mandate to act under the aegis of the JCRV, “the lack of advice on how to operationalize policy objectives left the charities to interpret and implement policy as best they could” (Hale, 1993, p. 282). The charities were often in competition for resources and had to undergo rapid expansion to cope with demand. Recruiting suitably experienced personnel in general terms and, more specifically, in terms of multilingual capabilities, was particularly problematic (Hale, 1993; Levin, 1981), and inevitably shaped the approach to and experience of refugee protection during this period.

Theorising and investigating the refugee camp

Individuals and families were temporarily housed in a network of camps, of which Thorney Island and Sopley accommodated the largest number. Both camps were located in former military bases converted into temporary “reception centres,” a label contested by Bailkin (2018, p. 14) for “[obscuring] the relationship that these sites bear to detention, and the extent to which their residents were unfree.” In fact, beyond the UK context, labels used to describe these human collectivities in the academy (see Oesch, 2017; Redclift, 2013; Turner, 2015) and by refugees themselves (see Huq & Miraftab, 2020) are the object of continuing debate on the heterogeneity of spaces, temporalities, and social relations through which refugee camps are created (see Darling, 2009; Katz et al., 2018; McConnachie, 2016).

The domestic response to the Vietnamese needs to be seen in the wider social and political context of refugee protection in the 1970s and 1980s because they were merely one group among many others. The different approaches to arrivals from Vietnam and Latin America during this period point to certain hierarchies at play—especially with regard to initial accommodation and freedom of movement—shaped by racial and political discourses on the nature of security and protection. Margaret Thatcher’s decision to take in a quota of Vietnamese refugees in 1979, for example, was driven less by concerns
to safeguard “precarious lives” than by “expedient domestic political concerns” (Chan, 1990, p. 97).

Examining UK camp experience also invites critical engagement with conceptualisations of the camp as a space of exclusion in which refugees are stripped of their political rights, reduced to “bare life,” and governed in a “state of exception” outside regular legal frameworks (Agamben, 1998; Owens, 2009). Such analyses have been critiqued for overlooking the complexity of power relations between people and institutional actors within camps, as well as for neglecting the subjectivity and agency of refugees themselves. Bailkin (2018, p. 16) expresses caution about theorising the British refugee camps as spaces of exception, rightly arguing that Agamben’s conceptualisation “does not capture the complexity of the British experience.” Instead, she considers them as “spaces of possibility as well as confinement” (Bailkin, 2018, p. 23) that articulated broader transformations in British society and politics.

Other critiques challenge the positioning of refugee camps as spaces of marginalisation and passivity, or “spatio-temporal limbos” (Martin et al., 2020), with Puggioni (2006, p. 69) arguing, for example, that as spaces they are “structuring and structured through a complex and varied politics of protection” and can even be seen in terms of “radical openness.” Foregrounding interpreting and translation practices in the camp, their organisation, deployment, and reception can therefore serve as a useful barometer of the degree of marginalisation and passivity during the period in question.

Emphasising the materiality of the camps supports analysis of the multifaceted nature of camp experience, shaped as much by agents of the state and the voluntary sector as by the built environment and its affordances. Several studies (see Abourahme, 2015; Maestri, 2017; Ramadan, 2013), particularly in human geography, have drawn upon assemblage theories to understand the relationships between materials, institutions, practices, and political actors in refugee camp spaces. However, much of this literature combines assemblage thinking and actor-network approaches with other perspectives, rather than engaging solely with the concept of assemblage as set out by Deleuze and Guattari (1988). According to Buchanan (2015, p. 382), scholarship on assemblage theory has led to very productive thinking about the complexities of social reality, but has also often “drifted a long way from its origins,” highlighting the tendency to overlook the fact that in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, “assemblage” does not have a referent (Buchanan, 2017, p. 466).

Assemblage thinking, however, has productive potential for our study. For instance, McFarlane (2011, p. 379) writes that assemblage thinking allows us to understand how “[p]olitical economies and structures emerge as relational products assembled through multiple routes, actors, histories, contingencies, resources, socio-materialities and power relations.” Such an emphasis has facilitated understanding of organisations, communities, and cities as dynamic and contested, as their components are “constantly interacting with one another in ways that produce new capabilities” (Dittmer, 2014, p. 388). We posit that the camp and wider system of refugee protection can be conceived of in similar terms.

In sum, while there are aspects of assemblage thinking of relevance to the discussion here, our use of “assemblage” departs from Deleuze and Guattari’s looser conceptualisation of an indeterminate and heterogenous range of elements that enter into relations with each other, and instead denotes an entity comprising spaces, buildings, interpersonal relations,
ideologies, policies, and (disciplinary) practices identified as possessing ontological sali-
ence within a wider system of humanitarian government and governance. From an episte-
mological perspective, this makes it possible to conceive of humanitarian action as
multi-layered, avoiding over-emphasis on aid provision and refugee protection as a unidi-
rectional phenomenon (see Barnett, 2013), and foregrounding the nature and modes of
exchange between refugees and non-refugees.

