BEYOND WORDS

NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN TRANSLATION

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"Science is about discovery, but it is also about communication. An idea can hardly be said to exist if you do not awaken that same idea in someone else." Marcus du Sautoy, Professor of Mathematics and Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, Oxford University

WHY DO INSIGHTS NEED TO BE TRANSLATED?

Replace 'science' with 'insight' in the quote above, and you've captured the essence of why we felt this paper needed to be written. As marketing and innovation processes are compressed into shorter timelines and attention spans are reduced, it is even more crucial to communicate insights not only accurately, but also in ways that excite and motivate. To complicate matters, those putting insights into action come from a wide range of disciplines and speak many different professional languages – not to mention literal language barriers between global teams.

In our work, we all need to understand people's *experiences*, not just buying or usage behaviours, which places further demands on insights to be contextualised and intimate but also remain relevant over time. Translating experiences and insights into understandable formats for (and *with*) different audiences reduces the risk of misinterpretation. When insights are misinterpreted, months of effort can be lost and additional costs incurred, and the time savings we were so desperate for are frittered away as attempts are made to 'unpick' strategies and concepts to make them usable.

PICKING FIGHTS WITH WORDS

"Most of us are better at sensing things, and it's harder to put this into words. We have a limited number of words we can use – they're actually quite a poor medium for expression ... Language mediates and muddies things." Speech and Language Therapist

Words have long been the accepted currency of the market research profession, even though products and brands often communicate most powerfully in non-verbal ways. We exchange thousands of words in documents, presentations, emails and meetings every day, often without questioning whether we've chosen the best way to express ourselves. It's not surprising, since we're educated to express ourselves neatly and accurately in words, and forget the multitude of ways we expressed ourselves when we were children through play, dance, songs and whatever else fed our imaginations! If we lose touch with the palette of senses available to us with which to 'read' situations and communicate ideas, there may be non-verbal messages we fail to make use of during all those meetings and presentations, but which contain the very essence of meaning we are seeking to translate:

"Only 10 % of the meaning we want to convey comes over in words. 40% comes through our tone of voice, and the rest through non-verbal means like body language." Speech & Language Therapist

We're already using lots of non-verbal tools in research. Technology has made it easier for us to use audio and

visual tools to capture experiences and show stimulus during fieldwork and presentations, and we all know the power of the video clip to make an audience stop fidgeting and pay attention for a few minutes! In much of our everyday communication, however, we're still relying on words to convey what we mean, perhaps at the expense of a more appropriate medium.

Ironically, it was in a verbal medium that we found a particularly apt expression of why words cause such difficulties for us:

'Words, Wide Night' by Carol Ann Duffy

Somewhere on the other side of this wide night and the distance between us, I am thinking of you.
The room is turning slowly away from the moon.

This is pleasurable. Or shall I cross that out and say it is sad? In one of the tenses I singing an impossible song of desire that you cannot hear.

La lala la. See? I close my eyes and imagine the dark hills I would have to cross to reach you. For I am in love with you and this is what it is like or what it is like in words.

The final line of the poem, *"And this is what it is like,* or *what it is like in words"* encapsulates beautifully one of the challenges we face as researchers when we're trying to 'translate' insights – the fact that *"what it is like in words"* may be something quite different from the experience itself.

In the spirit of 'partnership' and dialogue, we would have ideally been able to talk to the poet about her intentions in more detail. In the absence of this, an essay on her work provides some insight, describing it as 'translations of experience'. The writer Michael Woods goes on to say:

"...one of her preoccupations is the opacity of language that is so often apt to cloud communication of pure thought and pure feeling ... at the heart of Carol Ann Duffy's poetry is a continual acknowledgement and exploration of the limits of language."

In everyday life, we are constantly decoding and encoding, deleting and filtering information based on our own experiences and preconceptions. Being sensitive to our own and others' use of words, whether written, spoken or heard, can help us spot where words might be failing or acting as a barrier to meaning. Being aware of the limitations of language demonstrates the value of non-verbal forms of communication, but also helps us use words more effectively when they are needed.

GIVE WORDS A CHANCE

"Test words wherever they live; listen and touch, smell, believe." Carol Ann Duffy, *Away and See*

We are not suggesting that words should be abandoned completely, or that anything written in words will always be harder to understand. Language is part of identity and we cannot live without it. We have strong associations with words, deep connections that are valuable, personal and full of richness. But we need to think harder about how we use words so nothing is wasted or lost, and every word works as hard as it can to capture and communicate a full experience.

The art of story-telling has received a lot of attention in recent years, and is a skill where words are crucial. A good novel isn't just words on pages. A good story creates pictures in the imagination that carry the reader to worlds far away from the armchair he or she may be sitting in; it suggests sounds and smells of another life that the reader might otherwise never experience, offering a window onto emotional highs and lows we couldn't know before. The words work hard from the first page to the last.

When we put together debriefs we're often trying to tell a 'story' to the audience, to engage them in our shared discoveries and lead them to an ending that inspires and motivates. Words can be used effectively to reveal the conflict and tension that exists in people's lives. Describing what someone said or did compared what we later found out they were thinking at the time, for example, highlights the very real complexity of human experience. Details and narrations like this can create a compelling story, and one that we can engage with on an emotional, human level.

THE PROCESSES OF TRANSLATION

To gain a new perspective on our emerging hypotheses, we needed to look beyond our own spheres of experience as researchers and designers. Already we had noticed differences in communication style between the linguistic, engineering and visual design perspectives offered by the authors of this paper, and were keen to explore how far such differences could take us in translating insights, and whether we might find commonalities across disciplines when it comes to the process of 'translation'. We wanted to see what we could learn from some people who don't work directly in the marketing and research industry, and understand how they tackle the 'translation' process from intellectual concept to action, from brief to implementation. (See figure 1.)

