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Communicating 'Self': Language and Issues of Belonging

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ABSTRACT There has been for the last decade, in the tenor of general scholarship, much enthusiastic talk about the 'mobilities turn' in the social sciences, and of borders made porous by mass communication and the various patterns of migration and circuits of mobility. International foreign 'students' form one vector amongst the multiple trajectories of migratory movement, and represent foreign 'bodies', who (choose to) become mobile in search of educational opportunities. Such movement renders them 'international', and in some instances cosmopolitan. Many remain however, rooted to their home spaces through their use and choice of communication through their home languages; and further use their home language to satisfy a sense of belonging in a foreign host space. Language (and communication) is thus considered key in unpacking notions of belonging. This exploratory paper employs an interpretivist lens and works through a sample of narratives of a small group of foreign African students and unpacks how language(s) and communication are used by the students in a way that 'speaks' to a sense of self and belonging.