A related concept is “territorialisation.” In the DeLandarian reimagining of assem-
blage theory, for example, territorialisation refers to “the degree to which the compo-
nents of the assemblage have been subjected to a process of homogenization, and the
extent to which its defining boundaries have been delineated and made impermeable”
(DeLanda, 2016, p. 3). By contrast, de-territorialisation is understood to include pro-
cesses that destabilise an assemblage, making it open to change, but also that provide the
potential for re-territorialisation. Such concepts are considered useful in re-appraising
the camp as a space of marginalisation and passivity as they offer a means to interrogate
the push and pull of agency in the various contact zones (following Pratt, 2008) within
and outside the camp.

A starting point for the analysis is to acknowledge the multiple and often competing
processes and forms of territorialisation in camp life. The state, charities, and refugees
were all engaged to varying extents in developing and maintaining certain types of physi-
ical or imagined “bounded entity” (as we propose to call it), though their interests in
doing so inevitably diverged to some extent. Examples include state and charity involve-
ment in creating and maintaining (“territorializing”) the camp as a site of protection and
discipline (as a type of “top-down” process), achieved through uses of the built environ-
ment, discourse, routines, and control over bodies, ostensibly to homogenise for ease of
bureaucratic efficiency and social control, and also to lay foundations for life beyond the
camp. By contrast, for refugees concerned with maintaining ontological security and
preserving cultural identity, creating their own bounded entity (as a “bottom-up” pro-
cess) was achieved through activities like cooking and engaging in interactional and
linguistic practices that may contest or re-negotiate top-down attempts at homogenisa-
tion. The various “territories” that these bounded entities form are made and remade as
they intersect and evolve over time, and in which language and interpreting play a cen-
tral, constitutive role.

Thorney Island and Sopley Camps

Located in a former Royal Air Force (RAF) base in West Sussex, Thorney Island was
operated by the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) between October 1979 and
December 1981 and designed to hold a maximum of 600 refugees, with an average stay
of 4 months. A national housing shortage meant that numbers in the centre rose to 730
in January 1981, and the average stay was much longer than initially planned (Jones,
1982). Sopley, also a former RAF base in Hampshire, was also operated by the BCAR
and housed up to 620 refugees.

There is little archival evidence of any overarching language policy operating in the
camps as a whole, although it appears that interpreting was used to sanction certain behav-
iours: refugees who refused to take part in “communal life” were often penalised through
the withdrawal of interpreting services and assistance with resettlement applications.\textsuperscript{4} However, evidence suggests that the various agencies tasked with reception were not fully prepared for the level of linguistic heterogeneity among the arrivals, nor the extent of English language support needed. Initially, most staff could not speak Vietnamese, so once the need for language skills became apparent, Vietnamese- and Cantonese-speaking interpreters and fieldworkers were recruited, including some who had recently arrived as refugees themselves. Fieldworkers were employed primarily to support resettlement and serve as intermediaries between the BCAR and the refugees. In addition to their main duties, fieldworkers and interpreters were often involved in enforcing discipline and providing emotional support. A crucial distinction between the two was that the interpreter was “not entitled to act or make decisions on behalf of BCAR.”\textsuperscript{5}

Despite the absence of scripted language policies developed by either the state or the BCAR, ad hoc practices emerged in both camps. In the remaining sections, we explore the evidence of such practices, showing how these are linked to processes of (de-/re-) territorialisation within and beyond the camp. The examples show top-down territorialisation practices operating at multiple levels, including through the maintenance of hierarchies and routines, the control of refugees’ bodily practices in the camp, and expectations of their behaviour following resettlement. The final example of the parasocial work initiative serves to exemplify institutional efforts to mitigate practices of “othering” observed in the camps in ways that add a new dimension to our understanding of territorialising practices.

Control of refugees’ bodily practices through translation

Refugee camps have been understood as exceptional spaces created to manage people who are regarded as “out of place” (Malkki, 1995, p. 512) because they disrupt the link between the citizen, state, and nation (see also Turner, 2015). At the two camps, control of refugees’ bodies was a crucial tool not only in terms of maintaining discipline but also in stabilising the identity of the wider assemblage of refugee reception. The enforcement of strict cleaning routines and scrutiny of refugees’ personal hygiene practices can be read as a form of homogenisation in establishing the camp as a socially ordered territory.

Cleaning and associated disciplinary procedures were mediated by a variety of language practices. Vietnamese-speaking fieldworkers were required to “explain to the refugees their daily domestic and civic duties” and to “assist section leaders to achieve the best efficiency in cleaning and discipline tasks.”\textsuperscript{6} When refugees complained that they did not want to miss time in their English classes by cleaning the staff dining room, Major Arrowsmith, the Thorney Island camp director, explained that cleaning “. . . would form part of an English lesson and would be very useful [to them] in a practical way as well as learning English language.”\textsuperscript{7}

Written translation was also employed as a disciplinary tool. Archival material refers to notices and rules relating to cleaning that were translated into Vietnamese and Chinese. When cleaning was found to be sub-standard on one occasion, Major Arrowsmith asked for the translation of a newspaper article concerning an 81-year-old widow who lived alone in a damp flat while waiting for Council housing, stating that the
Vietnamese refugees must be told that there are many such people in Britain waiting for accommodation and appreciate what the Government is doing for them . . . the refugees must play their part in helping us for their own future good.8

This practice emphasises the insidious conditionality of resettlement invoked by the camp authorities’ territorialising processes: refugees would only be considered as deserving of support if their behaviour met certain expectations, an attitude that is echoed today (see Pinkerton, 2019).