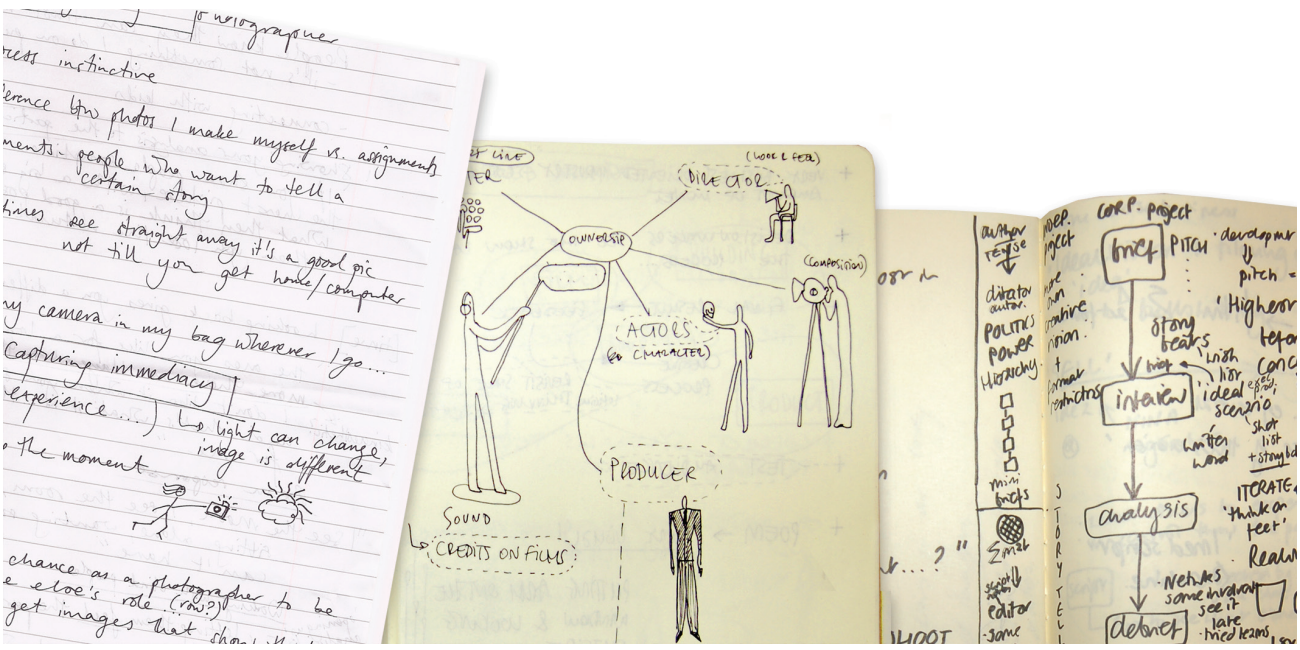
We chose to interview a range of people who communicate ideas in their everyday work, to try and understand what makes them good at their profession, learn about the tools and techniques they use and identify parallels we can borrow for our own research 'translations'.

Teachers, lecturers, actors and training experts featured in our sample, as well as a furniture designer, innovation consultant, speech and language therapist, professional language translators, a film director, radio presenter, photographer and even a restaurateur.

Interestingly, many of those we spoke to had a wide skill set and interests outside their job that complemented each other. A secondary school teacher who is also a part-time playwright and improvisational comic, a Science Communication lecturer who also presents a radio programme for the BBC World Service, a researcher who also plays cello and regularly appears in plays – it soon became clear that one of the reasons our interviewees were so good at what they did was their breadth of skills and enthusiasm for learning and expressing themselves in a variety of ways. We began to see that they had several 'muscles' at their disposal with which they could communicate, beyond just words.

They also had strong empathy skills and could be incredibly sensitive to the human experience:

FIGURE 1
EXAMPLES OF THE VARIED STYLES OF NOTES TAKEN BY THE AUTHORS IN RESEARCHING THIS PAPER.



"Scientists aren't known for their empathy skills, but it's important. (To communicate science) you have to get into the mind of someone who has none of this language, and you have to know what buttons to press". Marcus du Sautoy

Often our interviewees' familiarity with their subject and their own sensitivities enabled them to detect and engage with others on a direct and intimate level. They relied as much on intuition as on rational thought and technical skills, actively exploring and applying non-verbal techniques and tools to support the verbal.

USING POETRY AS STIMULUS

As part of our quest to understand how insights can most effectively be translated, we showed Duffy's poem to some of our interviewees, to see how they reacted to it as a 'brief' or piece of stimulus. We had some surprising responses. Some found it very easy to re-interpret the poem in another medium, for example our cellist, who had no problem 'reading' the words as though they were notes on a musical stave and easily improvised a soulful piece of music around them. The film director we interviewed added further details in her interpretation of the poem, imagining specific lighting effects to create a stronger sense of disconnection in the scene, and indicating the posture of the subject, chin on hand looking into the distance.

The professional translators we spoke to found it quite a challenge to translate into another language, despite the apparent simplicity of the language in English. They wanted to know what the writer's intentions were, how important certain modes of expression were and how much of this needed to be in the translated version to make it a valid and 'true' translation. They were keen to point out that there were difficult decisions to make even on the simplest of phrases such as *'for I am in love with you'* – and stressed that literary translation is quite a different skill from more 'industrial' types of translation:

"For many fields of expertise, IT, pharma, finance, engineering etc., a translator will endeavour to reproduce a faithful translation, sticking as closely as possible to the content of the original text ... Literary translation is quite a different expertise. With a poem, and particularly this one, how it is written (style/structure/words) is equally important as, and related to, how it makes you feel." Translator

The business innovation consultant we interviewed similarly wanted to go back to the source of the poem, in fact to sit down and have a cup of tea with Carol Ann Duffy! He needed to understand the context in which the piece was written, what was happening in the world and in her life at that point, in order to make sense of the poem for himself.

Then there were those who didn't want anything to do with the poem at all – despite having comfortably expressed themselves in words throughout the interview – and when handed the poem even physically distanced themselves from it if they could! For some it was too reminiscent of a piece of schoolwork or an academic text demanding to be formally analysed and understood – and presenting perhaps too 'fixed' a brief? For these interviewees, the poem almost became the opposite of stimulus – shutting down the conversation instead of opening it up. Michael Woods finds an interesting parallel to this in a line from another poem by Duffy:

"A thin skin lies on the language' (line 16 – Moments of Grace), something that a poet inevitably finds difficult to live with. ***This 'thin skin', like the insulation on an electric wire, prevents real energy from being experienced.*** *The insulator in the electrical sense is, though, a lifesaver but in the case of the language of poetry it is a killer."*

EXPLORING THE RANGE OF SENSES

Even though the poem contains visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements, for some of our interviewees it was the words themselves that created a barrier. At its worst, this is what a badly written PowerPoint presentation can become, and why it has been criticised so much in recent years as a medium for communication. Not everyone has a natural affinity with words, and with the full range of senses at our disposal to support and illustrate words more effectively, we lose a lot if we don't put these to use.

Anyone who has studied Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) will be aware of the importance of the senses and how they relate to an individual's 'learning style'. Some of us have a natural preference for either visual, auditory or kinaesthetic stimulus (or a combination of these) when we're absorbing new information, and being aware of that bias can give us clues about why certain kinds of presentation or stimulus appeal to us – even where they may contain very similar information. Identifying preferred learning styles in an interview or group discussion can be a very powerful tool for understanding why some stimulus is working better or worse than others, and gives us ideas about how to 'translate' ideas in a more effective way.

