

The Space In-Between: Early Reflections From An Autoethnographic Study

Maya Iza Azizan

Northumbria University, the United Kingdom

Abstract

This presentation presents initial findings from my doctoral research which aims to explore the ways in which the Malaysian diaspora in the North East of England perform their cultural heritage. Underpinned by autoethnography and ethnography as analytical methods, I problematise the autoethnographic perspective of being an insider researcher and explore the 'space in between'- the tensions, challenges, and constant questioning of my own biases and assumptions in the first two years since I established contact with the Malaysian diasporic community in the North East. I reflect on my emotional connection, or sometimes disconnection, since engaging with this community. Two aspects will be examined: first, how I embody myself as part of the research while simultaneously associating with the community, and second, the connection between discourses of performance and performativity in diasporic settings. Through examining these methodological and theoretical considerations, I aim to demonstrate how autoethnographic practice offers valuable insights into understanding diasporic identity formation and cultural maintenance. This presentation will contribute to ongoing debates about reflexivity in qualitative research and the complexities of insider/outsider positionality. By sharing my methodological journey thus far, I hope to open up discussions about the challenges and opportunities of researching one's own community, particularly within diaspora studies, where questions of belonging, authenticity, and representation remain a central concern.

Keywords: Autoethnography; Diaspora; Malaysian; Performance; Reflexivity