The various translation regimes operating on Thorney Island generated other social tensions and signalled a lack of awareness of linguistic heterogeneity and varying literacy levels in the camp on the part of the camp authorities. Discussions of unrest between Vietnamese- and Chinese-speaking refugees were triggered, for example, by the translation of notices into Vietnamese but not into Chinese languages. Major Arrowsmith sought to reassure refugees who speculated that “Vietnamese ideology” was being promoted, by stating that “we are going to translate all notices into Vietnamese and Chinese, and whenever possible, all announcements over the tannoy will also be in Vietnamese and Chinese.”9 The fact that multilingual support needed to be requested within the camp is noteworthy, particularly as the BCAR was able to source Cantonese speaking support from outside the camp. Inattention to multilingual needs could scarcely be blamed on a shortage of resources; however, it is possible that the pace of resettlement and turnover of interpreters sometimes affected practices.

**Code of conduct**

Alongside processes of territorialisation that were enacted through the othering of refugees’ bodily practices, documentation relating to camp rules provides further evidence of the homogenisation of refugees’ daily interactions, but in ways that show the assertion of refugee agency. The Vietnamese Committee at Thorney Island played a major role in the day-to-day running of the camp. Made up of elected representatives from among the refugees (including interpreters), it was tasked with raising any concerns with the camp authorities, organising activities, and maintaining discipline.10 The Committee established a four-page Code of Conduct, instructing fellow compatriots to “be hard working with [their] English study and be aware that English is very vital to [their] future in terms of getting on with a new life and getting a job.”11

While the Code of Conduct can be understood as one of the ways in which the elements of the camp are homogenised, it can also be read as a form of “coding” which DeLanda (2016) describes as the expressive components of an assemblage which include language, rituals, and non-verbal communication. Writing about universities and territorialising practices, Bacevic (2018, p. 80) asserts that

[highly formalised assemblages . . . tend to come with a higher degree of coding; language and non-verbal behaviour will usually be defined or prescribed, and will serve to visibly distinguish between components of an assemblage and those who do not “belong.”]

Thorney Island can therefore be understood as a relatively formalised entity, with the Code of Conduct being one of the several micro-policies that prescribed the behaviour of
refugees. The Code supported both current and future goals, namely to maintain discipline in the camp and also to “win the sympathy, respect and to encourage the aid of the British people for the Vietnamese . . . when they move out to resettle in council houses.”

Although the Code specified an “adaptation to westernization, but not a total westernization,” it was made clear that abiding by the Code required refugees to “improve [themselves] to be able to fit into British society.”

Although the Code may have supported the camp authorities’ efforts to exert social control, it is striking that the policy was spearheaded by the refugees and refugee interpreters, and not by the camp authorities, suggesting that its creators were not motivated by joint enterprise in territorialisation. Instead, the Code emerged as a response to dissatisfaction with discipline in the camp and to the pressures experienced by interpreters. For example, Committee minutes dated 3 April 1980 provide insight into the tensions created by the multi-layered roles of the interpreters, including reference to a complaint that “the interpreters were not very helpful with [the refugees’] resettlement querries [sic]” and the apparent heavy-handedness of one interpreter’s approach, who responded:

Would you understand that I was not very keen on being a senior interpreter? I would think that I was only a senior in short terms [sic]. I hoped that any of you might replace me. Honestly speaking to be involved in the Committee is a hard job that gives me too much trouble and headache.

The creation of the Code therefore served as an attempt by interpreters to re-territorialise those aspects of camp life that had left them exposed to (sometimes violent) recriminations from fellow refugees. It is an example of the assertion of agency through which a form of ontological security was promoted over and above any desire to align with camp territorialisation practices. The care and control of refugees promoted in the Code was ostensibly born from the need for the interpreters’ control over their own bodies rather than a desire to be complicit in wider camp control.

**New Homeland magazine: Refugee agency and (Re-) territorialisation**

A project to publish a magazine about camp life written from the perspective of refugees was developed at Thorney Island. It was another indication of the refugees’ desire to exert agency and resist passivity by reporting on their experiences and contesting the discourses and (territorialising) practices of the camp authorities. However, what started as a refugee-led exercise was soon co-opted by the camp authorities, with translation used as a tool to (re-)territorialise the camp assemblage.