Talking to other professions made us realise that there are a multitude of ways we can go 'beyond words' to translate ideas. This was not only apparent with some of the more obviously 'creative' professions we spoke to, but also where you might assume there's less room for multi-sensory expression. In 'Finding Moonshine', for example, our mathematician Marcus Du Sautoy explains how symmetry is part of everyday, natural life:

"The flower that can achieve perfect symmetry attracts more bees and survives longer in the evolutionary battle. Symmetry is the language used by the flower and bee to communicate with each other. For the flower, the hexagon or the pentagon is like a billboard shouting out 'Visit me!' For the bee, encoded in the symmetrical shape is the message that 'Here is food!' Symmetry denotes something special, something with meaning. Against the static white noise that makes up most of the bee's visual world, the six perfect petals of the clematis stand out like a musical phrase full of harmony." Marcus du Sautoy, *Finding Moonshine*

He instinctively reaches for visual and auditory hooks – including dozens of drawings in his book – to help us understand how a complex mathematical subject can relate to experiences and objects we can all imagine from our own daily lives. At other points he talks about the 17 kinds of symmetry to be found in Granada's Alhambra palace, and tells a story about exploring it with his young son, getting caught up in his own personal analysis process as he tries to identify all the different symmetries there. Story-telling like this plays a key role in how he can successfully engage a non-mathematical audience in highly advanced mathematical concepts without it feeling like an academic lecture.

In another of Duffy's poems (Away and See), Michael Woods draws particular attention to the importance of the senses:

"(this is) an invitation to concentrate on the actual experience of things rather than worrying too much about what name to give them. ***We are able to derive 'meaning' from sensory detail in a much more direct way. Language is, after all, a code*** *we use to articulate that very experience…"*

He goes on to say:

*"…**visual** and **aural** perceptions are crucial for feeding the creative imagination."*

Many of our interviewees used rich, sensory language and expressed themselves incredibly well. They told us lively and highly descriptive stories to illustrate their experiences, helping us picture the work they did more clearly and draw stronger conclusions. Several were very physical communicators, with the teachers in particular keen to demonstrate how they move around their classrooms and encourage students to physically engage with their environments to make their subject matter come to life. Others played us music, showed us pictures and used props around them to get their point across – often with no need for encouragement from the interviewers!

INTUITION – ENGAGING THE SIXTH SENSE…

"The process is mostly, in my case, instinctive … it's not something that you know you do step 1 then step 2, it's not something that I am aware of … The instinct when you think that something is going to happen that you are ready and you take your photo." Photographer

We noticed a spectrum of 'translation' processes when talking to our interviewees, from the rational to the intuitive. As mentioned above, many seemed to rely on a certain 'intuition' in their work, and some were conscious of this as an invaluable skill that helped them carry out their activities more effectively. They could switch between being rational and intuitive, as well as using both modes simultaneously. Despite being driven by intuition, our photographer is also highly adept at the rational and technical tasks like selecting the right camera equipment and precise photographic settings that will capture the scenes she is intuitively drawn to. We tend to give words and rational thought greater authority over intuition, but one of the keys to effective translation as a researcher is the ability to draw on both capabilities as and when necessary:

"Language is a subjective thing, has a lot to do with intuition, feeling – often you know that something is not well-written or is poorly communicated when text just 'sounds a bit odd' – not something you can necessarily put your finger on". Translator

Where face-to-face interaction is involved, our speech and language therapist also talked about 'micro-expressions' – those split-second non-verbal reactions such as eye movements or gestures that can give us additional clues to understanding what someone is saying. We may not be able to translate their meaning into words but we often make sense of them intuitively. This may explain the difference between the moderator's instinct about how a group of research participants felt about an idea during a discussion, compared to the somewhat 'muted' experience for those watching behind a two-way mirror. In this case, the answer may not be in the recording or transcripts, but the moderator will be able to incorporate this feeling into analysis to reach a more meaningful set of findings.

Being responsive to internal translation processes sets the stage for communication. What is our internal condition in any given situation? How are we feeling when we meet a client for the first time, enter a room full of respondents or observe a particular scene?

Decoding our own subjective response can be a starting point for understanding a situation. It certainly provides an added human dimension and if we can learn to make sense of and trust these gut feelings we can start to develop new sensing skills that bring colour and life to our research toolkit. Developing this ability may take time, but with experience and a willingness to step beyond our personal boundaries we can discover a new territory of translation skills.

DRAWING INSPIRATION FOR RESEARCH

Most of our interviewees were passionate about communication, and this was where we started to see similarities with their work and our own experiences of research and insight translation. They often worked to a 'brief' of some kind, having to understand and interpret their brief in order to work most effectively with their clients and audiences. Many had a phase of work similar to our own 'fieldwork' stage – particularly those involved in teaching and therapy – where they had to be sensitive to the needs of audiences and find different ways of capturing difficult experiences and subjects. There were also things we could learn about presentation and debriefing, as well as client-handling skills – even where the 'clients' in their case could be stroppy teenagers in a classroom or social workers being trained to work with dementia patients. We also drew many parallels with our own analysis process – not least, that this is not the neat and orderly process we might like to think it is (or simplify it as such once we've finished it!), but that it is the messiness and uncertainty in analysis and allowing it to happen throughout the life of a project that can allow us to produce the most creative and innovative insights.

Since many of our interviewees followed some kind of process from brief to debrief we decided to map their insights and examples to this simple but familiar framework and draw inspiration for new ways to go 'beyond words' in each stage of a project. Keen to translate these insights into practical ideas, we accompany each section with some suggestions of how we can all experiment with ways of going 'beyond words' in our research.

THE BRIEFING PROCESS

"The brief stage is the cream of everything, it's cosy, that's the lovely part!" Designer

"The biggest risk for misinterpretation is at the point of the brief." Business innovation consultant