*New Homeland* was first proposed by the senior interpreter at Thorney Island, with support from members of the Vietnamese Committee. It was intended to “cover the information and the writing incorporating the life of the refugees and their activities’ during the first year of the centre’s operation.” The minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 20 November 1979 record a suggestion by Nora Morley-Fletcher (of the BCAR) that the magazine also be distributed to Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong to inform them about “the English way of life.” The magazine thus served an important function as a territorialising mechanism for stabilising the camp’s identity across geographical territories.
Articles in the magazine were published in Vietnamese and in English and included contributions from refugees, interpreters, and British staff members. The magazine paints a generally idealistic picture of life in the camp. An article written by an anonymous refugee expresses their “heartfelt thanks” to the British people who “stretched out their friendly hands to save us in adversity.” An introduction by Major Arrowsmith describes the relationship between the camp staff and refugees as one of friendship, while also emphasising the importance of refugees showing their gratitude by contributing to British society: “I am quite sure that when you leave the Centre for your new homes and jobs, you will, with your new skills and pleasant personalities, be happy, and be a useful member of your New Homeland . . .”

The editorial process behind the writing and selection of articles is not clear, but the minutes of a meeting held on 20 November 1979 record Major Arrowsmith suggesting that the editorial committee be assisted by a fieldworker and a member of the teaching staff. Major Arrowsmith also stated that Head Office would require a translation of all articles before they were published, but whether or how the editorial committee were involved in this process is unclear. Permitting the refugees to publish in Vietnamese indicates that they had some autonomy to express their experiences, but the practice of translation was used to prevent any threat to the camp’s authority. Refugees’ voices were permitted only if they could be checked to ensure that the reputation of the camp was maintained, suggesting that translation was used rather egregiously as a practice of control and (re-)territorialisation, as opposed to an exercise of collective self-expression and creative response to containment.

English language support

Intensive English language teaching was a key element of camp life under the front-end loading policy, which prioritised the delivery of educational resources in the camps over provision in mainstream society (Hale, 1993). The Hampshire Record Office contains extensive accounts of the organisation of English language provisions at Sopley under the auspices of the Hampshire Further and Higher Education office. For example, a combination of volunteer, qualified, and trainee teachers offered 3 hours of tuition per day to adults, which later increased to 4 hours.

There was an expectation that ad hoc solutions for language learning would suffice given initial estimates of the length of stay at the camp (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 36). However, similar to Thorney Island camp, it became clear that Sopley camp numbers would continue to rise for some time and that the length of stay would be months longer than anticipated because of national housing shortages. This entailed a shift in terms of staffing, and the establishment of a temporary adult education centre on the site, which included a library stocked by donations. This shift in operational scale—a form of territorialisation—entailed physical changes to the site such as appropriating some spaces for classrooms and accommodation for teaching staff (given the camp’s geographical isolation), in what was described as a “total approach” to learning. The materiality of the camp was therefore affected by the establishment of the centre, its concomitant routines and class schedules, and expectations with regard to self-discipline and attendance.

Interpreters were called upon to support the work of the centre and therefore may be seen as agents of the total approach to learning. The archive evidence points to their work
with the centre involving disciplinary and welfare-related interactions. For instance, fieldworkers were tasked with reporting absence and following up matters with individuals if problems arose, work that often required interpreter involvement. This led to competition over interpreters, who, because they were managed by the BCAR, were not always available to support the work of the education centre. The situation prompted a recommendation for dedicated interpreting support at the institutional level and the need for a planned approach to interpreter provisions:

> Interpreters have continually presented problems as they are employed by BCAR and withdrawn at a moment’s notice. I have recommended to the Area Education Officer that the Education Department engages [their] own interpreter responsible to Headmaster and Adult Education organiser.

By October 1980, the BCAR completely withdrew interpreter provisions, requiring the department to employ its own and to provide accommodation at the centre.

**Care of interpreters and fieldworkers**

Through their dual positioning as refugees and fieldworkers, interpreters contributed to the processes of (de-/re-)territorialisation in the camps. Yet, while they had the potential to re-negotiate or even to disrupt the disciplinary practices and regimes of which they were a part, the examples here show that interpreters’ attempts at re-territorialisation (i.e., carving out spaces of intra-community support) were sometimes co-opted by the camp authorities, who sought to homogenise their practices and position them on the side of the camp management. The relative neglect of the emotional labour of interpreters and fieldworkers raises questions about both the camp authorities’ approach towards their care and the wider politics of protection in which they were located.

Although there is scant evidence of overall policies for the recruitment of interpreters and fieldworkers, insights into the approach taken are found in a 1980 job description for Vietnamese fieldworkers drafted by Robert Hood and Bui-Thi Nham, an advisor on welfare. It has not been possible to ascertain whether the wording of the description had been adapted from an earlier job description aimed at monolingual English speakers, but it is striking in the degree to which fieldworkers are “othered,” suggesting an ethically questionable basis for the way in which their role was framed. The document explains that interpreting is central to the role and that the

> Vietnamese staff will have authority over the refugee . . . the Vietnamese fieldworker must also be fully aware of the problems and needs of the refugees living in a reception centre and when living in small communities throughout England . . . ,

and “[t]he advice of the VFW [Vietnamese fieldworker] is always essential and helpful to ensure the well-being of the refugee.”

The role of fieldworkers as implementers of policy also extended into matters of resettlement: Vietnamese fieldworkers were told that they needed to make it clear to refugees that offers of housing must not be refused, as this would increase pressure on reception centres and delay the arrival of refugees from Hong Kong. Towards the end
of the document, there is some consideration of the fieldworker’s personal position vis-à-vis the future and available support, but this is soon passed over with the final exhortation: “So be fair, try to help them effectively.” The emotional labour of the fieldworker appears to be taken for granted. The job description shows the way in which the interpreter/fieldworker became a central agent of relationship development within the camp, having responsibility for welfare concerns as well as communication. However, the BCAR’s duty of care to the interpreters as refugees themselves receives passing mention only, suggesting a tendency to underplay their status as objects of humanitarian support. It is important, however, to acknowledge the lack of materials about the BCAR experiences in the archives consulted to date; the tendency observed here may therefore not reflect wider organisational attitudes.

The minutes of the Vietnamese Committee meeting dated 4 December 1979 include explicit recommendation that the Vietnamese “use the Fieldworkers more [than interpreters] as regards information as this would make the Vietnamese communicate more in English and this would help them to learn English faster than if they always used an interpreter.” This entry is indicative of the front-end loading policy put in place for the Vietnamese arrivals. It also shows how attempts to limit reliance on interlingual translation support positioned interpreter mediation within the camp life as a type of blockage, which resonates with some public discourses in the contemporary age (see Tipton, 2019).

Parasocial work training

The preceding sections show variability in interpreter experiences in the camps and their frequent positioning as helping hands in ways that downplayed their own positions as refugees. This final section briefly explores a post-camp initiative sponsored by the Home Office from 1982 to train 22 individuals in parasocial work to support the resettlement programme (Bang & Finlay, 1982). Their approach in selecting and training individuals shows much greater sensitivity to the issues arising from the duality of the refugee/interpreter position, but also draws attention to shortcomings that affected the trainees themselves and the effectiveness of the scheme.

Bang and Finlay’s (1982) report on the scheme highlights sensitivity to the positioning of refugees who came forward to participate, not only in relation to potential inter-generational and class tensions they were likely to encounter in their work but also in relation to their personal growth and coming to terms with their experiences of the recent past. Interpreting was deemed integral to the role. The report was written to document what was described as a unique approach in the period, aimed at training the Vietnamese in social work rather than in interpreting skills “for a more effective deployment of scarce resources” (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 2) and to “encourage pride in the trainees’ own culture” (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 3). Its importance as an artefact is underscored by the distinctly experimental nature of the training approach, the lack of scholarly literature in social work from the period in question, and the particular sensitivities to and discourse on interpreting as a complex skill. The fact that it contains a report in an appendix written by Felicity Edholme entitled “One year on” provides additional insight into the scheme’s effectiveness and limitations. While reliance on the report doubtless presents a limitation, it importantly reflects the voices of refugees and their experiences which are so often neglected in academic research.
In recognition of the individual vulnerabilities of many of the trainees, the scheme provided informal support and a space where people could discuss worries about family back home and unburden personal grief. Training entailed working alongside workers from the BCAR and the Save the Children Fund (SCF), the two charities involved with the scheme. (The BCAR came on board much later than SCF owing to concerns about the trainees’ welfare and closeness to the issues at hand).

The report expresses a clear preference for advocatory/interventionist approaches to interpreter mediation based on assumed advantages of bicultural competence, and emerging bi-institutional competence. Yet, presciently, it also makes reference to a distinction between direct and indirect interpreting, and expectations that, once trained, fieldworkers would be able to use their discretion between the two, intervening as a “cultural interpreter . . . at the right moment and in a convincing way” (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 36). This level of discretion had its basis in the description of the fieldworker role as “interpreting, specialist, intermediary, educator, cultural bridge and counsellor” (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 43). In many respects, the scheme served as a staging post in the development of more clearly circumscribed interpreting services that emerged later in the 1980s, which perhaps explains the “catch-all” fieldworker description and risk management through expectations of discretionary interactional behaviour.

An evaluation of the scheme one year later highlighted several issues in the approach to training and continuity planning. The trainees reported an over-emphasis on Western approaches to counselling and difficulties of gaining trust with fellow refugees and coping with feelings of inadequacy (Bang & Finlay, 1982, p. 53). English as a second language support was only partially successful owing to timing (at the end of the day when people were tired) and lack of materials. Discontinuity in training owing to the unavailability of early trainees to impart their experiences to new trainees precluded a virtuous circle of support and knowledge exchange, limiting the scheme’s effectiveness. The scheme captures a duality in terms of its integrationist and care goals which can be critiqued through the lens of territorialisation. Reports of “western approaches to counselling” (a top-down territorialising practice), for example, demonstrated a need for co-produced solutions that valorised refugee perspectives and voices.