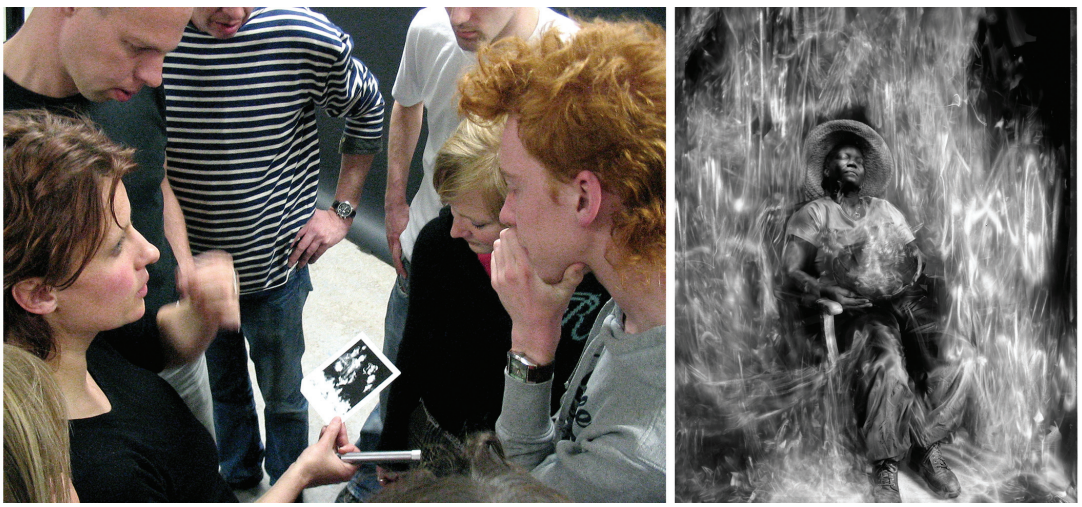
The brief is in itself a 'translated' item, transferred from someone's imagination into a formulated idea for action by another. There is always a risk that we lose the essence of that idea during translation from one person to another, lose sight of the original intention and set off in completely the wrong direction! But the brief also tends to assume that the original intention is already the 'correct' way forward, but often, in the act of sharing and translation, an idea can be enriched and evolve into something more focussed and relevant. In this section we explore where 'translation' fits into the briefing stage of a project: understanding the intent of a brief; identifying how we might expand or contract the brief to make it richer, more robust and more relevant; and looking at how to communicate the brief without losing its essence.

Understanding the brief

Our photographer gave us an inspiring example of how a brief can be understood through dialogue – in her case working with blind people to help them create their own photographs. Within a group of two to four people, she asks one person to explain an idea they would like to communicate and how they might translate this idea into a form to photograph. They discuss as a group the composition, foreground and background, and how they might use props to set the scene. Using spoken dialogue and touch she shows them how they can create a photographic image, feeling the camera to understand how it works, taking their hand to explain locations and positions in the room. They *feel* their way around the scene, using a torch to illuminate the objects and people they would like to include. It is often an iterative and time-consuming activity, as they try out photos that the photographer then describes back to them, until they finally achieve the desired result. She acts as their eyes. Interestingly, she does not feel there is a distinction between people's ability to see and their ability to create compelling images. (See figure 2.) We all somehow have a unique way of 'seeing' the world whether or not we have sight:

"It doesn't matter if people are blind or seeing because some people just visualise things and some don't … some people just see a tree and then other people see the leaves and the light, the shadow, the stems and the branches. There is so much to see in a tree, and yet some people don't even see the tree itself!" Photographer

FIGURE 2
SHOOTING BLIND – PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED



Just as you can't really understand a country, language and culture unless you travel there, we can't expect to understand our clients without getting to know their 'territory'. Our innovation consultant describes the different ways he explores his client's 'territory', focusing on building a relationship before tackling the brief. He looks at how they present and describe themselves on their website, visits their offices and notices how people behave towards one another or towards him as a visitor, observes how the office space is designed and laid out, listening for the vocabulary used in their marketing materials, but also in conversations. All these aspects of a company experience can together provide rich clues as to how our client thinks and sees their world, manifestations of their organisational values and tacit beliefs. Already this means we're going beyond the words on the page and into the context and culture in which the brief may have been written.

Expanding and contracting the brief

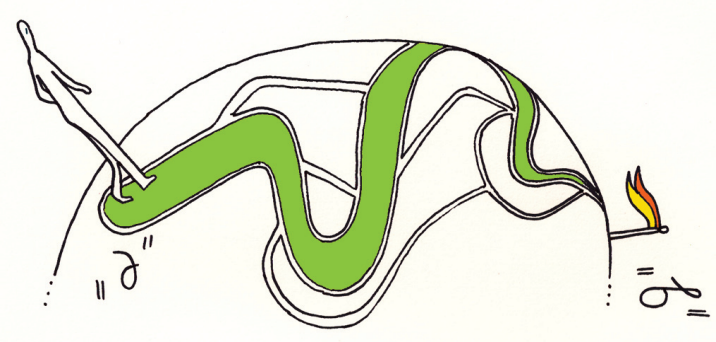
Knowing where the client is right now and where would they like to go gives a sense of the *initial* scope of a project, a vantage point from where we can identify if, how and where a brief should be challenged. Not every brief needs to be challenged, but the process of doing so helps us become familiar with the boundaries and flexibilities in a project.

What if the research brief, were approached as a kind of visual map, showing where we'd like to get to and routes we could take, but leaving us the flexibility to explore the smaller roads and see the sights along the way? There is room for spontaneity and change of plans whilst keeping track of overall direction, pace and progress. The brief can then be seen as a starting point for conversation, a living document rich with emotional triggers – 'I've always wanted to visit that place!' – as well as rational facts – 'We just don't have enough time to go there' – helping us to prioritise. (See figure 3.)

Speaking to our teachers about this stage, we heard about how they expand and contract their lesson planning, a kind of route plan for how to get their students from A to B. They take into account the examination requirements or key goals for a certain subject, relate that to their school term plans and continue to reference down to the individual lesson plan. If an individual lesson doesn't work, they have the map clear enough in their heads to try a different 'route'. This form of scoping up and down is both systematic and creative. Each level has its own set of boundaries and conditions but works within the framework of the class, school and the national curriculum.

The constraints and boundaries of a brief are also important in helping us to go 'beyond words'. Most of our projects will have limited timeframes, tight budgets or challenging recruitment criteria. But even the interviewees who initiated their own projects and created their own brief, such as the photographer, filmmaker

FIGURE 3
IF OUR RESEARCH BRIEF WERE A MAP, WE MAY KNOW WHERE WE WANT TO GO, BUT REMAIN OPEN TO THE MANY WAYS TO GET THERE



and designer, mentioned the need to define self-inflicted boundaries and constraints – in essence, construct their own challenge. They know that a set of limitations will trigger the best of their creativity.

Another idea we discovered here came from our playwright, who had created a play without words. In doing so he forced himself and the actors working with him to invent new ways to communicate with only movement, gestures, facial expressions and sound. This strategy to remove one or more senses can heighten the remaining senses and offer alternative perspectives, enabling us to discover initially hidden aspects within a brief.

Communicating the brief

Choosing how to communicate a brief depends on understanding your audience as well as the project process that will follow. In filmmaking we heard that in essence a series of 'mini-briefs' are created for different members of the crew and given to them during specific handover points in the filmmaking process. The film's concept remains consistent and intact with the writer and director's vision, but each expert involved, including the actors themselves, has the freedom to respond with their own creative translation or interpretation within these given boundaries. Costume designers might improvise through wardrobe design, styling and colour, set designers decide the back drop against which the action should take place, contributing interior architecture and design details, whilst the soundtrack composer enhances the film's atmosphere with a musical score that punctuates the storyline. Without a coherent but flexible brief, these important sensory touches could cause complete chaos!

Filmmaking also gave us inspiration for more experiential methods of conveying a brief, going 'beyond words'. Film directors sometimes create dynamic mood boards from selected film clips as a means of briefing their production crew on the qualities they would like to create in the film. Clips might illustrate camera angles, set designs, editing styles or lighting effects to convey a concept or atmosphere. Using the references and language of film as a briefing medium seems suitable for an audience of film industry experts.

Taking this example of moviemaking further, directors have been known to try out different endings for their stories with selected audiences. Perhaps we can already be thinking about our audiences for a brief – our clients and their stakeholders, creative partners, consumers and end users – how do they need to see, hear or feel things in this project? We could also try out different potential 'endings' before a research project even starts! Where are we expecting the research to go? What hypotheses can we create already?

It may sound like a lot of extra work up front in a project just to get started. However, to steal a phrase from our innovation consultant, *'slowing down to speed up'* is a valuable strategy, especially at the beginning of a project. It can bring greater credibility and quality to the research findings, set up the right conditions for dialogue to continue throughout the project and provide a positive and inspiring start to a project team – going far beyond the set of written 'instructions' that some of our briefs have become!

Ideas for going beyond the brief

- Go and experience the client's organisation if you can. Ask to receive the brief at their offices in their context – or have a video Skype call and nosy at what's going on in the background!
- Ask for more from the brief. Request product samples, ask the ad agency to show the latest creative work, and inquire what other, non-verbal stimulus there might be for us to learn more about it.
- Visit shops, restaurants and real locations as a research team before responding to the brief to get a feel for where the products or services you are working on actually 'live'. Who do you find there? What does it sound like? How does it smell? What does it look? What do you have to do to get there? How do you feel visiting the location and afterwards? This can be a valuable exercise to do and discussion can ultimately help build common understanding of the brief.
- Explore your topic visually using sites such as Flickr.com or taggalaxy.de to find out what images people associate with a brand or subject area.
- Try drawing the brief after you've received it – does

this uncover any new aspects? What if we try to find a piece of music to express it?
• Share maps, plans and ideas about the brief with clients before any final decisions have been made – our 'translations' may inspire a different direction or alternative perspectives on the problem.

THE FIELDWORK PROCESS

"What I like about being a photographer is the chance to be on the front row of someone's life." Photographer

Interviews and group discussions are the stage of a project where researchers have the privilege to be 'in the front' row of people's lives. Many of us have felt this sensation, been so immersed in someone else's world that the boundaries blur, but have also faced the challenge of trying to make that initial connection and build trust quickly with respondents who may be reluctant to participate. They and we are often left somehow changed by the experience – and then with the challenge of articulating it.

The fieldwork phase for our interviewees had a number of parallels: rehearsing a script for actors, spending time with waiting staff, chefs and customers for the restaurateur; location-scouting as a film director. What was consistent was a need to be alert and engaged throughout this phase to get the best results. We were curious as to how non-verbal skills might help us achieve such an intimacy with our audience – what further tools and techniques could we employ?

Reaching your audience

Teachers need to communicate with and interpret the responses of their students in much the same way as a researcher with an interviewee or focus group. They have to simplify lessons and break things down to communicate effectively with a class or student. Good teachers won't stick rigidly to the lesson plan if they see an exercise or technique isn't working. Knowing the ultimate goal or strategic intent of what they're trying to achieve, they can be flexible and apply the principles they keep in their back pocket in order to reach a particular class or individual. Considering this flexible approach for research adds further skills to the researcher's toolbox, going beyond the standard interview process.

Our photographer also mentioned the use of body language and eye contact as crucial for making a connection with a subject, especially if a language barrier also exists. She tries to convey the message of 'trust me' with her whole being, being open, relaxed and present. Subjects recognise that she is truly interested in them and they give her something back.

Helping participants to express themselves

Plenty of training courses and books give advice on how to create rapport in interviews and groups and make sure we get the best use of the brief time we spend with research participants. Every moderator develops their own way of doing this in time, and we don't pretend to offer any magic tricks here! However, as far as going 'beyond words' is concerned, this is where body language and the ability to 'read' other people can make the difference between an average interview and a really fascinating one. Neuro-Linguistic Programming already offers a wide range of tools and techniques to anyone willing to spend a little time learning them, and highlights simple behaviour such as mirroring body language and tone of voice to help people feel more comfortable. Although it's important to be ourselves when we're moderating, we gain a lot from the small, non-verbal changes we make if we're sensitive to our interviewees:

"My body language and facial expression is a bit more expressive when I'm with a patient … you have to be careful about things like sarcasm too! If patients don't feel they understand what you're saying, they feel upset and angry. You lose their trust if they don't get what you're trying to say…" Speech and Language Therapist

Trust and confidence are important for everyone in the research process, but this does not mean that we should always explain things to participants in the simplest way possible. On the contrary, often it is important to us to know when language or ideas may not be communicating clearly, so we can explore why concepts are being rejected or insights are hard to gather – and

do something about it. This is another example where intuition and attention to minute, non-verbal details can be extremely important – where participants may not wish to admit they don't 'get' something, or not want to speak about something we need to pick up on the signs that tell us this so we can probe further in other ways to help them feel comfortable.

We can also help people to express themselves by giving them different options for conveying feelings and opinions, letting them decide how and where to start their story. Most researchers have an ever-expanding toolkit of exercises and techniques to go beyond standard questioning, but we may still be relying too much on participants' ability to express themselves in words, when another medium may be more suitable. Sometimes, asking people to create visuals can provide an outlet for us to access more emotions and language as our English teacher describes:

"I might set them a task, say, to find 3 objects that interest them in a museum. There is a time limit, so some of them sketch the object because they can't find the language quickly enough. When we're back in the classroom, we can use the drawings to start talking about the objects and generate the language at that point instead." Founder, Cultured Learning

Listening with all the senses

"I'm not a good communicator sometimes, I fail to listen with my eyes, ears and feelings, don't listen to the context in which they're speaking – who is THIS person speaking, how are they trying to communicate with me." Actor/ trainer

It's all too easy to go into 'automatic' sometimes when we're listening to research participants – particularly when we're nearing the end of a project, we've heard similar responses and think we know already what the findings might be. It is at this point that we need to make sure we're still going 'beyond words' and stay alert to the subtleties of different human experiences. Our designer also described picking up on the detail of human behaviour in public places, noticing the funny or strange ways people 'misuse' simple everyday objects. This would give her clues to unmet needs and serve as inspiration for new products.