Oral history testimonies suggest that long-term opportunities were greatly fostered by participation in the scheme, underscoring its practical re-territorialising potential. Two previous participants, Jack Shieh and Tang My Trinh, interviewed in 2019 as part of our wider study, acknowledged the immense value of the institutional knowledge gained through the programme, echoing similar recent experiences of Kurdish interpreters (see Green et al., 2012). For Shieh, the experience helped him set up community associations and liaise with local authorities in work that continues to the present. That the need for specialist community-specific support has continued for so long demonstrates the immense challenges faced by arrivals in that period, and also captures the complexities of so-called social anchoring processes (see Wilkins, 2021).

**Conclusion**

Devolving responsibility to charity organisations that had to compete over resources and rapidly expand operations to meet needs unsurprisingly led to a more reactive than
planned approach to language support provisions. However, we find that in the absence of scripted policy, certain “regimes of translation” were generated by various camp agents (refugees and camp staff) as a result of their respective vested interests, both within the camp and beyond. These “regimes” appeared to operate in parallel rather than in dialogue with each other.

The concept of territorialisation has helped to unpack some of the power relations within the camp and, crucially, shed light on some interpreters’ responses to confinement and the multiple role expectations placed on them. For example, although the creation of a Code of Conduct may be viewed as supporting the camp authorities’ approach to maintaining social order, the insights into the emotional pressures experienced by the interpreters suggest that the Code can also be construed in terms of “re-territorialisation” deriving from the desire to make confinement more tolerable and protect the self.

The relative neglect of the interpreter’s dual positioning as refugee and interpreter evidenced through the recruitment materials is a stark manifestation of attitudes to interpreters primarily as a resource. This echoes the Hungarian experience in the 1950s, when Hungarian interpreters based in hostels to provide both interpreting and English language lessons were obliged to spend a long time away from their family and felt constantly on call (Tipton, 2018). A solutionist approach to interpreting is to some extent understandable as a response to large-scale human displacement; nevertheless, the discourse practices revealed through the recruitment advertisements betray a surprising lack of care at a time of great upheaval and emotional fragility.

The concept of territorialisation also interrogates what it means to provide humanitarian protection on the domestic front. After providing initial shelter and care in the camps, the evidence suggests that over time, territorialisation (in its top-down form) extended beyond camp life, becoming more politicised. Within the camps, there was also a discernible shift in emphasis from protection to securitisation through homogenisation. This is evidenced through the camp practices documented in the archives, which involve interpreters being to some extent co-opted into processes of top-down territorialisation, achieved through homogenising human behaviour (hygiene and cooking practices) in ways that relied on inter- and intra-lingual mediation.

Territorialisation has also emerged as a useful concept for thinking through matters of temporality in the life of this network of camps and can potentially be extended to conceptualise mutual support mechanisms that emerged in subsequent decades. The housing shortage in Britain at the time meant that the duration of stay in the camp was much longer than first anticipated. Confinement doubtless led to activities designed to promote ontological security and also—through the interpreters and fieldworkers—to attempts to lay some sort of foundations for life beyond the camp. Although this may not correspond to the “radical openness” of the camp suggested by Puggioni (2006, p. 69), it does provide insight into practices enacted to resist passivity.

The limitations associated with the often fragmentary archival evidence leave many questions open about the experiences of the wider body of interpreters, but it is clear that they emerge as drivers of intra-community efforts to plan ahead for resettlement. Although the camp management’s lack of attention to interpreters’ personal welfare was mitigated in the parasocial work programme, it reveals how easily the concept of interpreters-as-resource can obscure the humanitarian needs of the individuals concerned.
Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under grant number R122716 awarded to Dr Rebecca Tipton.

ORCID iDs

Rebecca Tipton https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6974-8226
Annabelle Wilkins https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4235-9719