Language teachers put great value on the *experience* of learning a language and visiting another country because it brings it to life, makes the words mean something and gives them a tangible context:

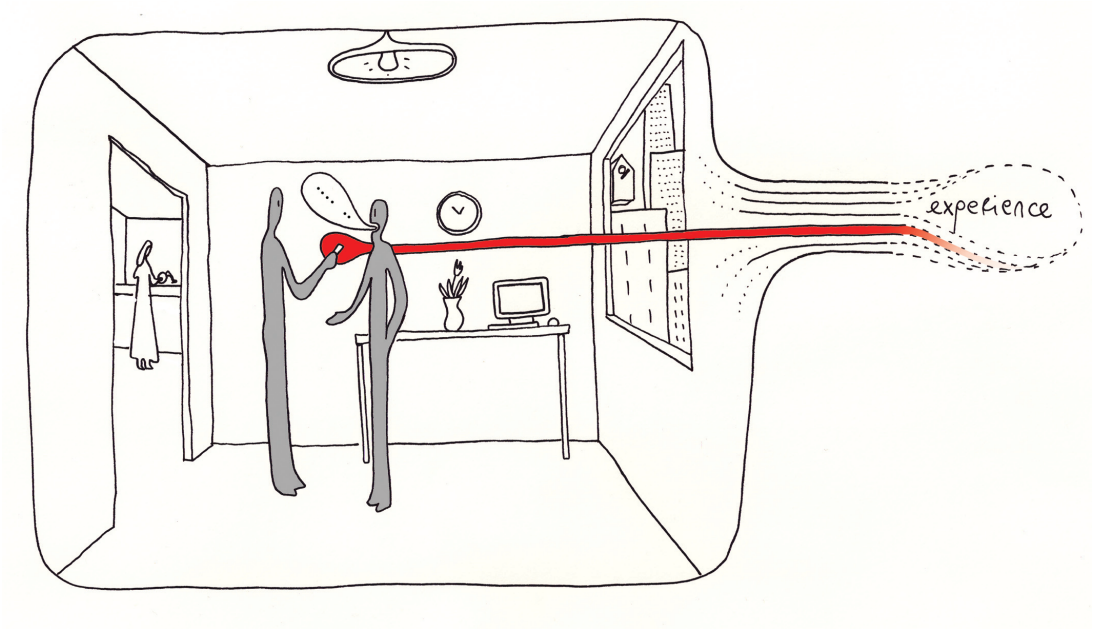
"The word 'apple' suddenly means much more when you're holding it in your hand, biting into it, smelling it and tasting it – you can't get that in a classroom." TEFL teacher

This is also why interviewing participants in their own home or workplace is so rewarding. Their words and stories come to life when we can see them in their own environment, and they are 'illustrated' by their own props. A husband's interest in cars is plainly illustrated by the pile of car magazines on the coffee table and the children's game in the corner that was really bought with Dad in mind! These are also the stories and pictures we can share with our clients and research partners, so they can get a feel for who we've spoken to and what their lives might be like.

Just as a film director might gather various ingredients to tell a pre-defined story, casting actors, location-scouting or choosing a certain time of day to film with specific light conditions, we might think as broadly in the types of information we 'listen for' in a research session in order to re-create the experience for our audiences. For example, taking extra photographs of locations en route to an interview to contextualise the location, or recording not only the interview audio but also the background noises to help later set the scene. (See figure 4.)

There is an additional advantage in involving partners and clients in fieldwork. They bring their own perspective and sensitivity to absorb certain types of information. Creating multi-disciplinary teams can create highly 'absorbent' fieldwork activities with each discipline honing in on a different facet of information and maximising the learning in a fixed amount of time. Our consultant explained how fieldwork was a phase in which he bounced ideas off different people, sharing and reflecting on concepts and insights to collectively grasp a fuller understanding.

FIGURE 4
WHAT KIND OF SENSORIAL INFORMATION CAN YOU PICK UP ON TO CAPTURE THE FULL EXPERIENCE OF AN INTERVIEW?



Ideas for going beyond the interview

• Fight for opportunities to carry out in-context research such as homework kits, home visits, workplace shadowing, even guerrilla interviewing in shops, to expose yourself to the more experiential sides of the participant's story.
• Keep a variety of research techniques in your 'moderator's back pocket' so you can choose the most suitable tools at any time to give your respondents opportunity to express themselves in many ways – words, pictures, sounds, gestures...
• Think about using a wider range of techniques to enhance presentation of stimulus, taking a leaf from the film director's book and perhaps compiling a series of film clips that evoke the mood of the concept?
• Capture clues from body language and non-verbal responses – your own and your audience. When do people sit forward? When are they less engaged? Where do they look responsive? When are they laughing or smiling?
• Do some basic NLP training to increase awareness of non-verbal patterns and clues
• Remember that participants are human too – they get tired and bored, and this may not be a 'normal' activity for them!

The debriefing process

"In live theatre, if you work your arse off, the audience can tell and will forgive you almost anything! They will have empathy and associate with you. But if you stand there and ask them to judge it, they will." Actor and trainer

If we've done our job well, been communicating and translating with the client and project team throughout, and worked together to build on ideas for the analysis, the audience should be able to anticipate the general direction of the findings at the debrief presentation. This doesn't mean the research was in vain, but rather that the translation process has been going on since the brief was formed, and the debrief becomes a formalising of the output from that process. The 'formal' debrief meeting can then act as an energiser, catalyst and jumping-off point. Rather than arguing about choice of words and fine detail in the findings, the team can start to discuss implications together – resulting in a smoother transition to the next stages of the work.

Thinking about your audience...

"We decode and encode; but a human translator will approach the task at a conceptual/contextual and not

purely structural/linguistic level. Simple non-human translation will substitute words in one language with the equivalent words in another language, treating them in isolation with no consideration given to the objective of the text or its intended audience." Translator

Good translators will not even attempt a translation without knowing who needs to use it and adapting their style and approach accordingly. We need to do the same with our own work, constantly considering who needs to understand it, and what medium and style is best for them. Where project stakeholders are from diverse backgrounds, we need to think carefully about the language we use to communicate with team members – who may be based together in the same office or dispersed in locations around the world. A radio presenter highlights a rather extreme version of this dilemma when putting together his radio show for the BBC World Service:

"the World Service has 39 million listeners around the world, and it does make it difficult ... I always want to put in puns, jokes, and cultural references that will make the broadcast more lively and engaging, but people might not understand. You have to use language as simply but effectively as you can." Presenter of Digital Planet

In this case, the presenter is sacrificing some of the richness and humour to make sure his diverse audience can understand the essence of each programme – something which can cause arguments with programme producers, since judgments like these are always subjective. Whilst we usually have nothing quite so challenging as 39 million different listeners(!), it is our job to make sure people less directly involved in the project can grasp the key points easily and intuitively – which usually means less complicated jargon, and more accessible communication, both verbal and non-verbal.