Notes

1. https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/historical-census-tables
2. Principally the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR), Save the Children Fund (SCF), and Ockenden Venture, with additional support by the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) and the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS).
3. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/4 Thorney Island—Educational provision for Vietnamese refugees.
4. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Penalty for not taking part in the communal life of Thorney Island, p. 1.
5. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Fieldworker job description, 1 April 1980, p. 2.
6. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Allocation of duties of Vietnamese fieldworkers, p. 4.
7. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese committee meetings. Minutes of the Vietnamese committee meeting, Tuesday 18 December 1979.
8. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese committee meetings. Minutes of the Vietnamese committee meeting, Friday 2 January 1981.
9. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese committee meetings. Minutes of Vietnamese committee meeting, 2 July 1980.
10. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Organisation of the refugees at Thorney Island Reception Centre, Section 1. Viet Committee, p. 1.
11. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Code of Thorney Island Centre, p. 2.
12. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Code of Thorney Island Centre, p. 2.
13. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Code of Thorney Island Centre, clause 20, p. 4.
14. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Minutes dated 3 April 1980, pp. 1–2.
15. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Minutes of Vietnamese sub-committee, 23 April 1980.
16. West Sussex Record Office, File Par 196/7/8 New Homeland magazine.
17. West Sussex Record Office, File Par 196/7/8 New Homeland magazine.
18. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese committee meetings. Minutes of the Vietnamese committee meeting, 13 December 1979.
19. Hampshire Record Office, File H/EDI/4B/5 Reports, reviews, and correspondence about the education of the Vietnamese refugees. Memo dated 6th August 1979 from county education officer reestablishing adult education centre at Sopley.
20. Hampshire Record Office, File H/EDI/4B/5 Reports, reviews, and correspondence about the education of the Vietnamese refugees. Report by Wendy Orr adult education organiser at Sopley, 16 September 1979.
21. Hampshire Record Office, File 173A12/A4/4/1 Refugees from Vietnam at Sopley—role of the Red Cross (Hampshire Branch) in the provision made at RAF Sopley camp. British Red Cross, minutes of meeting held Friday 3 August 1979.
22. Hampshire Record Office, File H/EDI/4B/5 Reports, reviews, and correspondence about the education of the Vietnamese refugees. Memo to Mr Sturgess, senior assistant education officer for further and higher education, from Mr J. Legg, area further education adviser, 3 December 1979.
23. Hampshire Record Office, File H/EDI/4B/5 Reports, reviews, and correspondence about the education of the Vietnamese refugees. Letter to Mr McMurdoo, Home Office, from J. H. Aldam, county education officer, 13 October 1980.
24. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Vietnamese fieldworker job description.
25. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Vietnamese fieldworker job description, p. 1.
26. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Vietnamese fieldworker job description, p. 3.
27. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/15 Vietnamese sub-committee and interpreters’ reports. Vietnamese fieldworker job description, p. 4.
28. West Sussex Record Office, File AM 808/17 Vietnamese committee meetings. Minutes of Vietnamese committee, 4 December 1979.

References

Abourahme, N. (2015). Assembling and spilling-over: Towards an “ethnography of cement” in a Palestinian refugee camp. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 39(2), 200–217. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12155
Agamben, G. (1998). Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford University Press.
Bacevic, J. (2018). With or without U? Assemblage theory and (de)territorialising the university [Special issue: Reassembling knowledge production with(out) the university]. Globalisation, Societies and Education, 17(1), 78–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2018.1498323
Baillkin, J. (2018). Unsettled: Refugee camps and the making of multicultural Britain. Oxford University Press.
Bang, S., & Finlay, R. (1982). Working to support refugees. Refugee Action.
Barber, T. (2018). The integration of Vietnamese refugees in London and the UK: Fragmentation, complexity, and “in/visibility” (WIDER Working Paper No. 2018/2). United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research. https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2018/444-5
Barnett, M. N. (2013). Humanitarian governance. Annual Review of Political Science, 16(1), 379–398. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012512-083711
Buchanan, I. (2015). Assemblage theory and its discontents. Deleuze Studies, 9(3), 382–392. https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2015.0193
Buchanan, I. (2017). Assemblage theory, or, the future of an illusion. Deleuze Studies, 11(3), 457–474. https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2017.0276

Chan, K. B. (1990). Hong Kong's response to the Vietnamese refugees: A study in humanitarianism, ambivalence and hostility. Southeast Journal of Social Science, 18(1), 94–110.

Crowson, N., Hilton, M., & McKay, J. (Eds.). (2009). NGOs in contemporary Britain. Non-state actors in society and politics since 1945. Palgrave Macmillan.

Darling, J. (2009). Becoming bare life: Asylum, hospitality, and the politics of encampment. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 27(4), 649–665. https://doi.org/10.1068/d10307

DeLanda, M. (2016). Assemblage theory. Edinburgh University Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia. Bloomsbury.

Delgado Luchner, C. (2018). Contact zones of the aid chain: The multilingual practices of two Swiss development NGOs. Translation Spaces, 7(1), 44–64. https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.00003.del

Dittmer, J. (2014). Geopolitical assemblages and complexity. Progress in Human Geography, 38(3), 385–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513501405

Footitt, H. (2017). International aid and development: Hearing multilingualism, learning from intercultural encounters in the history of Oxfam GB. Language and Intercultural Communication, 17(4), 518–533. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2017.1368207

Footitt, H. (2019). Archives and sources. In M. Kelly, H. Footitt, & M. Salama-Carr (Eds.), The Palgrave handbook of languages and conflict (pp. 137–155). Palgrave Macmillan.

Glynn, I. (2016). Asylum policy, boat people and political discourse: Boats, votes and asylum in Australia and Italy. Palgrave Macmillan.

Green, H., Sperlinger, D., & Carswell, K. (2012). Too close to home? Experiences of Kurdish refugee interpreters working in UK mental health services. Journal of Mental Health, 21(3), 227–235. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638237.2011.651659

Haines, D. W. (2011). Rethinking the Vietnamese exodus. Hong Kong in comparative perspective. In Y. W. Chan (Ed.), The Chinese/ Vietnamese diaspora: Revisiting the boat people (pp. 20–35). Routledge.