As a predominantly auditory format, radio has to work especially hard to make communication come to life for the listeners. Our presenter goes on to talk about other ways he tries to make the programme communicate as clearly as possible. From the moment he arrives in a new location for a radio broadcast he is already thinking about how to communicate his experience – which means listening to it first and foremost, to capture and translate the elements that might communicate elements of the location to a listener thousands of miles away:

"Busy traffic noises can place you anywhere, from Delhi to Sao Paolo. Something like the sound of a clanging tram, on the other hand, is very San Francisco!"

Encouraging audiences to interact with ideas and experiences

When we're translating ideas *with* project teams, rather than *for* them, we can all work with the insights more quickly and easily. Helping clients and partners interact with ideas and take ownership of them is a challenging task, but much more rewarding in the long run than simply handing over a document full of words – and there is much we can learn from the trainers and teachers we spoke to. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has an '80/20' rule to encourage learners to generate words and language for themselves, rather than simply responding to tasks and questions. Ideally, the teacher should talk 20% of the time, and the students 80% of the time. The teacher's role is to find ways of eliciting language from students in the most relevant way, and give them confidence to use their new skills away from the 'safe' classroom environment.

Whilst researchers often have the benefit of experiencing consumers' lives at first hand, we also need to consider how we can simulate this for clients and others in the project team. Again, there were some inventive parallels from our interviewees:

"I had a psychology tutor who got a friend to build her a pair of goggles that turned the world upside down – she wore them as an experiment for 2 weeks and said she went mad by the end! ... The Royal National Institute for the Blind used to give you spectacles that mimic sight impairments, though you can get the same effect if you put a few layers of Sellotape over glasses – that's exactly what you see if you have cataracts. Those kind of things are good because they're active." Trainer working with dementia care workers

Teachers know that experiences speak louder than words, and that if they can get their students to connect ideas to physical movement, sounds and visuals, they are much more likely to retain them in the long term. The techniques they use are endless – anything from setting up a restaurant scenario in a German lesson, complete with menus and flowers on the table, to lying down on the floor to demonstrate the word 'uncomfortable'! Teachers constantly improvise, look around themselves and grab whatever is closest to hand to bring their subject to life.

Using different tools to 'translate' findings beyond words

Going 'beyond words' means being confident and flexible enough to go beyond what is written in a presentation or document, and using whatever works to help us communicate what the research team needs to know. If we need to pick up a pad of paper during the debrief and sketch something to clarify a point, we should do it. The audience will be grateful for an alternative perspective, and it might just spark off new connections and ideas we hadn't thought about before.

We also shouldn't abandon the non-verbal tools already at our disposal:

"We generally don't use DVDs in training because it puts people into a passive state – but we've discovered a tool for training care workers in dementia which was non-verbal, and really effective. It's a fictional account of a Jewish Holocaust survivor suffering from dementia, very well made, it's very engaging, with lots of metaphors and symbolism – it really takes us into her world, the sounds of what's going on around her and how it might feel for her." Trainer working with dementia carers

A word of warning: with an immense range of options available with which to share the debrief with our team, we might be tempted to over-complicate the insights with a multi-media extravaganza that serves more to obscure the insights than make them more accessible. The most effective communication is often the most simple – and again, can be completely non-verbal:

"Why is it that we love actors who do nothing? Popov the clown would come and sweep up at the end of the act ... Finally, when nothing was left but the spotlight, he'd start to sweep that up too, brushing it smaller and smaller like a child, until it was gone. It's such a simple act – a lesson for anyone who wants to communicate well." Actor and trainer

Ideas for going beyond the debrief

- Encourage clients and research partners to get involved with the insights before the debrief presentation – some could even do some interviews themselves to get the moderator's view on a project.
- Be sensitive to clients' attention spans and learning styles: just like research participants, not everyone processes information in the same way. Give them different options so they can find a format that communicates for them and their team.
- Introduce a range of sensory stimulus into the debrief – anything from music to objects and pictures the audience can interact with and respond to; this can be as simple as sample products from the project or a carefully chosen 'soundtrack' that matches our consumers' lifestyles!
- Watch how professional 'performers' get their point across in different ways – not just words. Look at actors' body language, the emotional range of a musical performance or the energy of a dance; if we can reproduce just a fraction of their expression, we'll already be making a difference.

OOPS – WHAT ABOUT ANALYSIS?

"I don't see (analysis) as data, I see it as a moment in my life ... It's a 24/7 activity, I wait for the data to become clear." Business Innovation Consultant

We almost didn't want to write a separate section on analysis, because as our consultant above points out, it should be something that's going on throughout everything we do. In many of the activities we describe in the briefing, fieldwork and debrief processes, we're also talking about analysis, albeit indirectly. However, there are a few areas our interviewees touched on with analysis that are worth mentioning separately. Our film

director, for example, describes a comparable process in the evolution of a film script, which she describes as a 'living document'. This comes to reflect the collaborative nature of the filmmaking process, and is annotated directly by crew members marking the progress of the film.

But what of our own scribbles and annotations, and the sketches and maps we produce throughout a project to log our ideas whilst they're fresh and instinctive? Just like the TEFL teacher's students sketching because they can't find the words quickly enough, we need to allow ourselves to explore ideas in their different sensory forms to get the best out of our brains.

Letting things get messy

"My room at home is a space where I can easily drift in and out of ideas without feeling guilty. It is an extremely messy place. Half the time this gets me down. But it actually is a good reflection of my thought process. I'll start looking for a book buried somewhere deep in the pyramids of paper that sit atop my desk. But during the search I'll often come across something I hadn't been looking for which can take my thought process off in an unexpected direction. By maintaining an untidy room I'm raising the likelihood of making these random connections." pp. 33, *Finding Moonshine*

The author isn't afraid to admit that he stumbles on ideas and breakthroughs in his work often by accident – and it's the same for us when we're trying to 'crack' research and marketing problems during a project. How many times have we all been day-dreaming on the bus, making a cup of coffee, paying for our lunch when a new angle on a problem suddenly comes to mind?

Most people's minds don't produce beautifully expressed insights to order, so we need to be ready to capture our thoughts in whatever messy and multi-sensory form they choose to emerge.

Letting other people into the analysis process

"Being part of team is a skill in itself, understanding where you are in relation to others. It's also useful for patients that I'm part of a team. They get the benefit of not only my knowledge and skills, but also the benefit of us (the team of carers) talking to each other. Patients might have one-to-one sessions with a social worker, a nurse etc and then we'll all get together, say once a week, and compare themes. Within these discussions we find things out that you don't when you're in different locations. It means your plans for the next week can be much more focussed..." Speech and Language Therapist

For many of us the analysis process is already a multi-person affair, and it can make our findings and conclusions much richer as a result. What about those who may not have conducted groups or interviews, but who need to use the research and have perspectives of their own to add?