Hale, S. (1993). The reception and resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Britain. In V. Robinson (Ed.), The international refugee crisis. British and Canadian response (pp. 273–292). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hilton, M., Crowson, N., Mouhot, J., & McKay, J. (2012). A historical guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, civil society and the voluntary sector since 1945. Palgrave Macmillan.

Huq, E., & Miraftab, F. (2020). “We are all refugees”: Camps and informal settlements as converging spaces of global displacements. Planning Theory & Practice, 21(3), 351–370. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2020.1776376

Jones, P. R. (1982). Vietnamese refugees: A study of their reception and resettlement in the United Kingdom (Research and Planning Unit Paper 13). Home Office.

Katz, I., Martin, D., & Minca, C. (Eds.). (2018). Camps revisited: Multifaceted spatialities of a modern political technology. Rowman & Littlefield International.

Levin, M. (1981). What welcome? Reception and resettlement of refugees in Britain. Action Society Trust.

Maestri, G. (2017). Struggles and ambiguities over political subjectivities in the camp: Roma camp dwellers between neoliberal and urban citizenship in Italy. Citizenship Studies, 21(6), 640–656. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2017.1341656

Malkki, L. H. (1995). Refugees and exile: From “refugee studies” to the national order of things. Annual Review of Anthropology, 24(1), 495–523. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.002431
Malkki, L. H. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology, 11*(3), 377–404. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1996.11.3.02a00050

Martin, D., Minca, C., & Katz, I. (2020). Rethinking the camp: On spatial technologies of power and resistance. *Progress in Human Geography, 44*(4), 743–768. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519856702

McConnachie, K. (2016). Camps of containment: A genealogy of the refugee camp. *Humanity, 7*(3), 397–412. http://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2016.0022

McFarlane, C. (2011). On context: Assemblage, political economy and structure. *City, 15*(3–4), 375–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.595111

Oesch, L. (2017). The refugee camp as a space of multiple ambiguities and subjectivities. *Political Geography, 60*, 110–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.05.004

Owens, P. (2009). Reclaiming “bare life”? Against Agamben on refugees. *International Relations, 23*(4), 567–582. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117809350545

Pinkerton, P. (2019). Governing potential: Biopolitical incorporation and the German “Open-Door” refugee and migration policy. *International Political Sociology, 13*(2), 128–144. https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/oly033

Pratt, M.-L. (2008). *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. Routledge.

Puggioni, R. (2006). Resisting sovereign power: Camps in-between exception and dissent. In J. Huysmans, A. Dobson, & R. Prokhovnik (Eds.), *The politics of protection: Sites of insecurity and political agency* (pp. 68–83). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203002780

Rajaram, P. K. (2002). Humanitarianism and representations of the refugee. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15*(3), 247–264. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/15.3.247

Ramadan, A. (2013). Spatialising the refugee camp. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 38*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2012.00509.x

Redclift, V. (2013). Objects or agents? Camps, contests and the creation of “political space.” *Citizenship Studies, 17*(3–4), 308–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2013.791534

Robinson, V., & Hale, S. (1989). *The geography of Vietnamese secondary migration in the UK* (Research Paper in Ethnic Relations No. 10). Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

Taylor, B. (2020). *Refugees in twentieth-century Britain: A history*. Cambridge University Press.

Tesseur, W. (2017). Incorporating translation into sociolinguistic research: Translation policy in an international non-governmental organization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 21*(5), 629–649. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12245

Thomas, M. (1999). *Dreams in the shadows: Vietnamese-Australian lives in transition*. Allen & Unwin.

Tipton, R. (2018). Interpreters as technologies of care and control? Language support for refugees in Britain following the 1956 Hungarian uprising. *Interpreting, 20*(2), 259–284. https://doi.org/10.1075/inter.00012.tip

Tipton, R. (2019). Exploring the ESOL-PSIT relation: Interpellation, resistance and resilience. *Language and Communication, 67*, 16–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.12.004

Turner, S. (2015). What is a refugee camp? Explorations of the limits and effects of the camp. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 29*(2), 139–148. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev024

Wilkins, A. (2021). The politicisation of social anchoring: Language support and community building within Vietnamese refugee-led organisations in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1911631

**Biographies**

Rebecca Tipton is a lecturer in interpreting and translation studies at the University of Manchester, UK. She is principal investigator on the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded...
Translating asylum project 2018–2021 and has published on a wide range of topics in dialogue interpreting in statutory and voluntary sector services. Email: rebecca.tipton@manchester.ac.uk

Annabelle Wilkins worked as a research associate on the AHRC-funded Translating asylum project 2018–2020. She is currently undertaking postdoctoral research on the Making it home: An aesthetic methodological contribution to the study of migrant home-making and politics of integration project at Kingston University, London, and on the ‘Stay home’: Rethinking the domestic during the Covid-19 pandemic project at Queen Mary University, London. Email: annabelle.wilkins@manchester.ac.uk