It's time to de-mystify the analysis process in research. By including clients and other research partners in the analysis process itself, we can 'translate' insights *with* them so that concepts and language become more familiar, usable and relevant.

But can we involve them even more in these stories, even include them in the actual writing of the story, let them experience the different worlds of research participants for themselves and use those experiences to enrich and build understanding of sectors and markets, as well as identify potential new innovation territories? It takes a good deal of trust and time to create the right rapport within a research team to do this successfully, but it can result in a powerful experience for all involved as collectively, our influence and contribution has a greater reach.

Visualising analysis

One way we can de-mystify analysis is to try and visualise some of the processes we go through to reach our findings. Although this isn't always possible or relevant, in many projects we may have already created such visuals when we cover the walls of our offices in post-its and huge sheets of paper to try to 'up-pick' tricky problems in analysis. Some designers are already capturing this process – whether by photographing or typing up diagrams and sketches – so that it can be brought to life for clients and partners. (See figure 5.)

FIGURE 5
THROUGH VISUALISING ANALYSIS WE CAN CREATE INNOVATION FRAMEWORKS THAT REVEAL OPPORTUNITIES

'Mind maps' are another technique that allows us to visualise analysis, showing more clearly the connections and contradictions around ideas, and allowing for a more flexible approach to insight generation. Analysis need not be about distilling findings to the simplest common element, but allows conflicting but valid findings to build on one another to create a more realistic albeit messy picture of the whole. Life is grey and messy, and we need to look at ways of translating this complexity without overwhelming future users of the research.

PUTTING TOGETHER A TOOLBOX

We understand that it may not be possible with every client, team or project to push the boundaries of research practice to go 'beyond words' and include experimental and alternative approaches every time. However, we wanted to 'translate' the findings of our own research project here into a practical toolbox that could act as a useful reference in trying to go 'beyond words' in our everyday research practice. We've added suggestions of a few books and tools that have inspired us in their own way here too...

Going 'beyond words' means being flexible with *time*

Several of our respondents were conscious of something they called 'rhythm' or 'flow' – suggesting not everything has to move at breakneck speed to be effective! Allowing ourselves time to slow down, sleep on our thoughts and ideas and mull over concepts while 'off duty' can lead to richer analysis, sharper responses and more creative solutions. Slowing down helps you notice subtleties and develop more empathic relationships with respondents, partners and clients. Focusing in and out of a subject also gives us the perspective to be able to jump ahead or backwards in time, reflect on and direct our process. Research is real life, so bridging our free time and work time also allows us to bring new connections and perspectives to our work that we may normally keep at home.

More inspiration on slowing down: *In praise of slow,* Carl Honoré

Translation involves teamwork and collaboration

Working as one team with clients, respondents and partners can build a common language and shared understanding that enhances insight translation. If we can relate to each other beyond the specific roles we might all play in a project, beyond the different professional languages we all speak, we can go well beyond faceless words in the documents we write. Creating the conditions for dialogue, trust and respect requires daring to step outside of our specific roles as researchers. The benefit lies in being able to draw on each other's strengths and flex *collective* muscles, just as our speech therapist described, to deliver a more meaningful result.

For an inspirational example of teamwork: *Scott of the Antarctic,* David Crane

Getting comfortable with non-linear processes and mess!

Going 'beyond words' in research is a messy approach that pays off with more inspiring and realistic insights, and translations of experience that are better understood. Developing the ability to zoom in and out of the detail and bigger picture, and feel comfortable with a non-linear process is crucial if we want to get more from each project. Analysis is by nature a constant, ongoing process and the iterative loops of briefing, fieldwork and debriefing should support and feed this.

Have some fun with different perspectives: Play with *Google Earth* for a few hours...

Listening to intuition and gut feel

We instinctively use our strongest 'muscle' – be it words, sounds, or sketches to translate meaning quickly and accurately. We have discussed throughout this paper how rational and intuitive skills combine to offer deeper access to insight translation. Learning to step beyond our own comfort zones, trust and ultimately act on our instincts as well as our reason extends our palette of research skills beyond the verbal to include the non-verbal. Bringing this rich range of senses into play can help us capture our research experiences more fully, connect better with our audiences and understand their responses in a richer way.

Learn new techniques to support your instincts: *NLP: The New Technology of Achievement,* Steve Andreas and Charles Faulkner

RESEARCHER AS TRANSLATOR ... OR DIPLOMAT?

As researchers, we often have the privilege of listening to a lot of different audiences and moving between different stakeholders in projects. With no personal agenda other than to make the research as effective as possible, we could be like foreign diplomats, interacting with all the parties involved and learning how their needs can be brought together. We can develop the ability to speak in many different professional 'languages' so we can move smoothly between research participants, clients and other research partners, listening to and interpreting needs and assessing how they can be translated so that others can work with them.

Our role is also more than just translator, however, and, like a foreign diplomat, we have to take responsibility for the 'translations' we make and what other people do with them. Words in isolation may look benign and innocent,

but let loose they can do a lot of damage if we don't support them, clarify them and bring them to life in the way they were intended! Finally, passion is an essential and much underestimated ingredient for translating insights – you have to *want* people to understand. In writing this paper we realised that getting back in touch with what we love about research and bringing that into our everyday work means we naturally find ways to convey our freshly uncovered insights to audiences, without losing the energy that made them so compelling to start with.

References

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Woods, Michael, 'What it is like in words': Translation, reflection and refraction in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy © sheerpoetry.co.uk 2005-2008

List of interviewees

Mary Battley	Qualitative researcher, cellist and actress
Jonathan Cohen	Secondary school teacher, playwright and improvisational comic
Helen Clarke	Speech and language therapist
Gerard Harkin	Innovation Consultant, Synectics (Edengene as of April'09)
Mark Heron	Actor, director and trainer, JMBM training – dealing with dementia
Carolyn Jarvis	Translator, Lingo24
Anna and James Kerry	Secondary school teachers: languages and design technology
John Lederer	MD and founder of Brasserie Blanc, UK
Anja Ligtenberg	Freelance photographer, Eindhoven
Gareth Mitchell	Presenter, Digital Planet, BBC World Service; Lecturer, Science Communication, Imperial College London
Juliet Morgan	English teacher and founder of 'Cultured Learning'
Jacky Mortimer	JMBM training – dealing with dementia
Marcus du Sautoy	Professor of Mathematics, Oxford University and Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science
Nina Tolstrup	Designer, studiomama, London
Ruth Tomlinson	Translator, Lingo24
Suju Vijayan	Film maker and freelance writer, Los Angeles

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